

THESIS

CROSSING THE HOME-SCHOOL BOUNDARY: BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN A COLORADO
KINDERGARTEN

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ABSTRACT

CROSSING THE HOME-SCHOOL BOUNDARY: BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN A COLORADO KINDERGARTEN

Within the United States school systems, there are many children who are considered “at-risk,” “deficient,” and “unlikely to succeed.” Numerous of them are minority and poor children who come from cultural backgrounds unlike those of the middle and upper class. For many Hispanic students, school embodies a foreign culture with which they are unfamiliar. This can cause serious incongruities for the Hispanic students between their home and school boundaries which hinders their ability to transition into the boundaries of school and experience success. The present research examines the Mezcla Elementary Kindergarten in Colorado to evaluate its bilingual program. The school provides support for the Hispanic students who are new to the norms and expectations of school. The three main supports discussed are “Slow to go Fast,” Language, and Home Visits. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, I suggest that Mezcla Elementary is successful in reducing some barriers to entering school for poor Hispanic kindergarteners.

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DEDICATION

To my Parents Ulrich and Sabine:

Who never faltered to believe in my abilities and to support my endeavors. For believing that any field of research is valuable and teaching me that every person is worthy.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Within U.S. school systems, there are many children who are considered “at-risk,” “deficient,” and “unlikely to succeed.” Many of them are minority and poor children who come from cultural backgrounds unlike those of the middle and upper class. There are areas in the United States Hispanic or Latino populations are extremely large, and many of the children struggle in school, resulting in low grades, poor attendance and/or failure to graduate high school. I argue that school is a cultural field that Hispanic students may be unfamiliar with. A field is described as a social sphere in which certain norms and behaviors are accepted. Mezcla Elementary provides a program that aids the Hispanic students enter the field of school.

Based on the western view, the students themselves are often blamed for their shortcomings and it is up to them, and their families, to make changes to adapt to the norms and expectations of school. This can be very difficult to do if there is little or no support for the student. I view school as a cultural entity, with its own norms and rules. For those who do not have prior experience with similar cultural expectations, school can be foreign and difficult to understand. If the student is then blamed and punished for shortcomings, because of a “cultural deficiency,” they become segregated from the school’s culture.

Boundary crossing, as presented by Phelan et. Al (1991), occurs when students function in and navigate between different social settings: school, home and peer groups. For the students whose home life is significantly different than the school’s culture, boundary crossing becomes very difficult to do. When there are barriers between the different social settings, because of norms, behavioral tendencies and expectations, it is very hard to function successfully within all of them. The struggle can range from having to learn a few new rules all the way to having serious cultural conflicts between sets of expectations. For poor Hispanic students, the

difference between home and school can be very profound. Because the school's standards are put into effect from the very beginning in kindergarten, children have little or no time to make that transition.

The problem may not be that an individual student is deficient or is "simply bad behaved," but rather that they are facing a cultural transition and may be extremely uncomfortable within, and unknowledgeable about, the new cultural boundary. Some of the barriers they may be facing are low cultural knowledge of the school setting, lack of English understanding, parents who are unfamiliar with U.S. schools or even being illiterate themselves, and lack of understanding from the teachers. U.S. schools, for the most part, are currently very routinized and focused on academic testing. Many are poorly equipped to deal with social and cultural conflicts.

Further, in many cases schools are based on expectations based on the dominant U.S. culture in which certain people enter the setting at a disadvantage. Schools often reflect the broader systems of discrimination (Ferguson, 2001). Therefore students in school, who are considered to be in a safe learning environment, are experiencing many kinds of cultural conflicts and other forms of power hierarchies.

Young students enter kindergarten with a cultural tool kit (Swidler, 1996) and cultural models (D'Andrade, 1995) based on their experiences at home and with their family. As they grow, they also become more influenced by the greater community, media and the wider social environment. These shape how the students think about the world and how they react to stimuli. They may find themselves unprepared to deal with the school culture depending on their position in and knowledge of the dominant culture. A student, who does not fit the cultural environment of school is said to have low consonance in that culture (Dressler, 2005). That is, they are

marginalized, because they do not conform to the cultural norms. Low levels of consonance can cause significant stress for the student. In schools, marginalization can take the form of warnings, persistent punishments and academic shortcomings. If a student is constantly facing negative interactions with their teachers, it will be hard for them to learn and actively engage with the school culture. I argue that students who face many barriers when crossing the boundary into school will have more trouble adjusting to school rules, norms and behaviors. It is therefore important to analyze programs aimed at mitigating some of these barriers.

The current research is a case study of Mezcla elementary school which is attempting to mediate some of the troubles poor Hispanic students face in the school boundary. The research aims to assess what can be done to alleviate at least some of the barriers. Although not perfect, Mezcla's kindergarten teachers are developing a bilingual program where all students learn Spanish and English. Especially in kindergarten, the curriculum places emphasis on explicitly teaching the expectations placed on students. That is they are teaching cultural norms implicit to school. I will make the argument that what Mezcla Elementary is doing helps ease the transition between home and school for the attending Hispanic families, making the boundaries between the two less pronounced. At Mezcla Elementary students are immersed in a bilingual Spanish-English program. By reducing the strain of transitioning between boundaries, Mezcla helps reduce stress for children and parents by making them feel more consonant with the school culture. This gives students from a Hispanic cultural background a greater chance of success at Mezcla, even at the young stage of kindergarten.

The effort of Mezcla is important to recognize and analyze. Schooling is an important part of the U.S. culture and it is failing so many of its students. Those schools that attempt to adapt education to support the student who are often left behind in the system, must be evaluated

and understood. Sharing these findings is one way for new ideas about education to be generated and shared with other educators. Although not all of Mezcla's program will be applicable to other schools, it provides us with counter examples to standard U.S. school practices. The present research provides an Anthropological approach which brings to life the voices of effected parties and hopes to understand the issue with a culturally sensitive lens. In that way, it provides a look at the program that is different from a quantitative based methodology.

Chapter 2, entitled Background on U.S. School/ Literature, will give further insight into the generalized public school structure in the U.S., including some information on multicultural and bilingual education. I will also discuss how the Hispanic population fits into the educational system from a more holistic and general approach. The purpose is for the reader to understand the greater setting of the research. In this way, a deeper understanding of where Mezcla Elementary fits in can be gleaned. Within this chapter I make clear some of the critiques I have of the U.S. school system, but also some alternatives that have already been developed.

To understand where this project stems from, chapter 2 will also introduce the literature I draw on. This will give the reader the chance to understand my perspectives and where my research orientation and methodology stems from. As a cross-disciplinary researcher I draw on many different theories that I see as interrelated. I hope to show theses connections through the literature presented.

Chapter 3 will introduce Mezcla Elementary in greater detail. Here I will describe my methodology used to interact with the school and its actors. I will also explain my measures and techniques for gathering data. In addition information about Mezcla's core program in the kindergarten will be presented to give an idea of how the school functions as an institution. This includes information about their kindergarten curriculum titled "Tools of the Mind," and the

bilingual program. The actors will also be introduced as groups: Students, Teachers and Parents. These are the main groups of people that were part of my research and served as informants. This will serve to give the reader a base understanding of the social setting and the actors that are functioning within it. Although I was able to observe both English and Spanish speaking students in the classrooms, my project focuses on the Spanish-speaking students and their families in particular.

Chapter 4 presents the heart of my analysis. Here I will present the parts of Mezcla's program that are actively aiding in boundary crossing and mediating the barriers the students face when entering the school setting. It is set up in two parts that are meant to mirror each other. The first will be a description of the infrastructure and program that includes the viewpoints of the kindergarten teachers. The second part will re-explore the same topics but from the students' and parents' perspectives to analyze whether it seems to be working or not. It will also allow me to explore how the targeted population feels about the program.

Chapter 5 presents outcomes of the program that, too me, show that the program is working. Here I will present both quantitative and qualitative findings that embody all the parts of the program. In this way I see that Mezcla has developed a program that helps the boundary crossing of the students between home and school.

Lastly, chapter 6 will present the researches limitations and the conclusions I draw. Here I will tie together what I have learned to make the argument, that although Mezcla's program is still being perfected, it is helping to ease tensions in boundary crossing for its kindergarten Hispanic population by providing language congruency and cultural training for the students and parents.

Chapter 2: Background on U.S. Schools and Literature

In order to properly locate my current research, it is important to acknowledge the U.S. school trends as well as where multicultural and bilingual education fit in. I will begin with a discussion on the general trends and cultural norms of U.S. schools followed by a brief explanation of multicultural education and bilingual schools. Education is typically seen as State issue. However, certain initiatives are federally implemented “when critical national needs arise,” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). This, as will be described below, can affect the culture and development of the school programs nationally. I will also present some information about Multicultural Education. I will conclude the discussion with a look at Hispanics within the community and schools as a whole to give a more general understanding of the situation. I want to make clear that these are trends and generalizations and should by no means be treated as absolutes. These trends are meant to show what situations are present and what may be affecting schools and the Hispanic populations in the U.S.

U.S. School Background

U.S. public schools have become extremely standardized. Clark (2002) uses the term “one-size-fits-all” to describe the system that has narrowed its focus solely on the academics of education. This term encapsulates the routinized systems that are often present in the United States. From my own work, a teacher explained to me that all kindergarten classrooms in that district were expected to be on the same page in the same book on the same day. She seemed frustrated with this, lacking the time to spend more time teaching concepts that her classroom was struggling with. U.S. public schools are standardized to make sure everyone is learning the same things. This is both at the national level through tests and also locally by districts and school’s policies. Each individual the United States has the inherent right to this education

(Naylor, 1998). However, this concept is based on the term equality, where every person is given the same resources (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Equality does not necessarily mean that every child is getting what they *need* to succeed.

Standardization of school is summed up by the high focus on tests that are meant to assess basic knowledge. These tests begin in elementary school and stick with students into higher education. Although my project is focused on kindergarten, even these children are tested and placed at below, at, or above grade level. Schools are rated based on the raw score children get, not on how much improvement there has been. Children are essentially labeled as lacking, sufficient or excelling, and I believe that these labels tend to stick with the child. During my fieldwork, children were often pulled out of the classroom for short testing periods with the teacher. Ally (my informant) explained how, unfortunately, the tests were abstract and disconnected from how the children learn in the classroom.

At the epicenter of the standardization trend is the policy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a highly debated and questioned piece of legislation. On the surface it sounds ideal: we will not let any child fall behind or, essentially, fail. Each child *will* meet rigorous academic standards (Banks & Banks, 2004). What I have noticed is that this is implemented through very strict curriculums in which every class is on the same page of the same book each day. One manifestation of this is “boxed curriculums,” where exact instructions for each lesson are given to the teachers (Rose). In addition to this, NCLB has pushed teachers into the margins, making them personally accountable for their students’ performance. Performance, under NCLB, is to be measured by annual testing programs with emphasis on reading and math (Nieto and Bode, 2008). As a result, many teachers feel like everything is test driven (Banks & Banks, 2004),

often resulting in no time to catch children up or provide the type of instruction they need in order to learn effectively.

Under the Obama Administration there has been a push for change with a new plan that places the emphasis on student progress instead of pass/fail policies promoted by the tests under NCLB (Anderson, 2010). One of my informants told me that Colorado was one of the states selected to receive a waiver for NCLB and can implement new forms of testing and achievement measures. During my fieldwork, Mezcla had not yet made these changes, but it would merit tracking what they come up with and whether it shows cultural sensitivity to their student population. Obama's new plan does not remove teacher accountability and still maintains testing standards, effectively only slightly shifting the standard focused NCLB policy (Anderson, 2010). Along with Colorado, nine other states have received waivers because they "have embraced his [Obama's] educational agenda and promised to raise standards, and improve accountability and teacher effectiveness," (The New York Times, 2012). There is still a high focus on progression toward standards. Even if change takes place, NCLB mentalities that have been adopted by staff, faculty and the public will take time to change and will linger in schools even after the policy is changed.

Nieto and Bode (2008) state that equal does not mean equitable, and not all students require the same resources to get to the same end point. Sadly, the children the law was meant to help, namely minorities and poor, are often the children that are marginalized further by the law:

"Now several years into *No Child Left Behind's* implementation, it is becoming clear that the law is leaving behind more children than it is saving. The children being abandoned are our nation's most vulnerable children – children of color and poor children in America's big cities and remote rural areas – the very children the law claims to rescue," (National Council of Churches Committee on Public Education and Literacy in Nieto and Bode, 2008).

Although the aim is to close the achievement gap, NCLB and the heavy testing policy has resulted in a further constriction of access for minority children (Fine, Jaffe-Walter, Pedraza, Futch and Stoudt, 2007). *Access* being the ability to succeed in education which affects a person's options within North American society. The ideal of democracy meant to be upheld by NCLB, sadly often replicates social inequalities.

