Attitudes of Culturally Diverse Parents and Their Beliefs about the Role They Play in Their Children's Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examined parental involvement in early childhood programs through a combined lens of anthropology, sociology, and pedagogy seeking to understand the intentional and unintentional behaviors of teachers that may create barriers for parental involvement. The study gave voice to parents from culturally diverse backgrounds that are often overlooked. The study recognized the disparity and disconnectedness that seems to exist in communication between the child's most important caregivers, their parents and their teachers. The findings lead to an understanding that over the popular belief that parents are not involved in the education of their children, the lack of participation in the schools' attempts to bridge a gap, the miscommunication occurs across the two cultures, the schools and the families.

We teach our son to be good and listen to the teachers. We want our son to speak Spanish, English and Cajumbal, and we also want our son to maintain the culture that is us. We want him to dress in traditional Guatemalan clothing as well as to appreciate all the nationalities that make up the people of this paradise

The voice of a parent (2001)

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement is especially important for children who are at high risk for failure in school, such as children from culturally diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of culturally diverse parents regarding their role in their children's education, including their attitudes toward shared responsibility with the schools and the cultural context for parent-teacher relationships. The study also sought to understand the intentional and unintentional behaviors of their children's teachers and caregivers that may create barriers for parental involvement in the education of their children. This study gave voice to parents from culturally diverse backgrounds that are often overlooked in educational and social policy.

THE SETTING OF THE STUDY

The current study was embedded in the social institution of a preschool program (Head Start) in a remote valley in southwestern Colo-

rado. Many residents of the Valley have seldom or never left their hometown. Once inhabited only by the Ute and Navajo tribes, Caucasians, and Hispanics that are descendents of a marriage between Native Americans and the Spanish conquerors, the Valley has also become home to many immigrants from Mexico and most recently a large population of immigrants from war-torn Guatemala, the Mayans.

The local Head Start Programs offer local and immigrant families living in the Valley a first glimpse into education in the United States. The selected group of parents and children attending this program were from low-income households as defined by the Head Start recruiting guidelines. The ethnicity of parents chosen for the study is Native American, Hispanic, and Guatemalan (Mayan).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to describe the attitude toward parent involvement of culturally diverse parents, in this case Native American, Hispanic, and Mayan parents. It examined the parents' understanding or perception of the term *parent involvement* as defined by educators, the role the parents perceived as theirs in the education of their children, and the impact of their cultural differences on effective parent involvement.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:
1) What role do parents perceive as theirs in the education of their children?
2) Can an understanding of these cultural differences enlighten educators on techniques to enhance the involvement of culturally diverse parents in early childhood education programs?

Definitions
In order to better understand this study, one should be familiar with the terms used. These include the following:

Acculturation: The process of learning the cultural patterns of the dominant culture (Stefani, 1996, p. 350).

Assimilation: The process by which an immigrant group or culturally distinct group is incorporated into the dominant culture (Johnson et al. 1999).

Collectivism: Group orientation which affirms that it is more important to show loyalty to one's group than to strive for individual success. Cooperation and affiliation are emphasized rather than competition and aggression (Hofstede, 1980).

Configurative culture: Because of migration (or religious conversion), as technology advances, increasing intercultural contact and communication, cultural patterns begin to undergo modifications. Parents no longer provide major models for teaching important skills. Rather than elders and adults, peers and age cohorts begin to represent the future for a child or adolescent (Mead, 1970).

Cultural competence: Demonstrated ability to enact a cultural identity in a mutually appropriate and effective manner (Samovar & Porter, 1991).

Dominant Group: The cultural group that has the greatest power in society; sometimes referred to as the mainstream culture or group (Johnson et al..1999).

Enculturation: The process of learning the characteristics of the culture of the group to which one belongs (Johnson et al. 1999).

Ethnic group: Group based on its members' ancestors' national origin (that is, a specific country or area of the world), a shared culture, and a sense of common destiny (Johnson et al. 1999).

Individualism: A group orientation in which individuals work hard for personal success and accomplishment. Individualistic cultures place emphasis on individual goals people with a lack of individual success are perceived as having less academic, monetary, or social power. (Hofstede, 1980).

Intercultural Communication: Occurs when a message produced by one culture must be processed by another culture (Samovar & Porter, 1991, p.9).