Testing can have very negative effects for students who speak other languages at home. As Fine et al. (2007) state, "policies of NCLB have actually imposed an inequitable accountability system exclusively based on tests, delimiting possibilities for ELLs (English Language Learners) and minority student achievement," (77). The achievement gap is used to describe the phenomena of marginalized students receiving and achieving less than other students (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

A further issue with the achievement gap is the tendency to place blame on the student. As pointed out by Mariana Pacheco (2010) in her fieldwork at a bilingual school, there is frequently a discourse of deficiency. She found that even though the school had a bilingual program, there was still an attitude of 'deficiency' toward the students. Pacheco states that this is because of institutionalized practices and discourses. If students are seen as deficient, their shortcomings are blamed on their disadvantaged status or their mothers (Ferguson, 2010). They are never seen as equal in the school setting, placing them behind their counterparts from a very young age. The framework of deficiency creates a moral high ground for the school and its authorities (teachers, principle, staff) while children are seen as "lacking essential values, social skills, and the morality required of citizens," (Ferguson, 2010; 41).

This is part of what Nieto and Bode (2008) call Deficit Theories, where "responsibility for children's failure [is placed] on their homes and families, effectively absolving schools and

society from responsibility,” (pg. 15). Ferguson (2010), states that since deficiency and non-conformity to school culture are framed as pathological, the problem is “an individual disorder rather than one that is social and systemic,” (pg. 43). This mindset means that more expectations for improvement are placed on the home, away from school. Children whose parents can effectively provide the type of support required for school success can grant their child access to the resources school provides. For those parents that may lack proficiency in English, have to work long hours and/or have little knowledge of the schools culture or other circumstances, are seen as bad, incompetent or lazy. Too often, what students have learned and come to accept from home is ignored, or worse, invalidated at school. Mary Ginley, a teacher in a Puerto Rican dense area, stated:

“School is a foreign land to most kids, but the more distant a child’s culture and language are from the culture and language of school, the more at risk that child is. A warm, friendly helpful teacher is nice but it isn’t enough. We have plenty of warm friendly teachers who tell the kids nicely to forget their Spanish and ask mommy and daddy to speak to them in English at home... We smile and give them a hug and tell them to eat our food and listen to our stories and dance to our music. We teach them to read with our words and wonder why it’s so hard for them. We ask them to sit quietly and we’ll tell them what’s important and what they must know to “get ready for the next grade,” (quoted in Nieto, 2002, pg. 9).

Ginley has come to recognize the cultural differences that students have coming into school, but also the uni-cultural expectations school has. The school as a “foreign land,” metaphor shows how culturally bound the school institution is. As in most cultures, the values and expectations are normalized and seen as “good” and “right.” From having worked with students myself, I am positive that they pick up on negative attitudes toward values and concepts they have learned from home (this can include close family, extended family, as well as a different countries). In order to teach to the test, little time is spent on “affirming diversity” (Nieto & Bode, 2008) or on teaching the cultural expectations of the school.

Ferguson (2010) describes how “acting white,” defined as conforming to the dominate norms and expectations based on white middle class America, is a requirement for success in schools. I will not argue that teachers generally aim to marginalize their students, nor do I believe they think they are doing so, but because of the push for testing standardization and the strict local curriculum, teachers may be normalizing certain behaviors (Ferguson, 2010) that inevitably ostracize certain students. The teachers may actually feel a sense of helplessness when confronted with students who do not come from the “normalized” backgrounds. However, asking students to conform also results in a loss of identity for them (Ferguson, 2010).

The most troubling part about the standardized mainstream school culture is that there is an ever increasing racial, language and cultural diversity among students that are being asked to conform to a very strict set of rules. Because these standards are put into effect from the very beginning, children have little or no time to successfully transition into what may be a very different culture from what they are used to.

Multicultural Education

Despite the overarching push for standardization, there is a strong push back from those who support a multicultural education approach. Multicultural education is a reform movement which believes that cultural diversity is a part of U.S. culture, enriching society rather than being bad or harmful (Banks, 2002). In addition, multicultural education promotes access to equal *and* equitable schooling in order to raise every student’s achievement and providing the ability to be a reflective and successful part of a democratic society (Banks, 2002; Nieto and Bode, 2008). Equal refers to the same resources existing for everyone, while equity refers to adjustments made to accommodate diverse student populations (Banks and Banks, 2004). Nieto and Bode (2008)

put it as such, “*Equity* goes beyond equality: It means that all students must be given the *real possibility of an equality of outcomes*,” (11). This statement means that equality at the onset of education does not mean that every child actually has the possibility to attain the same level of achievement.

Multicultural education inherently accepts the many differences students have, and how these are embedded in social inequalities. Variables that constitute a student, such as native language, culture, race, gender, religion affect them personally (Banks and Banks, 2004), but also affect how others treat that person. Nieto and Bode (2008) necessitate the need for all inclusive education that is inherently antidiscrimination in general. Each student should feel validated in their own right, not only for achieving schools’ culturally accepted benchmarks, namely those defined through testing environments. Nieto and Bode explain that this requires open discussion about often closed off topics such as racism.

Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis suggests that when people from two different racial groups interact, it will improve interracial attitudes. In order for improved attitudes to happen, the hypothesis states that contact must occur when there is equal status, cooperation, authorities to mediate (such as teachers), and there must be individual levels of acquaintances (Banks & Banks, 2004). Ellison, Shin and Leal (2011) believe that conditions under which contact occurs in the real world rarely reflect these requirements, and that sustained contact can lead to various outcomes. They find that consistent friendship is an important factor to having favorable outcomes from contact. Tajfel and Turner (1979) suggest there is a difference between interpersonal (one on one) and intergroup (socially acknowledged groups) processes when contact occurs. Tajfel and Turner argue that “in relevant intergroup situations, individuals will not interact as individuals, on the basis of their individual characteristics or interpersonal

relationships, but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to members of other groups,” (pg.35). This means that already existing defined groups have to be broken down in order to facilitate the interpersonal friendships that Ellison, Shine and Leal suggest as crucial to successfully reducing negative attitudes during contact.

However, Ellison, Shin and Leal (2011) also found that attending an ethnically diverse high school lead to higher levels of respect and understanding about other ethnicities and cultures. It shows that schools can play a critical role in facilitating contact that is true to Allports hypothesis. However it is not a result based just on group proximity. In order to create equal status, the schools must unpack the systems of discrimination and power hierarchies in place. However, as I would argue that if it is true for racial groups, then it can help with other social boundaries as well, such as language, ethnicity and income level.

School can provide a climate that lends itself to Allport’s contact hypothesis. If it is successful, multicultural education can reduce negative consequences of social inequalities among students as well as between school authorities and students. Doing so can aid students’ feeling of belonging in school making the cultural difference less intense.

Hispanic Students and Bilingual Education

Since the legislation that sprung from *Brown versus Education*, in which the courts ruled in favor of integration of schools, more court cases surrounding minorities in schools have appeared. Notable is the court ruling in *Lau v. Nichols*. Although this court case was to defend Chinese students, it resulted in the ruling that "there was no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education," (Brice,

2002: 15). This is inherent to the notion of equity in education as noted above, and effectively rules out English Only policies that have often been encouraged in educational settings (Monzó & Reuda, 2009).

It has also been shown that successful learning means maintaining ones native language. Although English skills are inevitably important for school success, a quick transition will negate the child's knowledge base. Continual use of native language can also help increase communication with parents, broadening the student's academic support (Brice, 2002).

Of the minorities present in schools, Hispanics are the fastest growing group (Oades-Sese et al., 2011; Brice, 2002). However, there is still much debate on what to do about the increasing Hispanic student population. In many cases, English is the dominant language, and students who are "behind" in their English language skills are often marginalized for it (Monzó & Reuda, 2009). In extreme cases, language can be seen as a deficit and "the school demands the suppression of language brought from home and imposes Received Standard English as the sole legitimate form of expression as well as the sign of culture, intellect, and a commitment to bettering oneself," (Ferguson, 2010:205). Hispanic students may have difficulty communicating because of the language context and other demands placed on them from the academic environment (Brice, 2002). Instead of encouraging the skill to function in two languages, the lack of English skills is seen as a deficiency that has to be corrected before the student can participate in school (Ferguson, 2010). Viewing children under a language deficiency lens effectively marginalizes them from the school culture.

Hispanic students can feel power relations in which they are losing out. Gutiérrez and Jaramillo (2006) find that the "sameness as fairness rule," what Nieto and Bode would call equality but not equity, places the students whose prominent language is not English at a loss,

especially in the heavy testing environment of U.S. schools. Those entering a culture that are unfamiliar with the norms, often experience capital devaluation, “meaning that many aspects of their skills and knowledge are no longer useful in the receiving society (Friedberg, 2000) most importantly, their language,” (Kristen et al., 2011: 130). Monzó & Reuda (2009) argue that language has become a new form of racism, where Hispanic students are very conscious of being different to the “normal students.” Many students find ways to pass as English competent to avoid confrontation based on language. For students speaking only Spanish at home, the devaluation of their language can have negative implications.

Language is a very big part of culture, and therefore part of an individual. It is a way understanding the self (Ferguson, 2010). In general, Brice (2002) states that for the Hispanic population, speaking Spanish is an important unifying factor and associated with family. However, the Hispanic demographic is changing as the second and third generation of Hispanic Americans grow up (Suro & Passel, 2003), the parents in this study mostly spoke Spanish only and placed great importance on it. One of the teachers explained that some Hispanic students at Mezcla were from English only backgrounds, but the parents now want them to learn their language. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) shows how much language differs because of race, geography and income level, and how different ways of talking affect a student’s educational experience. Learning a new language in school for Spanish students is not a simple task. In addition, Hispanic students are often asked to take tests, under NCLB, in English before they have reached full proficiency. Fine et al. state “despite the fact that research indicates that it takes students five to seven years to attain the academic English necessary to perform well on standardized tests (Hakuta et al. 2000), a majority of states lack native-language assessments and require that students pass tests in English after two years (Batt et al. 2005),” (2007, 78). When

testing is the only way to be valued in the academic setting, Hispanic students often face serious devaluation.

Beyond language, there are other cultural differences between the Hispanic students' home and the school that can clash. While many U.S. schools, embedded in U.S. culture may place emphasis on individual achievement (Naylor, 1998), Hispanic students may be more social group oriented (González, Huerta-Macías & Tinajero, 2001). Brice (2002) uses the term *Familism* to describe Hispanic culture. *Familism* means that the needs of the family group come before the needs of the individual. This is a generalization and it is important to remember that students are self thinking and can therefore react and act differently in light of their situation (Monzó & Reuda, 2009).

Brice (2002) also states that Hispanic mothers are less likely to actively teach their children school related materials in the home, believing that to be the teachers' job. Although children can learn these things in school, it is very common in Anglo-American culture to instruct children early on the alphabet, numbers and writing ones name. This means that Hispanic children are less likely to get academic training at home and enter school "behind" their peers. This is linked to the Hispanic based belief that children should be allowed to be children (Brice, 2002). Even these small skills learned at home by the Anglo-American children result in them being better prepared for the school setting.

Vogt, Jordan and Tharp (1987) identified a cause of underachievement in schools for Hispanic students to be the "relatively narrow-range mismatches or incompatibilities between the natal culture of the children and the culture of the school *at points that are critical for school success*," (pg. 276). It means that even small differences can have large impacts on the child's ability to succeed in school. The natal culture, referring to the home, shows how small

differences between home and school create major barriers that hinder the students' success. As a result, Hispanic students may be facing incongruities with their school context that limit their ability to achieve in that setting.

Hispanic students are also subjected to the community's image of them. I use newspaper articles to analyze some of the attitudes toward immigrants. Immigration, especially the issue of illegal immigrants, is of concern to the U.S. in general. Colorado is not different. A certain hatred and patriotism is channeled toward those who are, or may look like, illegal immigrants. They are portrayed as "stealing" the jobs of Americans who need it. It comes from a long history of animosity that is still playing out.

A new development in anti-immigration/foreigners mentality is the "E-Verify" bill that is being pushed for to be "putting Coloradans back to work," (Haines, 2012: 1). The bill is a manifestation of negative attitudes toward immigrants in Colorado. Although it does not implicitly mean Hispanics can't have work, it does however take already existing racial profiling into a political realm creating discomfort and stress for anyone that "looks" illegal. That image is very directed at Hispanics in North America. Haines (2012) quotes that while 150,000 illegal workers have jobs there is a very high unemployment rate for legal citizens. E-Verify is an electronic checking system to confirm a possible employees status. This enhances the already existing dichotomy between two types of people, implying that the illegal ones are in many ways unworthy and "evil."

These issues are also trickling into schools. Lofholm of the Denverpost reports about a potential for schools resource officers in Colorado also doubling as immigration enforcers (2012). This would introduce the debate of illegal versus legal, and good versus bad, into the Hispanic students' daily interactions in schools. School is supposed to be a place of safety and

learning for students. This could break and harm the bond students form with their educators. Students are not immune to this kind of profiling directed towards them. At some schools this has already occurred and one student describes that the school officer “has tried to deport my parents... he does not make me feel safe,” (Huff Post, 2012). If Hispanic students feel uncomfortable in school because they are being faced with legal discrimination it will have serious effects on their well being and ability to function in school. Hispanic students will undoubtedly feel the increase of measures that marginalize and differentiate them even more from their peers.

In response to recent immigration raids, Damaris Cooksey states; “there is a lot of fear in the immigrant community whether people are documented or undocumented,” (Roberts, 2011). The statement shows that the public does not really differentiate between two kinds of immigrants, but lumps them together, as do the sanctions put in place to catch illegal immigrants. Countries of origin and skin color alone make individuals feel affected by the illegal immigrant policies, especially when these types of raids occur. For students, this will increase if raids and immigration officers are introduced into the school environment, especially when it is the resource officers doing the job. Although students may be aware of these attitudes outside of school, it will have profound effects if it becomes part of school. It may also have a direct effect on bilingual education for Hispanic students. If being bilingual is equated with being an immigrant, families and their children may shy away from bilingual opportunities. These circumstances can create English only policies, not through direct policy, but through the fear from and disposition towards Hispanics and the potential of illegal status.

In Colorado, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), Hispanics make up 20.7% of the population. For the town in which Mezcla is located, Hispanics are 11.23% of the

population. Although not the majority, they still make up a sizable proportion of the population. The concentration was confirmed to me, when most of the addresses of my participants led me to the same mobile home park. Most of them are concentrated further up north and are fairly unseen in the main part of town. The Hispanic population is already physically separated within the town. This type of practice should not enter the school, but it is important to understand that the students enter the school field with this type of background.

Mezcla's program is largely possible because of the Hispanic concentration in one area of the town. It means that the school's population is divided by two languages. With only two languages, a bilingual program to help support the Hispanic population is possible. If more languages and cultures were introduced, the situation would be complicated and unable to succeed under Mezcla's model.

Literature and Theories: Bringing in the Anthropological perspective

As stated above, many Hispanic students are facing incongruities between home and school. In this way, school is a social setting which has its own unique culture varying from school to school. In order to understand the phenomenon of children entering the school's cultural setting, it is important to understand where they are coming from and how this affects their ability to enter and function within the cultural boundaries of their school. Since there are many rules, regulations and policies present in schools, as shown above, individuals may or may not fit in depending on their early experiences at home. The heart of my perspective on school comes from a combination of theories and Literature from anthropology, sociology as well as cognitive perspectives that highlight cultural boundaries and individuals' interactions within them.

Individual Students Entering Cultural Contexts

By utilizing the concept of habitus, I approach the children in school as experienced individuals. That is, they have a history of many past experiences that have shaped who they are. *Habitus*, as defined by Bourdieu (1984), is a set of predispositions and preferences that are learned early in life, most likely from one's family. Shaped by historical influences and the context in which it develops, the habitus is malleable as new events and situations unfold. Children are better able to adjust and change to new situations as compared to adults, which is linked to their brain's plasticity (Clark, 2005). Children may be able to adapt better behaviorally to their environment based on their experiences. Bourdieu (1984) further argues that the habitus is “systems of durable, transposable dispositions,” (72). This means the habitus generates actions and directs perspectives, which means that children will not automatically adapt successfully to a new environment. Habitus speaks to the gut instincts a person may have toward right and wrong (Bourdieu, 1984), and a child's Habitus may be counter to what is expected in school. Reay (2004) argues that certain children in school may have “a feel for the game [the norms and expectations of the educational field] generated by middle-class habitus” that they may have developed at home (pg. 79). Children who have “a feel for the game” will be better able to function in the educational field and may feel very little conflict, therefore negating a need for personal adjustments.

I further argue that Habitus is culturally shaped, where individuals from certain cultural groups will embody a similar, though not identical, habitus'. In each cultural setting there is an expected norm of behavior to which a certain type of habitus will be more suited. If a person finds themselves in an unsuitable social cultural context, they will most likely struggle to feel comfortable as well as to live up to the norms.

Bourdieu further introduces the concepts of *fields*. These are social spaces highly structured by power relations in which people interact. Each person is bounded by the rules of the social space and has various strengths resulting in disproportionate chances of success in a particular field (Bourdieu, 1988; 1985). Culture is a significant influence on a field's dynamics. Bourdieu states "those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage," (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 102). School is such a field. A child's ability to succeed in the educational culture or field is linked to their habitus and the tools available to them. Certain students will come with the background that allows them to better take advantage of resources and social situations within the school field.

Anne Swidler (1996) defines the term *cultural tool kit*, which each person possesses and learns from their cultural history. The cultural tool kit is a pool of strategies of dealing with environmental stimuli. The tool kit allows them to navigate their environments, or, in Bourdieu's terms, the fields they are operating in. Cultural tool kits are reflective of Bourdieu's concept of *Cultural Capital* which provides tendencies and resources for interacting in a given field (Reay, 2004). Bourdieu (1991) makes clear that each person operates in different fields and may find themselves in more powerful positions in certain fields. Cultural capital has been used extensively in educational research to understand how or why certain students experience academic success. Notable is Laurau and Horvat's (1999) concept of *moments of inclusion* described "As the coming together of various forces to provide an advantage to the child," (pg. 48). The authors argue that a habitus and cultural capital are not deterministic, but rather there is a "moment to moment development," (pg. 50). This means that the nature of the school field and the interactions that take place between a student, the families and the school faculty have a large impact on the child's development and academic success. In order to have success, the student

needs to feel less social exclusion and alienation due to their habitus and cultural capital. Moments of inclusion are keys to their success. As a result of this assessment, Lareau and Horvat (1999) argue that analysis should look at the strategies and the nature of the field as interacting with habitus and cultural capital. Anthropological methods lend themselves well to the “double vision” approach argued for by Lareau and Weininger (2003). The double vision approach stresses for understanding both the institutional standards of the school as well as reflexive look at how the parents and students perceive the standards (in Reay, 2004). It places importance on how the affected individuals view the institutionalized practices.

Further, it is important to recognize that schooling inequalities, which are both seen and measured through differential achievement and participation (Barone, 2006), are affected by multiple forms of capital and other factors. These include: cultural capital, economic capital as portrayed in Bourdieu’s theory itself (Reay, 2004), occupational ambitions and cognitive resources (Barone, 2006). I see occupational ambitions and cognitive resources as closely tied to one’s cultural background (what is seen as important) as well as one’s economic circumstances. Because the population researched in the present study is both of a cultural minority when compared to the dominant culture present in school and are mostly low-income, I see them as “disadvantaged” under Bourdieu’s concepts in the field of many U.S. schools.

Durability and Change

Children who learn certain tools in their home may find themselves lacking in the educational setting. The power imbalance may cause issues when children begin school, leading to school failure. Swidler states that *retooling*, learning new tools and strategies, is possible, but that it can be difficult and laborious as is also the case with the habitus.

Children, arguably, can be more successful at retooling and adaptation because of their plasticity. However, it is only possible if the proper support and motivation are presented (Swidler, 1996). Morgan (2008) states that in order for a child to understand and successfully navigate a new culture, there must be pervasive support for them to do so (Grusky, 2008). In this way I see the school's culture as accessible only if students are given sufficient aid in understanding it. For Hispanic students, who may not have learned many of the norms present in U.S. schools, retooling is difficult and often there is a lack of support for it.

Retooling has further been supported within the cognitive and neuroscience literature. Transmitters in the brain called neurons function in relation to each other. A common saying "neurons that fire together, wire together" means that if neurons are continually activated together, this will become a more permanent connection (Clark, 2002; Kitayama & Park, 2010; Stiles, 2008). Neurons that are linked form so called neural pathways. Being in a specific cultural setting will expose children to specific cultural tasks that are linked to specific values. Continuous repetition of these tasks will reflect stronger connections of certain neural pathways in the brain (Kitayama & Park, 2010). Each individual will vary based on their individual experiences, but will develop a cognitive "phenotype" that is greatly impacted by cultural contexts (Wilson, 2010). Cognitive phenotype refers to a person's unique way of processing information in the brain and refutes the idea that all human brains function the same. Cognitive neural pathways, or phenotypes, especially in highly plastic children's brains (Clark, 2002), can be altered by engaging in new or different, repeated, cultural tasks shaped by the situational norms and expectations (Kitayama & Park, 2010). Tasks that are required in school must be rehearsed and repeated so students have sufficient time to strengthen the necessary pathways.

Further, displayed behaviors are linked to deep set values and beliefs similar to the core habitus each person has. Children who enter school may not display behaviors that are expected of successful students, because they have not learned them, nor are they valued. This comes from the “Iceberg Analogy of Culture,” (Paige, 1986). It holds that behaviors are visible manifestations of deep, under the surface, values and ideologies. If that is the case, it may be hard for teachers to understand how hard the cultural retooling (Swidler, 1996), can be for children when they enter school. Behavioral change can be in conflict with the student’s deeper values and habitus. It is therefore very likely that even if change does occur, it will take a great deal of time.

In light of habitus, fields and tool kits, I believe that children enter school with a cultural history that may or may not be successful in the educational setting. My work uses this argument to analysis Apen Elementary’s program. If the core values and repetitive cultural tasks from home are unlike those from school, retooling will be very difficult as different cognitive phenotypes are required for the child. The educational setting may be very new and difficult for a student to understand. Students, especially minority, poor and in this research’s case, Hispanic, are asked to cross into the schools culture and may not be getting the help in order to succeed. I further believe that how a student perceives themselves in that setting, as well as how they are treated by their teachers, can have a large effect on their ability to adjust to the new setting.

School is Socially Created: Consensus

The social interactions students experience in school can have a large impact on their retooling or behavioral change, even if the habitus does not. In the extreme form, Emirbayer (1997) sees people as completely dependent on interaction; "previously constituted actors enter [transactions] but have no ability to traverse [them] inviolable. They ford them with difficulty

and in [the interactions] many disappear. What comes out are new actors, new entities, new relations among old parts," (Abbott in Emirbayer, 1997, p. 289). What this brings to light is how the students engage with other people in the school setting and that those interactions can have a profound effect on them. The habitus of the interacting individuals, as well as the field that they are interacting in, have a large affect on their contact. The contact, in turn, changes the actors slightly. Actors include teachers, administrators, parents, peers and an individual child. At times, individuals coming from different backgrounds will not understand the other's cultural behaviors.

Usually, cultural misunderstanding results in a strengthening of stereotypes and negative attributions instead of a mutual comprehension that they are misunderstanding each other (Rawls, 2000). Often, the same stereotypes and power differences are furthered through these misunderstandings. It is counterproductive to Allport's contact hypothesis, as it neglects cooperation and equal status for the children. I assume that teachers who believe in deficit theories of education will interact very differently with students from low-income, minority or non-English backgrounds than teachers who take a multi-cultural approach. As Pianta, Steinberg, and Rollins (1995) point out, a large protective factor (that is something aiding in the success of students as defined by the schools) for at-risk students is good supportive interactions and relations to their teachers (Pianta & Walsh, 1996).

School itself is an institution with its own culture. School culture is described by Hudley and Daoud as an "organized system to meanings that organize a group members' perceptions, behaviors, and interpersonal process... the particular ecocultural niche of school (the cultural and ecological context in which people in the school community live out their daily lives)," (Gottfried, 2008: 188). By this definition, the system of meanings is subjectively created by the

school and influenced by the broader U.S. norms. However, it is very possible that Hispanic students may not have learned what those norms are, or may have learned conflicting norms at home. A student who in any way conflicts with the school culture may experience low cultural consonance, ranging from very little to a lot. “Cultural consonance” is the degree to which an individual exemplifies or is able to achieve the cultural ideal, or in other words, the consensus (Dressler, 2005).

Consensus is linked to issues of models or framing. Roy D’Andrade (1995) states that individuals socially learn ways to think about the world. That is, certain stimuli have been linked through neural pathways so that encountering one thing elicits a set of responses such as emotions, behaviors or thoughts. It is linked to the theory of habitus. Students may very well have a different more specified model from home, friends or personal encounters that is different from the cultural model at school. Models are used to “reason with or to calculate from by mentally manipulating the parts of the model to solve some problem,” (D’Andrade, 1995: 180) which reflects the cultural tool kit. Models allow for individuals to successfully navigate their environment provided that their model is capable of handling the environmental stimuli. If groups of people do not have shared models, or cognitive phenotype, then a consensus cannot exist. As stated above, a consensus exists when individuals of a group or culture agree to a large extent on how to view the world (Dressler, 2005). Unfortunately, students, regardless of their background, are required to function in the school’s model, whether it is similar or different from their own, and regardless of how the school system perceives them, their community and their models.

These models and ways of thinking about the world hearken back to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, where a person does experience and “socially learn” new things, but there is still a

rooted core that reacts to the new. This means that models that are different from the ones learned at home may be difficult to accept and understand, even for highly adaptable children. The institution of school acts as a field in which certain norms or a consensus is already in place. Students, whose early experiences and habitus reflect the dominant school model, will be able to function better in the school field.

It has been shown in several studies that individuals who are not consonant have increased stress responses. Gravlee, Dressler and Bernard (2005) conducted a study in Puerto Rico involving three of the main race categories: Blanco, Trigueno (colored), and Negro (black). What they found suggests that there is a psychological stress for Negro individuals when they enter higher SES social contexts, which affects their health more than do the negative effects of being low SES. This study shows that individuals can experience high levels of stress because of their lack of congruence with the dominant social norms encountered in the environment or field that they are entering. Based on this research, I argue that students may also experience a similar stress response in school if the school's context is different than what they learned from home, friends or their neighborhood. Students who are not consonant will encounter more stressful situations in school because they are an outlier if the school is unable to support the students properly. This can also become a problem for parents if they do not speak English well or do not understand aspects of their child's education. This is especially true if the social interactions lead to negative experiences for the students and their parents.