Intercultural competence: The reinforcement of culturally different identities that are

significant in the particular situation (Samovar & Porter, 1991, p.25).

Post-figurative culture: The historically earlier and preliterate cultures; Members often enter adulthood relatively early. Puberty rites play a particularly significant role. Post-figurative cultures depend on the presence of three generations who live in the same village or abode. Frequently, children follow in the footsteps of the parents, including the trade of the parents (Mead, 1970).

Pre-figurative culture: Mead's pre-figurative society represents the emergence of an unknown future, the development of a world community as communication reaches the furthest villages instantly. The decline of the role of parents, eroding family support and guidance. The future no longer exists as the past; the older generations get isolated from the younger, thereby offering less in terms of guidance, advice and values (Mead, 1970).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parent involvement in early childhood programs was launched into the spotlight with the initiation of Project Head Start in 1965. Head Start's primary goal was to prepare economically disadvantaged children and their families for education. The social, emotional, physical, nutritional and special needs of children were an integral part of this groundwork (Scar & Winberg, 1986). Project Head Start proceeded to gain renown and successfully anchored more Federal funding than any other early childhood program. In part, this was due to the impact the school/parent partnership proved to have in the later education of the children, as well as the familial and environmental gains (Reece, 1985; Weikart, Epstine, Schweinhart, & Bond,1978; Zieglar, 1973).

Seeking or encouraging parent involvement is most often viewed as an attempt on the part of educators to empower the parents and share the responsibility of educating their children (Gestwicki, 1997; Pettygrove & Greenman, 1984; Rockwell, Andre &, Hawley, 1996). Rockwell et al. (1996) define this partnership between the parent and the teacher as a collabo-

ration that grows slowly, building itself upon mutual trust and respect, a bridge that allows a meaningful presence of the family in the program. According to Zieglar (1973), parent involvement is perceived as one of the most valuable factors in effective programming, only made possible through the dedicated perseverance of educators and program administrators.

Children live in the context of their families; therefore, families are the most important influence on children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Sociocultural theorists including Vygotsky (1962, 1978) proposed cognitive development being dependent on the interaction between adults and children within each culture, a progression that took place through the collaboration of members of one generation with another. Today, perhaps more than ever, as the traditional family is replaced with variations and broadened definitions of increasing complexity (Barnett & Hustedt, 2001; Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, and Sekino, 2004; Lynch & Hanson, 1992;), the school exists as one of the few constants in the lives of children. One answer for families could be the involvement in a partnership with teachers. This would apply especially to children and families of culturally, linguistically, and/or socio-economically diverse children who are more at risk for failure or dropping out of school (Stormont, Espinosa, Knipping, & McCathren, 2003; US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999).

Hart and Risley (2003) in their three year study on families and how they talk to young children found that child in a professional family would hear 11 million words while a child in a welfare family would hear just 3 million. Hart and Risley (2003) concluded that the better chances to succeed in school and the workplace were positive early experiences in oral language, emergent literacy and vocabulary possibly received in child care settings.

While positive and negative parental attitudes toward involvement have been examined, there seems to be paucity in research that examines the cultural or gender differences in parental attitudes toward offering support and being involved in the education of their children

(Bauch, 1992; Costas 1991; Espinosa, 1995; Kaste 1999).

Barnlund (1975) considers problems of meaning associated with cultural differences in intercultural interactions. He proposes that the aim of human perception is to make the world intelligible so that it can be managed successfully; each person creates for him/herself a distinctive world. Any communication, interpersonal or intercultural, involves a transaction between these private worlds of individuals.

There is considerable evidence that parent involvement leads to improved student achievement, better school attendance, and reduced dropout rates. Furthermore, these improvements occur regardless of the economic, racial or cultural background of the family (Flaxman & Inger, 1991). As summarized by Epstein (1992, pp.1139-1151), "Students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations and other positive behaviors, if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging and involved."

Embedded among the many definitions of diversity is the difference of cultures. The anthropologist, George Spindler (1963), stated that:

> In an attempt to deal with its daily problems, each society develops certain patterns of behavior and attitudes that are useful in meeting human needs and resolving conflicts between individuals and groups. When these patterns become well defined (and even institutionalized) and accepted by the dominant group within a society, they constitute what are called *core values* of a culture. These core values then become standards by which the major institutions of the dominant society then identify their members. These standards in turn become the criteria for giving people opportunities for advancement and other rewards. (p. 26)

Who defines parent involvement and how? How do culturally diverse parents from collectivist societies perceive these *core values* that define parent involvement?