Stress appears to be a master mechanism that has a strong effect on physical health. When a person perceives or experiences stress, especially over long periods of times, negative health consequences can follow (Sapolsky, 2004). Sapolsky (2004) also presents Jay Weiss' building blocks of psychological stressors. The four blocks that can mediate psychological stress

are: stress outlets, predictability, personal control, one's perception of the conditions and social support. Each of the blocks can aid in stress reduction, but also in stress increases if lacking. These factors also play a role in children's lives when they enter school. Having successful stress outlets, predictable stress, real personal control (not perceived), a perception that things will get better and a strong social network allows an individual to mediate stressful situations with less negative outcomes. A school context, which is also culturally shaped, will have different structural systems that affect these building blocks' availability and use. In this way I see a great potential for schools to reduce the stress many Hispanic students face in the school context.

Stress can have a large impact on students' ability to function in school. Lisonbee et al. (2010) found that activation of stress responses in students was correlated to behavior and regulation abilities. That is to say, as stress went up accepted behavior and personal regulation skills declined. In addition, children who lived in a setting where physical discipline was not frequent, or part of the consensus, had higher levels of behavioral problems when experiencing physical punishment than children who lived in settings where it was normative (Lansford et al., 2005). The study shows that children can perceive what is socially normal and accepted and react in more extreme ways when things are not consonant. Lacking consonance with the school setting can cause stressful situations for students, because they perceive it as un-normal, which can further hinder their ability to perform well, unless they are given appropriate support and time to adjust to the new cultural setting.

Crossing Boundaries: Students Enter the School Field

A study by Patricia Phelan, Ann Locke Davidson and Hanh Thanh Cao (1991), showed how students navigate multiple worlds and social settings. Bourdieu would term these fields. The authors developed the model depicted in figure one:

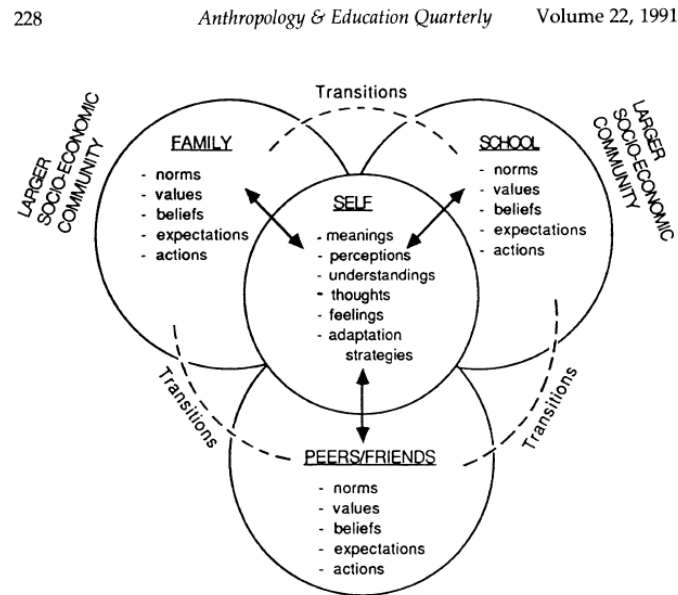


Figure 1
A model of the Interrelationships Between Students' Family, Peer, and School Worlds.

Figure 1

The boundaries between the different settings are characterized by specific norms, values, beliefs, expectations and actions or behaviors. Phelan et al. found that students with congruent worlds, as defined by family, self, school and peers/friends, had the least amount of trouble with school and felt little hardships when transitioning into that boundary. The relation to the present study is that students who have similar functioning fields and have developed a habitus, and tool kit appropriate for the field, have little difficulty moving between the social contexts, because of the cultural continuity. I consider habitus to mainly develop within the boundary of family, while each of the boundaries can be viewed as fields under Bourdieu's

theory. Phelan et al. found that many students were left to navigate transitions on their own with little social support. Those that had difficulty figuring out the field of school also had a harder time having a successful experience in school. Having a difficult time transitioning into the school is common for students from immigrant or low-income families. They felt higher levels of discomfort when entering school “boundaries.” This is because the culture of the school is significantly different from what they have learned and experienced at home. For some Hispanic students, their habitus and cultural tool kits may not be in a dominant position in the field of school. It then becomes significantly harder to have strong agency and success in school for them.

On the flip side, a study by Vogt, Jordan and Tharp (1987) showed how tailoring a school to the children’s cultural needs greatly increased their school success. Conducted in Hawai’i, they found that if school was tailored to the children’s cultural based skills, they became more productive as a class. This included allowing for more group work and avoiding highly individualized work. In this case, the school made adjustments to make their field similar to the home. A school that is tailored to its students can promote a sense of belonging.

Ma (2003) found that school climate which included factors such as parent involvement and disciplinary norms had significant effects on a student’s sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is defined by Goodenow and Grady (1993) as “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported in the school social environment,” (in Ma, 2003: 340). When students have sense of belonging in their schools they will shower higher levels of academic involvement and ultimately school success (Finn 1989 quoted in Ma, 2003). It means that school culture does play a role in a child’s ability to navigate and succeed in its setting.

Boundary crossing is at the heart of my research. It exemplifies the social contexts students find themselves and highlights the conflicts that can exist between the cultural settings. Schools can have the potential to aid students in boundary crossing by making the cultural school norms explicit and giving student sufficient time to adjust to it. Carter and Chatfield (1986) made some preliminary statements about effective bilingual schools which help highlight some models of success. They stress the need for organization, clear roles, consensus building and positive school climate. These all reflect aiding students in adjusting to the new school culture, knowing the expectations and reducing their stress by building a consensus with and for them. It has therefore been shown that schools can be tailored to reduce stress for students due to low cultural consonance and hard boundary crossings. My work at Mezcla Elementary reflects these theories and is aimed at understanding how this particular school's program is easing tensions for the Hispanic students who may face incongruities with the more typical U.S. school systems.

Chapter 3: Methods and Setting

Methods

My goal was to find out how school was for those entering its cultural boundaries that may not have had prior access to its rules and norms. That is why I choose to study kindergarten specifically within Mezcla, as kindergarteners are new to school, unless they had attended preschool. In addition, for some of the parents, it was their first child entering an U.S. school and so it was a new experience for them as well.

In order to get to know the program, I spent extensive time in the classroom. I began work during the middle of spring semester 2011. I went for the full school day every Tuesday and Thursday during my own school schedule and then went full time every day, for the remainder of their semester. I also attended some summer school to continue conversations with the children. I missed a few days during my summer in order to conduct interviews. Finally, I returned fall semester for one half day per week to get to know new children and see the beginning of the school year. During my course with the classes I acted as chaperon on two fieldtrips which went to the Denver Zoo and Museum. I logged over 170 hours in the classroom and felt that this way I was able to get to know the school, curriculum and program.

During my time in the classroom I took both observer and participant-observer roles. At times, especially at the beginning, I would just watch what was going on from a table or corner of the room. The children seemed used to frequent visitors and, overall, did not seem to mind my presence. Later on I acted as a sort of teaching assistant, by helping during group work, leading small groups and participating during circle time. However, I made clear with the teachers that I was not a disciplinary figure as I wanted to converse with the students as well. They agreed that this was alright. In this way, I could incorporate myself into the classroom,

while maintaining a good relation to the students that was not hampered by too much authority. During lunch I would alternately eat with the teachers and students and “hang out” with the kids outside in order to get to know both groups. Although most of my time was spent in the Spanish classroom with Ally, I also followed the Spanish students to their English time with Rose and Susan. All names presented in this research are pseudonyms.

Once I had a better understanding of the school, I sent out requests for interviews and waivers for allowing me to converse with the children while recording the conversation. Cover letters and consent forms were sent out in every child’s Thursday Folder, which gets taken home and viewed by the parents over the weekend. I was not able to contact parents in other ways as the school cannot hand out information and most of the students arrived via bus. The convenience sampling resulted in mainly all Spanish-speaking participants. I hardly got any responses from English families, and so was not able to do a comparative study.¹ Instead I focused on the Spanish-speaking families. All materials for the Spanish parents were sent home in Spanish.

I sent out a second wave to the new cohort during the fall, in this case only to Spanish families. All, except one, interview with the mothers took place in their homes, most of which were located in a mobile home park. I only spoke to one father, as it was the mothers who were home, answered the phone and signed forms. In total I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with mothers. Only two were in English, the rest in Spanish. Although I went in with some questions, I also wanted to allow the parents to give input and direct the conversation. Spanish proved difficult and it was not until the last five interviews that I was comfortable with it.

¹ The teachers claim this is a common pattern in the school. The Hispanic families are more likely to sign waivers, accept help and be involved. The teachers speculate that Hispanic families have an attitude of “wanting a better life,” and are willing to accept aid and be involved in order to make this a reality for their children. They see the lack of the white families’ response as part of the more independent American culture. In addition, Ally hints that many (though not all!) of the white families are in their impoverished situation because of bad parent choices and shows a reflection on their character: they are not the type of parents to be involved with education.

However, the parents were very understanding and helpful. I used some of the responses from the first cohort of parents to re-construct the questions somewhat for the second.

During school hours, I would have conversations with students during free time, outside or when they had completed work early. The teachers had agreed to let me pull students aside, provided they had no work to do at that moment. I spoke with fourteen students about how they liked school, the languages, their friends and teachers. Three of these were with English students, the rest with Spanish. I spoke in which ever language the student chose to speak in. With a few giving that choice resulted in bilingual conversations. These conversations were rather short with a max of 10 minutes at a time. Because they were short, I often spoke to the same student multiple times in multiple settings: a corner, while they were coloring, outside or were engaged in another calm activity.

I also interviewed the kindergarten teachers. I conducted two initial interviews with Ally. The first was an unstructured interview, followed by a structured interview to hear about the program. At the end of the spring semester 2011, I interviewed all three kindergarten teachers with a structured interview. These allowed me to ask specific questions regarding the program, the schools goals and to clarify some of things I had been noticing in the classroom.

Although my sample sizes are rather small, qualitative research that is aimed at describing and understanding one population does not require as big of samples as do studies aimed at generalizations (Marshall, 1996; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). When the goal is to “obtain insights into particular educational, social, and familial processes and practices that prevail within a specific location,” large sample sizes as seen in quantitative research are not a high priority (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007: 106). This is the case for my research. Therefore

large sample sizes were not one of my high priorities, though I do not deny that more participants provide more information.

I gave the teachers a consensus survey consisting of 24 questions to see whether or not they agreed on what it means to be a good student. The items were based on free lists from the kindergarten teachers as well as my observations.

Consensus analysis is used to see how much individuals agree upon a set of related questions (Weller, 2007), and how much they can be said to share a cultural model (Dressler, 2005). UCINET is a program which runs the cultural consensus analysis and gives the researcher a eigenratio. Generally, a eigenratio of 3.0 or above shows that a cultural consensus, or model, exists. Romney (1999) warns that finding a model statistically does not actually distinguish between “natural knowledge” and “cultural knowledge” which “involves sharing of ideas, concepts, behaviors, etc., by more than one person,” (104). However, in the interviews with Ally reveal that she sees school as a cultural entity with its own cultural norms and behaviors.

“You know in certain cultures and ethnic groups, and in socio-economic status parents... the way that the parent interacts with the child, the types of questions they ask...are a certain way. A lot of these kids are used to being talked *at* not being talked *with*. So, you have to teach them how to ask the question. You have to teach them how to I *wonder* about something. I actively model “hmmm... I’m wondering why [makes a quizzical face and taps the side of her head with her pointer finger]. Does anybody know why? Will you wonder with me?” And we show what it looks like. The facial expression, the body language... you know,” (Ally).

The parents also comment on how Mezcla specifically works well in their lives, because the school reflects their own culture. When I asked Guadalupe, one of the Spanish-speaking mothers, how their culture may be different from the U.S. and if that is reflected in their relationship with the school she responded, “Yes! [I understand] But, no. Because this school is

like our own culture. Because, they make it easy for me because the principle, she understands us because she speaks Spanish!” Arcelis to the same questions stated that “With the culture, I know that with my parents I had a different culture then the united states... but at Mezcla, the culture is working well with [my child’s] life.” Both of these responses show recognition that this would not necessarily be the case at other school. Therefore I felt that my informants supported my claim that school is a field with its own culture.

I used UCINET (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2012) to run the cultural consensus. I ran the consensus analysis both for just the kindergarten teachers (Six when including oper’s in the classroom) and for all the surveys I collected from teachers for a total of twelve. Weller (2007) states that when variability is low only a small sample is needed to find the cultural appropriate answer which is part of the UCINET output. The ORDVAR (explained below) output I got showed that there were high levels of agreement on the items indicating high levels of variability.

Once I had collected data, I formulated a survey for the parents also using consensus theory, but also adding in consonance. In this case, I asked eleven items pertaining to being a parent of a student involved with school. I asked them in general format of what should be expected (consensus) and then asked the same items about their individual experiences and behaviors (consonance). Consonance theory allows me to see how well a parent is living up to the consensus, if it exists. I also asked questions alluding to stress based on Sapolsky (2004). These items included questions such as “I feel nervous or scared when I am in an English situation,” allowing the participant to answer on a Likert scale from one to five. I chose a five point scale instead of seven, because I was working with a non-academic population, most of whom had never taken a survey of this nature before. For that reason I wanted to simplify it. At

the end I asked a few short answer questions about *confianza* (trust). The survey for the parents was sent home with a cover letter and consent form through the Thursday folders. This was done with the Fall 2011 kindergarten cohort as well as the students now in first grade.

I wanted to use UCINET (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2012) for the parents' surveys, but ran into some trouble. If a respondent circled all the same answers, in some of my respondent's cases all fives, the variable has zero variance. With zero variance the correlation between the variable (each respondent) and others is undefined (Personal correspondence with Borgatti, 2012). I made sure that the respondents who chose to circle all fives seemed to fill out the rest of the survey properly. That way I already eliminated four surveys that were not properly completed. With the UCINET complication, I had to eliminate a further eight leaving me with only 15 surveys.

Because of this complication, I also used a program called Ordvar, which allowed me to calculate the agreement between respondents on each consensus item (Blair & Lacy, 2000). The technique used is called ordinal consensus, and tests how much variance in opinion there is on each individual item, instead of looking at consensus as a whole as UCINET does. It also allowed me to run the ordinal consensus using all my participants which was not the case with UCINET. I therefore used this to supplement my consensus analysis. ORDVAR gives scores between zero and one, one being complete consensus.

As I suspected, agreement increased on individual items when I used all survey responses versus the reduced group of 15. I found that item six pertaining to language had a very low score of .47, with all surveys included and only .44 with the reduced set of 15. All the other items had scores of .7 and higher, so this was a clear outlier. For that reason I decided to keep it out of my consonance calculations.

Using the consensus scores from UCINET, minus item 6, I then calculated consonance scores for each participant. This score was calculated using the sum of the absolute difference between the consensus answer key and the participants answer for themselves. From there, I used SPSS to calculate correlations between the consonance scores and the stress related questions to see if the parents less consonant with the model of being a student's parent had higher indicators of stress. Since I had a small sample size, it was likely that I would have nonparametric data. I ran SPSS descriptors to check my data for skewness to see if it violated the assumption of normality (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, Barrett, 2011). The consonance score variable had a very positive skew of 4.19. Because this variable is used in all of the correlations, I used the Spearman Rho test which is acceptable for nonparametric data. This means it does not assume normality (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, Barrett, 2011).

The School and It's Program

Initially, my intention was to look at low-income student populations at Mezcla Elementary. When I first visited Mezcla Elementary, I had no idea of their bilingual program, until the principal mentioned it to me in a sort of off-hand manner. I jumped at the opportunity and soon found out that their bilingual program included English speakers learning Spanish as well as vice versa. My new focus became the Hispanic population at Mezcla within the context of this bilingual program. Although my focus had shifted, I would still be working with mostly low-income and poor children.

I met early on with the Spanish speaking Kindergarten teacher. I chose to work with kindergarten, because at this point the students (for the most part) were new to the educational setting, and for some of the parents, this was their first child to attend school in the U.S. In this

case the phenomenon of boundary crossing may still be more pronounced. I met Ally, a white, blond haired woman at a cafe in town, where she greeted me with a welcoming smile early during the Spring semester. Dressed for warmth and comfort, she settled herself down to speak to me in a matter of fact manner. Despite her European decent, as the Spanish kindergarten teacher, I have seen her conversing with Spanish parents with ease and comfort. It was obvious that the parents respect her opinion and appreciate her Spanish fluency. As most of my work would take place in the Spanish classroom and with the Spanish speaking families, she became my key informant at the school.

Ally is a large enthusiast for the program at Mezcla. Her history of working in the Peace Corps and wanting to work with low-income populations made her a perfect fit for Mezcla's goals. Mezcla not only caters to Spanish speaking students, but is also a school with mainly all low-income and poor families. This adds a new layer to the school. Her description of the unique setting made it clear to me that I would want to do some research at Mezcla Elementary.

Located in a small neighborhood, the school caters to mostly low-income and poor families with many students on reduced or free lunches (Ally). The children all learn both English and Spanish and switch their groups from homogeneous language groups to heterogeneous ones. The school has slowly been implementing the bilingual program as one cohort of children moved up through the grades. The beginning of my research was the first school year the school has become completely bilingual through fifth grade.

Mezcla Elementary opened the door to doing research focused on boundary crossing. As my research progressed, I became more interested in how the school was aiding its Hispanic families to be part of the school culture and therefore allow the children to function within it. Most of the Hispanic families at Mezcla are Mexican. Ally described the Hispanic's situation at

Mezcla in cultural terms, “you’re in a school from a non-dominant culture, you know, like you’re in a different culture so it’s a little intimidating.” As a teacher she is highly aware that the Spanish speaking students and their families often come from a background very different from hers or the one school is based on. I will take time here to introduce the school’s curriculum and bilingual program as well as the three major groups of actors in my research: students, teachers and parents. This will give the reader an idea of the school, the setting and the individuals functioning within the cultural boundary of school.

Curriculum: Tools of the Mind

First through fifth grade use a “boxed curriculum” which Rose describes as “‘here’s your box and here’s your manual,’ and it tells you what to say...it’s the district program, so no matter where [the students] go they’ll get ‘it’,” (Rose). This is highly routinized and is pre-determined for the whole district. In contrast, the kindergarten has adopted a curriculum titled Tools of the Mind or ‘Tools’ for short.

Tools focuses on “school readiness,” as many of the children “come in and don’t know how to recognize their name. They don’t know how to hold a pencil, they don’t know how to cut with scissors, and they’ve never been exposed to school materials,” (Ally). The lack of exposure to school material is recognized by the kindergarten teachers as largely having to do with poverty. This means that the beginning of the year a lot of emphasis is placed on modeling what a successful student looks like. Ally states that you “sort of you go slow to go fast. The beginning of the year is a lot of relationship building, a lot of learning how to take turn. We learn how to... look like students before we expect them to *be* students.” Rose reflects the same notion by explaining how the year is split into two parts: “the first half of our year, we spend a lot of time, building those school readiness skills, so that they can be learners. And then we

spend the second year of our school year building the academics. Which we can, now that they know how to be learners.” Learning school readiness includes very explicit instruction on “readers turn the pages this way. Readers point to the words this way while they read. Readers look at the pictures and talk about it with somebody,” (Ally).

Further, Tools uses students to model for other students. The curriculum incorporates students who have a particular skill working with a student that doesn’t quite have it yet. It makes it easy to have a class filled with students from “both ends of the spectrum and in the middle with the scaffolded writing.” Scaffolded writing means that while some students write three full sentences, others may write only one or may be using single letter words. The “working amount is the same, it’s just at different levels,” which allows for more advanced students [peer teachers] to help those that don’t quite have it yet. Susan says this “has been very beneficial for me, as a teacher, to see because they do learn best from their peers and not from me standing up lecturing.” It melds well with the dual language program. In the afternoon, when children are in heterogeneous language groups, a balance is constantly struck to insure Spanish speakers can help the English speakers with Spanish and vice versa.

As part of scaffolding, children are seen as helpers and helping resources. Because of the ability for students to pair up in slightly different levels, much of the classroom activities take place in centers. Children are strategically placed in groups of four or five so that there are always a few kids that are a little more advanced to help the rest. Sometimes, the groups rotated for different projects and activities, and sometimes all the groups are completing the same task. The children state that “I like it when we work in *centros* [centers],” (Jesus), and that they enjoy working with their *amigos* [friends].

Under Tools, *amigos* are seen as a resource. Although students frequently run up to Ally for help, she usually replies with “can you ask an *amigo* for help?” Ally often does not help until the child has asked their center friends and could not resolve their problem that way. The children understand the concept though, and when asked what to do when they need help many replied “well, I go to an *amigo*,” [Ana] and know that they should “help your *amigos*,” (Flor) in order to be a good students. This is actively practiced with the students at the beginning of the year to support this behavior. It does not always work, but even towards the end of the year, Ally stayed adamant about asking students to try and come back to her if it doesn’t work.

Centers are not perfect. Ally commented that when students get pulled out for intervention time “I don’t have enough for them [students] to help me model.” Mixing kids based on level and language is important to the concept of centers and falls apart when Ally looses kids in the classroom. In addition, the children are not always perfect models, and the groups sometimes go off task when the teacher is not at their table. This includes rocking back and forth, making jokes, lying around on the carpet (if the group had clipboards on the ground) or playing with surrounding objects and toys. Despite certain imperfections, the students were often on task. Especially towards the end of the year I was able to observe them keeping each other on task through reminders of what their job was. I thought it was impressive how often I was asked by children for academic help or to check students work. It showed how on task they were during partially self-regulated work time.

Finally, Tools is very developmentally appropriate according to all three kindergarten teachers. It involves putting “the play back in kindergarten. It’s a lot of dramatization, developmental play,” (Ally). The teachers see themselves as guides for “kids [that are] self

directed and are learning through their own play,” (Rose). Rose, one of the English kindergarten teachers, gives an example of play and body movement involved in learning:

“Tools made every activity to work on, problem solving and academics at the same time. To work on self regulation and academics. So the carpet squares, you show a picture of a cat, you have them map it out with their hands, C-A-T [she holds up her hands counting off fingers], same thing, but then they jump on the phonemes, so it’s more appropriate, developmentally their jumping, but you have to teach too what it looks like to control your body when you’re doing it. Like, “OK, show me a thumbs up way to do it and a thumbs down way.” We jump and fall over, we be silly [thumbs down way], so their having to control their bodies, and think about two things at once. They’re controlling their bodies and they’re learning the phonemes.”

At the beginning of the year all the kindergarten classrooms go through Fairytales. They focus on one story per week such as: Goldilocks and the Three Bears, The Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf, and Little Red Riding hood. Notably, they did not use Mexican or Hispanic stories to go along with the English ones. First they hear the story read to them with explanations of word meanings (vocab building). This also works on being able to control the body for a longer period of time. They then draw a large picture as a class with a beginning, middle and end, filling in the story with little pictures drawn by the teacher (recall), followed by a couple of kids moving abstract representations of the characters through the pictures as the rest of the class tells the story. Each day they have short, easy art projects that are essentially making costumes and props. On Fridays, the children, in groups, get to put on the costumes (masks, paws, capes...) and play together. The teachers wander around to get them to act out the full story.

Although the play and crafting are very controlled, focused on the lesson and story, it allows the children to continually learn about the same story in different ways throughout the whole week. By the time they were acting out the story in their groups they were very

knowledgeable about it. Sometimes they deliberately made funny changes, knowing full well that it diverted from the real story. Even during the acting phase however, the students are supposed to pass out “role cards” in their group to designate the actors (and which part they are playing) as well as a director.

Play does not always come across in the classroom. I frequently noticed, that even during more relaxed/ creative activities, students were prompted to stay on task with comments such as “What is your job right now?” and “I need you to do your work right now.” Even coloring is seen as the students’ job/work and it is conveyed as such to the students. This is a direct connotation conflict with attempting to put the play back into the classroom. I found, at times, creativity and playfulness was stiffened instead of encouraged when the teachers framed focusing on the activity as “your job.”

During multiple occasions students had short art projects to complete, many of which also focused on an academic skill as well, though that was not always the case. In one case, the students were asked to cut out fish with a certain number of dots on their body. The tails were separate with the corresponding numbers written on them. The final task was to paste the fish with their corresponding tails on paper. The students were allowed to color the fish as well. Before sending the students off, Susan had the students repeat the instructions, “First we cut, then we color, then glue. Cut, color, glue.” On the table for this project there were three small laminated cards placed in order with the words cut, color, glue, with images alongside the words. When I asked a girl if she was ready to glue (she had not colored at this point) she very pointedly looked at me and said “No. I have to color.” She points back at the cards. “First cut...” She trails off. The cards had gotten slightly scrambled due to the activity at the table. She re-

arranges them properly. “This is what we have to do. Cut [points at the card], color [points to the next card], glue [points to the last card].”

This creates a strange juxtaposition of the terms “play” and “work”. Despite allowing for acting, coloring, cutting and other smaller art projects, there are very explicit instructions on how to do it. Even the “play” is highly regulated and controlled by the teachers’ authority and instruction.² This is also the case when student get to do small finger games or dances to music played from a CD. In one case, during the song “Juanito cuando bailas [When Juanito dances],” one boy started dancing bigger and more “crazy” than other students. Ally quickly puts an end to it, “That’s not how we dance,” and tells him to sit out for that song. While the teachers are attempting to put play back into the curriculum, they may be at the same time taking it out through their impressions of correct and ordered play as part of the students’ academic work.

Finally, Tools is meant to work on one academic and one social skill at all times. The following is a description of this. In the morning the Spanish cohort of kids find themselves a buddy and sit on the carpet area with books at their level. Each pair has two papers, one with a mouth, designating the role of reader, and one with an ear to designate the role of listener. The purpose is to have one child read and then have them switch roles. This is a skill that progresses over the year. Early on, the kids are often just looking at pictures, only some already sounding out the words. At this point, they are learning what “it looks like to be a reader,” (Ally).