Historically, the American school system has seen the transmission of society's core values being a primary function of the *Schooling* experience, closely tied to the linguistic codes, behavioral expectations, and value systems of the mainstream middle class and upper classes. Researchers Espinosa, 1995; Hurn, 1993; Knapp, 1995; and Wolverton, 1995 identified this as a reason for children from lower socioeconomic and culturally different backgrounds to be viewed negatively. Are the expectations for parent involvement imposed by the core values of educators a clash of cultural values of societies that differ from the dominant culture? Perhaps some of the difficulties that are experienced in involving parents in the education of their children stem from the make up of the "fabric of our society" (Espinosa, 1995; Kaste, 1999; Randall-Davis, 1989).

Culture and Communication

Intercultural communication theory is grounded in the concept that participants in any interaction bring with them "a system of symbols and meanings" (Schneider, 1976, p. 297) that shapes their perceptions of a shared experience. Whether the intercultural interactions are in the classroom or in a business or social environment, differences in cognitive processing and problem solving are inherent within the interaction (Liberman, 1996). Hofstede (1980) claims that in the multicultural classroom:

> the focus of the teacher's training should be on learning about his or her own culture: getting intellectually and emotionally accustomed to the fact that in other societies people learn and problem solve in other ways (p. 301-320).

While there are many dimensions in which cultures differ (Cole & Rodman, 1987; and Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 1997), one that has received consistent attention from both cross-cultural researchers and psychologists around the world is individualism and collectivism. Countless cross-cultural studies (Cole & Rodman, 1987; Hall, 1978; Hofstede, 1980; Hui & Triandis, 1986) have provided theoretical and empirical evidence that the orientations of individualism and collectivism are omnipresent in a wide range of cultures.

Hofstede (1991) rated the United States as high in individualistic values and Guatemala and Mexico as high in collectivistic values. Gudy-Kunst & Ting-Toomy (1988) identified the United States as one of the cultures consistently high in individualistic values while Mexico was identified as a culture clearly collectivistic. Triandis (1994) asserts that "the contrast between collectivism and individualism is one of the most important differences in social behavior" (p. 169). The standards and structure within the culture of education in the United States founded by the dominant culture serves a diverse population from both individualistic and collectivistic societies. Cultural similarity in perception makes the sharing of meaning possible. This information was identified as imperative to our study.

Culture and Classroom Communication

As noted by Samovar and Porter (1991), many of the problems confronting both students and teachers in culturally diverse classrooms are traceable to culture. Stefani (1996) notes that culture teaches the students to rely on consistent patterns of cognition, behavior and learning styles. He concludes that when students and teachers adapt to one another's cultural values and preferred interaction patterns, then shared understanding and learning will be promoted.

Culture and Problem Solving, Cognition, and Pedagogy

Klinefeld (1975, 1994) reminds us that after more than twenty-five years of research on cultural differences in learning, educators have been unable to conclude that one method of teaching works better than another for children in a different cultural group. Mestenhauser (1981) explains that learning as well as problem-solving involves "the way a person abstracts information from the environment, remembers it, and classifies it into concepts and categories".

Kaplan (1988) examined problem-solving approaches in the more mainstream cultures. He concluded that different languages have different rhetorical norms representing different ways of organizing. For example, while English-speaking people from the United States tend to be more linear and direct, Asians and Native Americans employ a circular approach. Intercultural communication research that addresses cultural patterns of thought and problem-solving approaches has only scratched the surface of cognitive functioning and differences among cultures (Springer & Deutsch, 1985). It is important for teachers and parents to understand that they each know the child in different contexts and that each may be unaware of what the child is like in the other context. As children manipulate the home and school cultures, it is essential for both parties to keep in mind that the same issue could often be seen in distinct and disparate perspectives by the two parties involved.

Through this study, the researchers attempt to help parents of diversity as well as educators of children of diversity to revisit parent involvement, in hopes of eventually bridging the gap in communication that seems to exist between the cultures of the parent and the educator, overshadowing the important part played by parents which is the involvement in the education of their children.