This preliminary reading time is also a problem solving learning environment. Allie points out a boy that seems somewhat lost. He lacks the problem solving skills to deal with his predicament, “He didn’t follow the rules [finding a partner when it was time to do so] so he’s stuck. He has no partner.” She leaves him be a while to see if he’ll figure it out and asks some

² I should note that at the end of each time the children get “free time” in which certain activities are set up and they can chose to play with one of them. However, even here only a certain number of students are allowed at each station and the toys to put out are picked by the teachers.

prompting questions such as, “what is your job right now?” or “what should you be doing?” In this way she attempts to guide the boy to figure out asking a duo group to form a three person group with him. The way the reading is set up also requires students to recognize their dedicated role and take turns with it.

Later in the year, as they become better at their academic skills some of the play, learning to look like learners, and crafting develops into strictly academic focused tasks. This is a slow gradual process, and as pointed out before, it is built into Tools through scaffolding which allows students to work at their appropriate difficulty level.

Bilingual Program

The kindergarten has done an elaborate job of working with the dual language program. Mezcla Elementary is now a fully bilingual school all the way through fifth grade. One cohort started with a bilingual program in Kindergarten, and as they moved through the grades, the bilingual program went with them. The purpose of the program is for the students “to become biliterate, bilingual and bicultural³ in both languages/ cultures: English and Spanish. So English language speakers are learning to speak Spanish and Spanish speakers are learning to speak English and [all] are fluent in both languages by the end of fifth grade,” (Susan). I had asked if language would ever be considered a disadvantage to the students. Susan very adamantly responded, “Not in our school. Not in our school, because um, the dual language program, I think, at least evens that playing field, because everybody gets a turn at being an expert. You know, ‘I know what’s going on.’” Having a turn at being an expert has to do with the way the kids get mixed in heterogeneous language groups.

³ At this point, the bicultural part has not been strongly implemented yet, especially in Kindergarten level. Susan and Rose commented that the Bicultural part of the program is addressed in later grades more heavily. Although they do talk about Hispanic holidays (Cinco de Mayo, Dia de Los Muertos), the Kindergarten teachers are not focused on this yet. As they are still tweaking the curriculum and the school has very recently reached all grades being taught bilingually, it may be that this will become a bigger focus in the near future.

Mornings begin in homogeneous language groups. I spent most of my time with the Spanish speakers in Ally's class due to lack of response from English families. The morning routine, by the end of the year, ran smoothly having been built up throughout the whole year. The kids enter the room, many coming from the bus and cafeteria where they had received a school breakfast. A few of them are still clutching the breakfast leftovers and sit at one of the back tables in order to finish the meal. Some of the children are dropped off by their parents, usually by their mothers though I saw some fathers as well. The kids hang their bags and coats in the back corner on their corresponding hook. Above the hooks, each child has a small bin where their take-home folders and other papers. Boxes are marked with colored circles that indicate English or Spanish families so that anyone can file papers according to language.

After a short morning routine including finishing breakfast, brushing teeth and a short circle time the real scheduled day began. This is where the dual language program really kicks in. The children end up switching peers and classrooms about twice a day, but "we try to limit the transitions and make the transition happen at natural times so that it's sort of easier on the kids. You know, they don't sort of Chinese fire drill it in the middle of... an activity (Ally). All three of the teachers pointed out that research indicates that consistency is best for, especially, the younger children, and so they try to minimize the impact of the transitions.

There were three total classroom Kindergarten (though now they have increased to four), two of which are headed by an English-speaking teacher and one headed by Ally. Diagram 1 depicts how the kids moved throughout their day with two of the three transitions happening at "natural times."

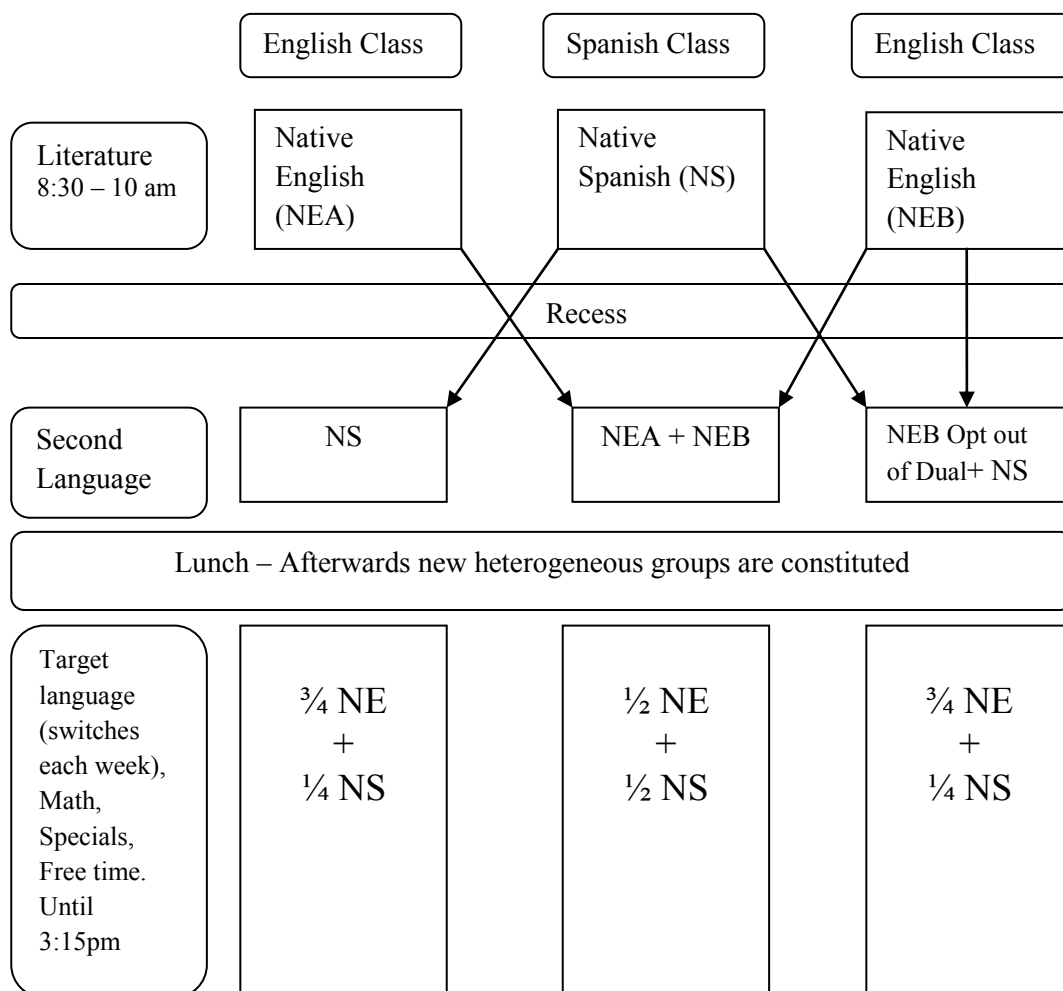


Diagram 1: Bilingual Program Schedule

The purpose is to have each child receive fifty percent of their education in either language. Built into it is literature in the child's first language and some second language learning in homogeneous language groups. Ally points out that this gives them a non-stressful time to just practice the other language with others that don't know it well either. "We keep in our minds is that our purpose is for the kids, not only to have English, but for the kids, no matter what they started as, to be, um... proficient in English and Spanish, both. Not just speaking but reading and writing as well," (Ally). Giving them time to learn their native language as well as second language in homogenous groups, allows the teachers to target each language group for their specific needs.

Although some parents have opted out of the bilingual program, asking for English only, this is being phased out as demand is low. As the process was taking place during my time at Mezcla, the schedule did change for year 2011-2012, but maintained the same concept of fifty-fifty language learning.

Once the groups are heterogeneous in the afternoons, the point is to have a supportive environment where students practice each other's languages. That way the students can have turns at being the experts and help their peers. "Here I want to have enough English speakers to help my Spanish speakers learn English. Here I want to have enough Spanish speakers to help my English speakers learn Spanish [pointing at the above diagram]. It trades by week. Same proportions of kids, but different group depending on week," whereas "before Spanish speakers were very isolated. They were kinda on their own track doing their own thing," (Ally). What the trade by week means is that each child, within a heterogeneous group, receives one week of afternoon program in Spanish and then one week in English. The bilingual program also prevents the Spanish students from being off on their own, completely separated from the English speakers.

Ally sees the program as a way to create better relations between students of different cultures: "It gives the kids an opportunity to expand their world and expand their friendships, if they choose. And we as teachers are sort of facilitators in that process."⁴ Rose and Susan agree as well, that the students can very actively learn from each other and it complements the Tools notion of having peer teachers.

⁴ Although not addressed by my research, it would be interesting to see what type of stereotypes or racist notions the children may have already adopted even at such a young age. For instance, do the white children see people with darker skin as illegal immigrants? If they do hold these notions from home, T.V. and society, it would be pertinent to explore if Mezcla's program is good enough to refute those biases as Allports Contact Hypothesis suggests is possible.

Although all the kindergarten teachers agree that so much switching is not ideal for the age group, it is also the best way to enforce a “fifty-fifty dual immersion program, “where instead of having the Spanish speakers isolated, learning from each other, we have them, we focus literacy in first language, but for the rest of the day for all their other core subjects the kids are mixed in heterogeneous groups,” (Ally). This is how the children are able to switch the expert role and become helpers to each other, no matter which language they speak.

Other Parts of the Program: Aiding Those in Need

Finally, it is important to mention how many support systems this school offers to their student population. Mezcla has an extremely high rate of poverty and many of the negative impacts it can have on children along with it. This is true for both the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children. The following descriptions are just examples of what the teachers often repeated to me throughout my time at Mezcla and during my interviews with them.

“when you look at your classroom, and you have, you know, maybe half of your families, in any other school, would be considered living in crisis. You know, uh... like, literally would be labeled in other schools as crisis... severe crisis. We’ve had homeless kids, we had kids living in hotel to hotel, shelter to shelter. And those stories that another teacher, another school may have once every few years, have a kid that has a rough sort of existence like that, we have several per Year,” (Ally).

“For example, you’ll have a kid coming to school without food. They didn’t get breakfast at home. Mom hasn’t paid the bill at school so they can get lunch, and you don’t know if there’s food at home for the kid to eat at night,” (Ally).

One boy lived “in a trailer and they [the family] were living on the rafters. The... supports, beams. He was literally walking from support beam to support beam, because there was no flooring. Um, and they have a mattress on the floor and that’s where they sleep. Um, there was no way I could expect that child to come to school and be able to sit, because he can’t even do that in his own house. He could stand, and that was fine with me. I could understand why lunch was very important to him, because, you know, his kitchen was very slim to none,” (Susan).

Because of these situations, Mezcla offers programs to help these families, even if it means redirecting them to another program. One thing they do is “almost every year here, a form that goes home that says we need to know your child’s jacket and boot size, the school gives it to them,” (Rose). In addition, Rose mentions that some kids get food to take home twice a week, as food at home is scarce and intermittent. They also have connections with dental and health programs to which they can refer families living in poverty. Far from an end all solution, they do the best they can. At the end of the day however, “our primary job is what we can do within the walls of the schools, to make sure the kids’ time here is safe,” (Ally). That being said, the focus of this project is not on the alleviation of problems associated with poverty directly, rather it is focused on how the school is helping ease the transition for Spanish speakers into the schools boundaries.

The Actors

Here will be a brief description of the three main groups of actors involved in my research: students, teachers, and parents. I present them in their own groups in order to give the reader an understanding of how they relate to the school. In addition, it lets the reader get to know the participants a little better within their own groups. As they frequently interact, it is important to know them on their own terms.

Students

The student body at Mezcla is very close to being half white and half Hispanic (mainly from Mexican origin), with slightly more white students. Ally noted that a few years ago, that was not the case as “we had a lot of white flight.” Mezcla was mainly all Hispanic, but with the increased reputation of Mezcla through the bilingual program, more parents are “choosing to

come and drive their kids from whatever part of the district to the school.” This has notably changed the student demographic at the school. In the Kindergarten there is one solid, very full, Spanish literacy group and two, only slightly smaller, English speaking groups. In the time I was at Mezcla, there was an increase in Hispanic students. Important to note is that some of the English speaking students come from Hispanic families, but had been learning only English as way to cope with living in the USA.

In addition, the school has a very high level of poverty with around 80 percent free and reduced lunch (Ally). Rose believes that poverty can have an effect on all students: “I would say that students from poverty... that there are experiences and things in their lives that, I mean, at six they’ve seen and dealt with more than most adults have. You know, trauma. Trauma is a huge one. And trauma affects learning. Being a student of poverty is traumatic.” Both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children are affected by these adverse outcomes of poverty. Ally sees poverty as resulting in stressors and stated “so, high poverty families, I think when there are those huge stress at home, can really react to that... kids *react* to those stressors.” Although my project is focused on the Hispanic population at Mezcla, the white children also face barriers such as hunger, homelessness, low parent education levels that are similar to the ones the Hispanic’s are facing. However, the few definitely middle/upper class students I met were white. Of the Spanish students I talked with and whose families I met, only one lived in an actual house and had an educated father.

The students like their school. For the most part they enjoy their classes, especially “Specials” (music, P.E., art and library time). They also love “the Jack and Annie books,” (Martha) which are routine throughout the whole year. A number of students told me they liked doing their homework; “[I like school] because of the homework. It is fun.” Most of them

enjoyed learning to read, write and count despite the work “[being] very hard,” (Esteban). Very seriously, Crystal told me that she likes to count “up to one hundred,” but “I don’t want to count to one hundred right now.” I assure her I believe she can do it as I’ve seen them practice in class. She nods her head solemnly: “I know how to count,” clearly showing her pride and the importance the skill holds for her.

The children also have hopes and dreams for the future. A trio of English speaking girls is planning a singing group, and along with a boy, the leading girl sang Justin Bieber’s “Baby, baby, baby, Oh!, baby...” into my microphone, clearly capitalizing on being able to hear themselves recorded. Every once in a while one of the Spanish speaking girls joins them, although it is not a frequent occasion. Esteban, a rather small, shy Mexican boy, plans to be a policeman when he is older and told me so in the following conversation:

Me: What do you want to be in the future?

E: policía! [Police!]

Me: Oh! Are you going to protect me? (I ask in a joking manner and over the top excitement)

E: nods

I: Really?

E: no! (he starts to giggle and relishes my mocking shocked face)

Me: [I put on an elaborate frown] You’re not going to protect me?

E: No! [More laughing]

I: What about other people?

E: Yes! [he laughs more]

This dream is later confirmed by his mother, who says it’s either a policeman or firefighter. The short conversation also shows how much fun the children have, and how responsive to joking they are. It was truly a pleasure to be around them and speak to them, because of their inventive fun.

By the end of the year they knew the routine, and all the kids I talked to understood the rules of the classroom. When I asked what I would have to do to be a good student in class, or what the rules were, students responded with “Safe body,” (Sophia) “what you need to know in

this class is... do what the teacher tell you and, don't say no when, when a *companera* or *compañero* [friend] asks you to read with them," (Ana), and "No fighting, no skating, don't say bad word, don't do bad things to people," (Helena). This exemplifies that the students, both Spanish speaking and English speaking, understand the rules and also understand the consequences of breaking them, namely "they [teachers] give a redirect. If they say it two times, you go to a refocus," (Flor).

Despite learning both languages and being in mixed groups for half the day, there still seemed to be a certain divide between the groups. Some of the Spanish speakers explained that, although they may like English (some did not), it is harder, "because I can't understand everything that is being done," (Roberto). Katrina told me that she did not like speaking English "*porque me da miedo* [it gives me fear]." It is perhaps because of the difficulty with English, that they tended to be friends with other Spanish speakers. Inevitably, they only listed other Hispanic students' names when I asked who their friends were. Only with further prompting did some say that they played with English speakers as well. Only three of the Spanish students I spoke to also listed playing with English speakers on their own accord. I gather that this is because they are also the three that have the most English knowledge, are able to practice English at home with either siblings or their parents, and actually spoke to me in both English and Spanish during my conversations with them.

This was also noticeable out on the playground. For the kindergarten groups there was a smaller, separately gated playground which was mostly tanbark area with a play structure and monkey bars, but had a short strip of cement with a shed at the end of it. Many of the Spanish speakers would convene as a group near the shed and often played some circle games there. At times they would run around and disperse, but would often come back to their group near the

shed. As a group they spoke Spanish out on the play yard. A few of them, those that already had a strong background in English, would sometimes leave that group to play with some of the English speakers. However, most of them agreed that it is harder to play and converse with the English students.

Rose commented on the divide between the students as well, noting that those that knew little English were not as integrated with the other students, “And the ones [Hispanic students] who aren’t as confident for whatever reasons, family things or just don’t know as much English, they, um, they stick together. And I mean, you can see why, that’s they’re safety net.”⁵

Teachers

Kindergarten has three teachers, two of which are English speaking, Rose and Susan, and one which is Spanish speaking, Ally. None of them are native Spanish speakers. Ally, as the Spanish teacher, learned much of her Spanish during her times abroad. Rose has darker skin (not of Mexican decent) with dark brown hair. Both Susan and Ally are white and have blond hair.⁶ This did not seem to interfere with the parents’ trust in the teachers. How much this affected the students is debatable. However, I did not gather data on this subject.

Ally, welcomed me into her classroom no questions asked. She was the first to respond to my inquiry and met with me shortly thereafter. Having a long history of working with low-income and minority populations from her work in the Peace Crop and other programs, she describes “so it was a good chance for me to go to Mezcla.” Both Susan and Rose reflect

⁵ It is notable that at the end of the year I watched some fifth grade girls, arms around each other, tears streaming down their faces, getting ready to leave for the summer. They were not ready to be separated. They were both Hispanic and Caucasian. Perhaps more of the cultural crossing occurs later when students have a better grasp of each other’s language.

⁶ In fact, most of the faculty and staff were female and had white skin and seemed to be of Caucasian decent. It can be very meaningful to a student to see someone with a powerful position similar to them. The only people who were actually of Hispanic decent were interventionists, one of the office workers involved with calling home and one T.A. It would be interesting to see what a difference it makes when the student population diversity is represented in the faculty and staff and what that means to students.

similarly on the subject: “that’s why I wanted to come to this school, ‘cuz as you know there’s not many schools that have, um... I wanted to work with kids learning English and I want to work with kids that I guess, you say disadvantaged. Those are the types of kids, I don’t like to put kids in types, but you know what I mean,” (Rose).

Together, the three form a very strong core and corroborate frequently in order to keep “the structures. For us it was very important to have that consistency for the kids,” (Ally). In order to aid in the children’s transition throughout the regular school day, they have taken it upon themselves to create as many similarities between the classrooms as possible. A few examples include the same calendar which is used daily for counting and keeping track of days, all the T.V.’s are in similar positions, they all have the same pictures relating to the Jack and Annie books that all the kids get to hear. In addition, they try to keep consistency “for their expectations. So that, you know, when you go into one room versus the other room, like the class rules are all the same, you know. And we plan together ‘this is how we’re gonna teach the class rules,’ so that everybody is hearing the same thing,” (Ally). Of course, this is ideal. I have noticed many discrepancies between the teachers because of their personalities, but that can’t be helped. For the most part, the teachers use similar language and maintain the same rules.

Although they showed commitment to working together, there was still variability in the group. The consensus analysis on what it means to be a good student based on teacher responses reflects the variability between the teachers. When I ran the analysis for the kindergarten teacher and Oper (T.A.) responses only (6 participants), it yielded a .970 eigenratio which indicates a lack of fit. There was one clear outlier and if I removed that data set, there was a very clear consensus with an eigenratio of 3.74. This means that there is variability in what the kindergarten teachers see as most important in student behavior. This will be reflected in their

behavior, methods and actions (Dressler, 2005) toward the students. Despite this, the disciplinary system seemed to stay largely the same throughout the classrooms. The biggest difference I did notice between the teachers was just how quickly they were willing to give out redirects versus warnings, as well their energy level with the students. It is not surprising to me, that the one teacher who is the most energetic with the students was the outlier, placing less emphasis on body control than the other two teachers.

In relation to the students, all three of the teachers see themselves as mentors that help guide the students both in academics as well as social development. Since there is a high level of poverty, the teachers also have a high awareness of physical needs the kids may not be getting at home. They describe a hierarchy of needs for the students, and academics are lower than certain physical needs such as comfort, food and rest:

“So your focus with each kid shifts to, where it should be, I think. Not that the academics drop, but it’s, I mean, it’s the hierarchy that everyone knows. You’re not going to focus on school when you’re hungry and you don’t know where your gonna sleep, you know?” (Rose)

“There’s the hierarchy of needs. If you’re whipped, if you’re toast, I’m gonna send you to take your little rest. It’s the same as when you’re sick. When I see a kid that’s just done, I’m like, I’d rather have them go home and take care of their little bodies, than push them and force them to be, be learning when their body won’t let them. That’s the way I look at it. You’re body will not let you, you need to take care of that need first.”(Ally)

The teachers have taken on a second caretaker role and are balancing those needs of the children with the need to teach them academics. As mentioned above, children who had not finished their breakfast get time to do so in the morning while the other children begin reading. I also observed Ally asking students if “you need a little rest time?” The students could then choose a pillow or blanket from a box and take a moment to unwind. All three agree that many

of these students have very difficult backgrounds, “and so, they need somebody, who is going to be caring and loving. And, um, somebody who is gonna be, you know, understanding,” (Ally).

It is clear that the three kindergarten teachers have a challenge taking on children from poverty backgrounds as well as from different languages. However, they all seem to enjoy their job and love working with the students. Susan, one of the English teachers describes how having Spanish-speaking students in her classroom is also a learning experience for herself:

“I love teaching with both languages. When I first applied for Mezcla, that’s where I was at, I was very hesitant, because I didn’t know: it was that fear of the unknown. But after being here, it’s... there’s a reason god sends you in some directions, and I’m a true believer in that. Um, I love how those kids teach me things as well, um, things about their language, about their culture, how their family does things differently, anywhere from a *quincenera* to, um, you know their births and how they name their children, differently than we would name our children with the mothers name. So, to me, in my eyes, those kids know more than I do, just because they have that piece and are also a piece of the American,” (Susan).

This type of enthusiasm is important for the teachers to have in order to make all their students welcome in the classroom. This is reflected in Rose’s hope to break myths about language as a deficit; “Well, I don’t think language is a deficit. I think it’s who they are and the *skill* might be the deficit, but it’s not the language. Um, so I like students and families to see... [myths broken].” The devotion to understanding and empowering students from a Hispanic cultural background emphasizes a respect for them. This does not mean that the teachers don’t see the need to learn the norms and dominant language of the school’s culture. What it does show is that they see the school’s culture as one valid culture amidst others, and that each person should have the opportunity to function within the schools boundaries.

Arcelis and Felipe, parents of Lucia, really like that the teachers “are very respectful. They know that, that each culture has its *costumbres* [manners or customs]. Therefore, they

teach the kids not to make fun, they should not make fun because someone does one thing and not the other. *Verdad* [right]? They teach them to respect each *costumbre* of every culture. It's good." By doing so the teachers help create a classroom that is welcoming to all the students.

I will now turn to look more closely at Ally's situation as the only Spanish-speaking teacher in Kindergarten. Ally has a little extra on her plate in adapting school materials, including those from Tools, to Spanish. Although the school is now fully bilingual, getting the appropriate materials is not fully supported yet. The books in Spanish are often a harder translation than the level of the English version. Ally describes how she would be taking away from the Kindergarten lesson if she focused on the advanced vocabulary present in the Spanish books:

"You know, in the English version it says "The kid *said* this. The kid *said* that." Maybe you'll have a yelled in there. Um... but you know, or "the person *saw* this" in Spanish, instead of you know "*la persona veo algo*" um... the word they'll use is *divicio* like discerned... from a distance. I'm like "Wha... why am I making you work for that word?" So I have to, when I'm reading from a chapter book in Spanish, I'm having to change the words to make it... I'm like "I'm not gonna make you work for the word *see*, I'm gonna make you work for content vocab in here." We're reading a book about Egypt... I'm gonna make you learn what a mummy is, what a sarcophagus is. That's the words I want you to learn. I'm not gonna make you learn eight different ways to say saw or said."

For Ally, it is very important to promote equality for the Spanish speaking students, so that there are equal expectations for them as there are for the English speakers. Although there are many Spanish speakers that speak both languages, there are also some that have very little English contact. In order for the program to be fully bilingual, Ally argues that complete equality between expectations is necessary.

Ally championed for further collaboration to make it happen. During the collaborative meeting with Rose and Susan, she recounts telling them that "we have unequal expectations here. 'Cuz I've been allowing your kids [the English-speakers] to write in English," while the Spanish

students had been expected to write in English. Bringing it up with the teachers allowed for them to start the discussion on how to make the program, and its expectations, more equal for the students. For Ally, it's still a battle to get complete equality between the groups, but she does her best to help the Spanish students in her class as well as in the English environment. And as all three teachers have said, the program is continuously being "tweaked" through teacher collaboration and feedback to keep it growing.

Parents

The parents that I was able to meet with were, with the exception of two, very welcoming of me. I only spoke to one father, as it was the mothers that were home with the children and had filled out my initial request for interviewees. When I called to set up an interview, they generally resounded with, "Si, por su puesto," [meaning of course] or "Si, si, no hay problema," [Yes, not a problem]. Although not all of them seemed to understand the purpose of my project, they were open to talking to me. I explain that it was part of my *maestria* [masters] at the University, Colorado State. It was clear that this was the first time that a researcher did interviews with them. I was lauded for my Spanish skills (which I would argue are not close to perfect), and several of the mothers commented on how great it is that there are people who take the time to learn Spanish.

Most of the mothers I spoke to have been living in the USA for a long period of time, but maintained close connections to Mexico. Although not the focus of my conversations with them, they mentioned coming here for a better life and "Well, [we came here] because it is like an opportunity for better work and to win more money. Yes... Always in Mexico there are no good jobs that pay well," (Gema). For the most part it was their husbands who were working while

many of the mother's were home with younger children. However, some of the mother's also held jobs.

Many described having tried to learn some English through programs at Mezcla for adults, but lacked transport or the free time to do so adequately. Of 28 participants on the survey, 16 circled sometimes or always for feeling nervous or being scared when needing to speak English. This reflects how little English they were able to learn. A few less than half of them were able to learn English well during their time in the USA.