Identified Barriers to Parent Involvement

Swick (1992) provided some insight on parental attributes that support meaningful partnership between the home and school; these included "warmth, sensitivity, nurturance, the ability to listen, consistency, a positive self image, a sense of efficacy, personal competence, and effective interpersonal skills" (p. 1). Prior research on successful partnerships between schools and parents indicated marital happiness, family harmony, and high esteem among parents (Schaefer, 1991; Swick, 1991). These studies disclosed teacher characteristics such as trusting, warm, close, positive, child-centered, and nurturing having a positive impact on effective classroom management skills. However, the sample of parents and the education and culture of teachers studied remained unspecified.

The Hispanic and other culturally diverse parents attending Head Start programs often occupy the other end of the spectrum. They are poor, may not speak English, may not have high self-esteem, and may not be motivated to be in-

volved in the education of their children due to their perceptions of their own education as deficient. The teachers of the children of these families are often of similar ethnicity, though culturally separated by profession.

Does this difference of the level of education enhance or hinder a partnership between parents and the school personnel among the culturally diverse parents? Could this difference pose a barrier to parental involvement among these culturally diverse parents and their involvement in the education of their children?

RESEARCH DESIGN

Case studies have become one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry (Stake, 2000). An advantage of the case study method is that it allows and encourages the researchers to engage collaboratively with the participating parents and teachers to address solutions to problems made salient by the study data. The current study used a qualitative case study approach using ethnographic techniques for data collection and analysis.

The process of data collection was "recursive and dynamic," the design emerging throughout the study (Merriam, 1988, p. 123). Analysis of the study began at the onset of the study. Analysis of data was not delayed until the completion of the study, but sustained throughout the study.

For this research, parent interviews, teacher interviews, observations of formal and informal interactions between parent and child and parent and teacher were kept in the form of field notes. Parent interviews provided the bulk of the data and were coded qualitatively. The results of the core category, parent perceptions, were broken down to four main themes. These included (a) cultural beliefs regarding education, (b) personal educational experiences, (c) perceived teacher features, and (d) perceived administrative features.

FINDINGS FROM COLLECTED DATA

The three participating parents were clear that they were involved in the education of their

children. The parents identified this involvement as teaching their children to be good, well mannered, to be obedient to the teachers and to learn well "to do a good job."

While the Navajo and Mayan parents remained emotionally involved in the education of their children, the younger and English speaking Hispanic parents were physically and emotionally involved. The Navajo and Mayan parents felt their physical presence was not needed in the school as teaching reading and writing was work done by the teachers.

Four additional themes emerged as interviews progressed. These were (a) personal beliefs in education; (b) educational experiences as a parent; (c) beliefs in socialization and play; and (d) desired teacher features. while the teachers were kind and courteous to the parents, it was indicated by the parents that they, the parents were not invited by the teachers to stay in the classroom. The teachers on the other hand associated parent involvement with the physical presence of the parents in the school.

Parents' Responses to questions

What role do parents see as theirs in the education of their children? All three parents, Navajo, Mayan and Hispanic, saw their role as transmitters of culture and providers of emotional support, teaching their children right from wrong, and the language, music, dance, clothes, food and ways of their ancestors. Parents from post-figurative cultures saw their children as the future of the past. Parents from configurative cultures saw their children as the present that is making changes for the future.

Do cultural difference and attitudes affect parental involvement? Yes, parents from diverse cultures, who did not read or write, or parents who were from other professions different from the culture of educators, defined "parental involvement" as teaching manners, right from wrong, and leading their children to be responsible and good citizens. On the other hand, the parent who was in school, learning to be a teacher, defined "parental involvement" as physically being involved in the daily lives of the children, including playing with them.

Do teachers unintentionally create barriers

to parent involvement? As qualified and experienced Early Childhood Educators, the researchers would rate this particular Head Start program where the research was carried out as developmentally appropriate and offering quality services. The teachers were kind and dedicated to the profession. Yet, the teachers unintentionally created barriers to parent involvement. The two of the three cases in this study, noted that they were not invited to participate and that they were given literature that they could not read. The literature was hand outs and letters in the English language. One of the parents being Mayan did not read, write or speak English. The Navajo parent spoke some English, but, she could not read or write English or a Native language.

Do cultural differences in childrearing impinge on this interaction? Variations in child rearing were indicated during observations and interviews. While teacher expectations of involvement required taking children for walks, to the park, the zoo and reading to them, the parents were very comfortable with what they thought they were providing for their children. The "cultures" of the parents, in this cases the Mayan and the Navajo parents, were non-readers and their socioeconomic status would not allow them to meet the standards set by the teachers.

Two of the families, the Mayan and the Navajo, did not agree with play; they would rather have their preschoolers spend that time learning. Developmentally appropriate practices encourage play as a learning tool (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997), but these parents did not understand this concept or were not aware of the dual benefits.

Culture and Communication

Disparity between the culture of the teacher and the culture of the parent understanding of what and how parents should be involved indicated clearly that there were problems in intercultural communication. The parents were proud of themselves as transmitters of culture. They were passionate about the importance of their children learning the values, the stories, the preparation of food and perhaps returning to visit the place of origin. The parents were humble in their requests to their children for submission to authority, to be good, to be honest, and to learn well. These parents worked hard to instill character and morals in their children. They saw no reason for their presence in the classroom. Culturally generated respect for education and authority kept them away from the institution offering the teacher the role as the provider of academics.

The teachers were unaware of this significant role played by the parents or the deep respect the parents had for them. The teachers who made two home visits a year and had parent–teacher conferences, told the parents what their children did in school, and how the children were faring. A visit was usually a one way transaction.

Cultural Configuration and its Impact on Parental Involvement

The three families fall into the three cultural configurations as defined by Mead (1968). The Mayan family is still living by the standards of their country of origin, (speaking the same language, wearing the same clothes, and believing that their children will follow in the footsteps of their parents and ancestors.) According to Mead's cultural configurations, this family could be categorized as post figurative.

The Navajo family would be configurative; while these parents cling to the ways of their ancestors; their children are making the changes to move towards acculturation with the dominant culture.

The Hispanic family, on the other hand, has made the necessary changes from the way their parents lived. These young parents were the first in their families to be high school graduates. In addition, the mother was the only parent acculturated to the "educators" culture; she is aware of school expectations and complies with them. She urged her children to play, socialize and appreciate the other cultures with which they would be socializing later in life. Unlike the other two sets of parents who remain detached toward global communication, the Hispanic parents have proceeded to move along with the trends towards a global community. They also identify that their parents did not have the opportu-

nity to do so. According to Mead's cultural configurations, this family could be categorized as pre-figurative.

Cultural Configuration and its Implications for Teachers

What implications does the cultural configuration have for teachers? There is great disparity between the cultures of home and school. Each day children such as the Mayan and the Navajo children in this study, who are living with parents embedded in a different culture and who still live a lifestyle from another era, leave an existence from a different period in time, with different expectations to come to an institution with new and different beliefs and functions. An understanding of the cultural configurations would help teachers further understand the behaviors of the parents, an understanding that could lead to better service to the children and families. Instead of creating cultural gaps between the parent and child, understanding and trained teachers could be mediators of acculturation for the children.

Culture and Classroom Communication

As the American school room changes, knowledge and an understanding of the various cultural backgrounds of the children and families is imperative for service offered by the teachers. An understanding of the Native American or Mayan reluctance to entertain others in their homes would explain the inability to receive home visits. Teachers lacking knowledge of the parents work hours or the parents' inability to read or write and the reasons for this inability if empathically translated, the services provided to both the child and the family could be positive and beneficial to both parties.

Culture, Gender, and Preschool Programming

In spite of the mainstream culture's attempts to alleviate gender biases, such a bias seemed to exist among parents of diverse cultures and collectivist societies. When children enter preschool, the creation of an anti bias classroom or gender sensitive classroom should perhaps be discussed with parents of diversity. Perhaps the

goals of equity should be explained more clearly to cultures that display definite gender differences within the child's immediate family group. How do we do this? Where do we start?

Research does provide some answers. Rockwell et al. (1996) defined the partnership between parents and the teachers as a collaboration that grows slowly, building itself upon mutual trust and respect, a bridge that allows the meaningful presence of the family in the program. Yang & McMullen (2003) studying the nature of the relationship between American teachers and Korean parents, particularly in terms of effectiveness of communication and cultural sensitivity in exchanging information state,

> To most effectively meet the needs of young primary-grade children for who English is not the home language, teachers must come to understand each child's family culture, how the family transmits that culture to the child, and cultural and familial expectations for the child behaviorally and academically. The best source for this information is the parents themselves (¶ 37).

The study concludes that parent involvement in this particular preschool program reflects the analogy of two ships passing in the night. While the parents drew comfort from the fact that they are teaching their children to be good, moral citizens learning the culture of their ancestors, the teachers' expectations from the parents were for a more physical presence in the classroom that displayed investment and involvement. The teachers were as unaware of parent understanding as parents were of the teachers' expectations. In addition, the administrative staff was naive of both teacher and parent confusion of the definition of parent involvement and proceeded with a set of standards which reflected Eurocentric expectations. While this particular program was observed as well run and making attempts to involve parents, communications between the parties were identified as absent. The administration drew comfort in the fact that parents were well served and that all their needs were being met through comprehensive services. Yet, the non-English-speaking parents felt that they were

not being served and identified gaps in communication which were leaving them helpless.

How then can such miscommunication occur? Communication is taking place within the dominant culture. Yet, even in this efficiently run program it was those parents of diversity that felt left out. The parents that "march to a different beat" were perceived as "not involved."

The current study contributes to the understanding of the various factors that contribute to positive and negative attitudes towards parent involvement by culturally diverse parents. Future research needs to determine the extent to which the identified practices are currently being used in preschool programs. It is important to know if these practices are being addressed in teacher education programs.

CONCLUSION

This study illuminated the fact that culturally diverse parents of preschool children believed in teaching their children manners and morals, to be good and to listen to their teachers. In *Laws,* Plato articulated education as "that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children; when pleasure, and friendship, and pain, and hatred are rigidly planted in souls not yet capable of understanding the nature of them and who find them, after they have attained reason, to be in harmony with her" (Plato, 1953, p. 218). Much credit should be given to these parents who were educating their children as suggested by Plato

Piaget (1971) and Vygotsky (1986) shared the belief that children arrive at knowledge through actively participating in the world around them. Erikson (1963) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978) pointed out that normal development must be understood in relation to each culture's unique features and life situations. Bronfenbrenner (1976, 1986) expanded the view by envisioning the environment as a series of nested structures that includes but extends beyond the home, school, and neighborhood settings in which children spend their everyday lives. Each layer of the environment is viewed as having a powerful impact on children's development.

This study has indicated the importance of providing the child with a cognitively, socially, and culturally supportive environment for optimum growth. In addition to a rich environment, these early childhood years provided with "suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children," as suggested by Plato (1953) and by the parents who participated in this study, made provisions of ideal conditions for a healthy growth possible.

Prescription for Early Childhood Professionals

Embracing the knowledge that parents do want to educate their children and that parents are involved in this education independent of institutions, to continue a harmonious partnership, the following suggestions are offered to care providers.

- Bridging the difference would mean to be ultra sensitive to the needs of culturally different parents.
- Study the culture of the incoming students and develop a trusting relationship with the parents and the child.
- Ask the parents what they think their role is in the education of their children.
- Share the expectations of the institution with the parents and the expectations of the parents with the institution.
- Compromise and work with the parent on how teachers could best serve the family and what practices in the classroom would promote cultural appreciation.
- Read, understand, and live by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct: for Teacher Educators

Is it possible to implement and appreciate ten cultures in the classroom? Preschool children learn best by doing. Here is an opportunity to acculturate the future of America to appreciate all the nationalities that make up the people of "this paradise" (voice of a parent).

The current study contributed to the understanding of the various factors that contribute to positive and negative attitudes towards parent

involvement by culturally diverse parents. The study provided a multifaceted view of the participants, the children and their families in a Southwestern Colorado preschool program. The study also provided a stance taken by the administration and staff of the preschool program that serve with best intentions to provide comprehensive services for children and their families.

What emerged was the need for a transformation of academia commencing at the preschool level into a more humanized and responsive climate that encourages collaborative interaction between education and social service agencies and culturally diverse families to be involved in the education of their children in order to create educationally democratic academic communities in the future.

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