Only two of the ones I spoke with, Myra and Vickie, were fluent in English and had grown up in the United States, though they had been born in Mexico as well. They still had a slight accent, but did not care about which language we would converse in. Naturally, in their situation, they did not *need* Spanish to speak with the teachers, but still placed high value on Spanish for their children.

Only two of the Spanish families lived in houses, one in an apartment complex and the eight other families lived in a mobile house park. All with the same layout, the mobile homes consisted of two bedrooms and a joint living room and kitchen. Most of the houses sported a very large T.V., but their similarities ended. Some were simply adorned, some had large frames with professional looking photos and some crowded with more than one family.

Despite the small living quarters, the mothers all expressed being happy in the neighborhood. It gives them access to Mezcla via bus and the children can play with each other. Although Myra, fluent in English, stated that it wasn't very safe and says that "they're [her daughters] not allowed to like really walk around and stuff. Yeah, it's not that great." She is the only one that had reservations. The rest were happy, for the most part, with their living situation, especially because the kids could go to Mezcla. Arcelis, who lives in an apartment complex

stated that “I will not move apartments because I don’t want [my children] to go to another school. If I moved, they would have to go to a different school. That’s why I stay in this apartment.” Mezcla and its bilingual program are very important to the families.

School, to the mothers, is school, and aside from the fact that they believe that their children are learning a lot and are satisfied, the only thing that mattered to them was that it was bilingual. Questioning them about how the program is and what they think about it seemed to be irrelevant in their eyes. Ally describes the parents often say “‘oh you know teacher... you know.’ Not all, but some parents, just sort of fall back... maybe it’s sort of they didn’t get so much education, you know, they’re not American, so they don’t know the ins and outs so they defer to your expertise [the teachers].” The parents do not see themselves as in control of the school, nor the experts on school, and it was something I was picking up on in the short or lack of responses to some of my interview questions. This may be linked to the general low education levels amongst the parents as Ally mentions as well as a lack in confidence in the educational setting. It may be simply that they don’t see it as their job to worry about it.

Despite their lack of perceived control over the educational system, the parents have high hopes for their children. They want them to get an education for their future, including both personal life and careers. Many stated that they wanted their children to have choices, and emphasized how wonderful it was that with public education and better opportunities in America, they could be whatever they wanted, if they “*estudiar, estudiar, estudiar* [Learn/study],” and that “*el estudio* [the study/education] is the biggest thing we [the parents] can give to the child,” (Guadalupe). Learning two languages was seen as an extra bonus to having more opportunities.

In addition, most of the mothers noted helping their children with the home work as important. Although many of them emphasized that right now they can help, “but later, [it will be difficult], yes,” (Arcelis). As the homework gets harder, or as more English makes it way home, it becomes difficult for the mothers to support their students in school. Despite that, they see it as their job to encourage and motivate their students since “they are ours, they are not the teachers, right? Therefore we have to have more interest in them. We help them and motivate them so they’ll do their homework,” (Arcelis).

Mothers also see themselves as teaching their children values and character as “being a parent, one has to teach their kids their responsibility. Because, if children are not responsible, they don’t do their homework. They have to do homework first,” (Guadalupe). In this way the mothers, and the father, saw themselves as very involved in their students’ lives and hope to help build a better future for them.

Their similar beliefs regarding a parent’s role related to school were reflected in my consensus analysis. Using the 15 participants, the consensus analysis resulted in an eigenratio of 2.89.⁷ Since UCINET had limitations, I used ORDVAR to supplement the consensus analysis. Using ORDVAR (ordinal variation), I was able to run ordinal consensus for all my participants as well as the reduced group of 15 used for the consensus analysis. This measures how much participants agree on a given item. As I expected, agreement on each individual questions increased when all participants were used with ORDVAR. This points at a stronger consensus had I been able to use all participants with the UCINET program. I believe that a model would exist if I had been able to use those responses as well.

⁷ This technically misses the cutoff point of 3.0 to show a shared model. However, 3.0 is an arbitrary number and an 2.89 eigenratio is still close. In addition, there were many responses I could not use do to the complications mentioned in the methods section. The authors of UCINET have assigned a 3.0 eigenratio as a cut off for consensus (that is anything above 3.0 shows a consensus). However, there has been little evidence produced that shows 3.0 is useful number to this end. New methods in addition to UCINET consensus analysis should be considered, because of the programs limitations. Using Ordvar was one step in this direction.

Also notable is that, using Ordvar, the parents' agreement on the item pertaining to language was only .47 using all participants and only .44 using the reduced group of 15. The exact question was "It is harder to communicate with teachers if they don't speak Spanish." All other items showed agreement of above .7 and many in the high .8 range. This tells me that the parents were split on communication concerns based on language. This was reflected in the different levels of English knowledge between the parents. Some parents picked up more English either because they had gone to school in the USA or their jobs. Many of the mothers I spoke with reflected that it was hard to learn English as they were home with the kids and lacked the transportation to get to Mezcla's evening English classes for adults.

Chapter 4: Crossing Boundaries: Mezcla Helps Students Succeed

The next chapter is split into two parts to look at what is actually occurring at Mezcla Elementary to alleviate some of the barriers Hispanic students could be facing when entering the school's boundary. The first part will examine the issue from the schools and teachers' perspectives. It will look at the infrastructures put in place and their intended aims. The second part will look at the students' and parents' perspectives. This will evaluate how the parents and students experience the schools infrastructures. The two sections are meant to mirror each other so that the schools aims are also "evaluated" by the families. In this way, I hope to provide a "double vision" as suggested by Lareau and Weininger (2003).

Aims of the School: How they "Help every child"

It is clear that between the high levels of poverty and the Hispanic students' cultural background, school can be very foreign to them. Ally, Rose and Susan emphasize the need to teach basic school rules and behaviors, all the way to basic skills, such as how to hold a pencil correctly (Susan), as they are well aware that many of the kids that enter the classrooms have little to no training in this regard. Ally acknowledges that "I grew up with monopoly, candy land and we had those games at our house, and you sort of learned to take turns by playing these games in your house. These are kids that maybe don't have that many toys or that, that resource or maybe their culture; they don't have that tradition." Although it may be partly a monetary issue, she also sees certain games and experiences as cultural, and that she can't expect every Hispanic child that enters her class to understand what monopoly is, nor to have learned the skills that come with that game.

Rose comments how "for Spanish speaking families I have made connections; it's like a very deep family connection. Like they see you, they want to kiss you on the cheek, like the

very respectful cultural thing.” In this case, it is clear that certain behaviors are different for the Spanish speaking families and that Rose sees it as a cultural difference. She does not think it is bad or strange, but simply understands that it shows a cultural background different from what she sees as the typical U.S. American.

The curriculum used in kindergarten, Tools, has cultural training inherently built into the program. As I observed early on during the fall semester, one of the centers during English Language Learning was to use the words pencil, marker, crayon and chair. It consisted of roughly ten minutes for each group, with a white, female T.A. instructing students to “show me glue,” and “stand up. Push your chair in. Move one chair over.” In the example with multiple instructions, the T.A. asks them not to do anything until she finishes the instructions. She comments later that it is training “so they [students] can function in the classroom when the teacher’s giving directions,” and that “they know the commands, and learn to listen to a progression of commands.” The purpose is to get the children used to school vocabulary as well as behaviors they will be asked to do, so that later the process will work smoothly in the classroom setting. This clearly shows how culturally inclined the school setting is, and that the kids need help understanding and learning in order to be successful in that culture.

Mezcla’s program and its kindergarten teachers are unique in how they provide training for the students, but also involve the parents and create continuity between home and school through the bilingual program. Mezcla’s kindergarten program provides one template to help poor Hispanic students succeed in the academic culture common in the U.S. Although it still expects the students to conform to many of the schools cultural norms, Mezcla attempts to guide the students. I will turn to discussing three of the major areas in which Mezcla intends to bridge

the gap between home and school, making it easier for the students to cross the boundaries.

They are: “Slow to Go Fast,” Language, and Home Visits.

“Slow to Go Fast”

“Slow to go fast” is a phrase I have taken from Ally which was briefly discussed above in the curriculum section. It is important to reiterate it here, as it so deeply tied to children learning about the school culture and what it takes to be a part of it. “Slow to go fast” represents the importance of teaching the students what it means to be a student and what school expectations are, so that the academic instructions run smoothly later on in the year. This teaching method provides the repetitive training needed to develop the cultural tools for success in the boundary, or field, of school. I will be using the progression of their disciplinary system to show how explicit the norms and ruled of school are made for the new students.

When I arrived at the school mid-spring semester, I was quite taken aback by the disciplinary system. Teachers or T.A.’s would give out verbal “redirect” warnings to the students. This meant that they need to redirect their attention to the task at hand (writing, reading, listening to the teacher etc.). These were often short and curtly stated. At times, I noticed the T.A. not even saying the child’s name, but making only eye contact before saying “redirect.” If a child continued the behavior they were given a “refocus.” The child would have to go sit in a corner and fill out a bright pink piece of paper. The task was to draw a picture, and for some students write a sentence, about what they were doing, and on the other side of the column about what they should be doing. They were not allowed to leave the corner until a teacher or T.A. checked off their paper. If a student collected to many refocuses, with the meaning that they were not focused on their work, they would get sent to Academy during lunch and recess to make up for lost learning time.

At times, it took a long while before anyone came back to the student, and since they weren't supposed to interrupt the instructional time, had to sit, hand in air, waiting for someone to notice. I was, honestly, taken aback by the system and did not think it so great. It seemed very distant from the students and age inappropriate when I first witnessed some of the redirect exchanges.

Along with redirects and refocuses, children can also earn jaguar paws for good behavior. These are stickers that they get to wear for the rest of the day. In addition, they fill out a little note card and stick it in a jar. At the end of a week or two, tallies are taken to see who got the most. These rewards are not given out every time a child has good behavior, and happen intermittently when a teacher happens to notice exemplary work or behavior, especially when it is a child that tends to have difficulty paying attention in class. As a whole, I felt I saw less jaguar paws handed out than redirects/refocuses, although all the teachers agree it should be reversed. That way a more positive tone is set in the classroom.⁸

However, once I was able to witness the beginning of the year, the disciplinary system makes more sense. I believe my initial reactions still hold, and I am not a fan of the system, but I can understand it now as a developing process. Redirects and refocuses are phased in later in the year, and are not used at the beginning. Rose explains:

“You need to have the kids act out what it looks like and what it doesn't look like, so they fully understand what does respectful mean, what does being productive mean. What does... why will I go to refocus if I do this. So before any of that happens we always take time to, um, I act it out first. I always say 'let me show you my thumbs up way, let me show you my thumbs down way' and then I have them act it out. And I have them, with partners, come up and act it out in front of the group. So then, they know the expectations.”

⁸ More recently I had a discussion with Ally. It turns out they have plans to re-design their disciplinary system as they found the “Redirect” and “Refocuses” were too much like time outs and had a negative connotation. She had just attended a training in which they discussed how to make more positive disciplinary decisions rather than the negative they have now. Unfortunately, during my time at Mezcla, none of the changes had been implemented.

These disciplinary learning situations using acting and discussions occurred frequently in all of the kindergarten classrooms at the beginning of the year. The teachers often provided review before doing activities with the children to re-establish what was expected of them. The teachers themselves modeled what good behavior looked like. For example, Susan was going to have a mock snowball fight with the Spanish students using crumpled papers. The children were clearly getting very excited, eyes glowing, they were waiting for the activity to start.

Susan took her time to establish the rules and the following conversation took place:

Susan to class: "Can we usually throw snowballs or other things at school?"

Kids respond: "No!" and "Bad choice."

Susan to class: "why is it a bad choice?"

Kids: "you get time out!" (This, Ally explained, is a very common response for children this age).

Susan: "Hmmm." She waits for more answers to come.

Kids: After a long pause "You could hurt someone!"

Susan: "Right! You could hurt someone!"

She continues the conversation by acting out certain behaviors such as throwing the snowball at someone's head. "Do we do this?" she asked and waited for the kids to respond "No!" Susan continues, "Can we run?" The kids respond, "No!" She strikes a deal with all the kids before letting them start: once she calls stop, everyone immediately stops and helps pick up the snowballs to place in recycling. The kids get to throw their snowballs for about two minutes. Susan and I get pelted (not in the head!); we were favorite target of the kids. All goes well and the kids actually stopped when they were asked to do so, and no one, not even the children with bad behavioral tendencies, broke the rules for the snowball fight.

At the beginning of the year, all three teachers are very explicit about what they expect the students to do. As in the example above, rules and expected behaviors are reviewed *before* students lose control during certain activities. In a way, the teachers are setting them up for success. And instead of redirects, they more frequently took the time to speak to children

individually. Ally pulled a student aside who had been trying to cut the glue stick with scissors. She explained that these were important school materials and that breaking them was not O.K. She showed him how to use the glue stick properly and explained what materials scissors were used for. Not only did this encounter reiterate the importance of school materials, it also taught the student what behaviors are considered appropriate with them.

Jaguar paws are very often used early in the semester as reminders to everyone about what the proper behavior should be. Giving out a paw allows a teacher to say “‘Oh look at! Jackie, came in, sat down quietly, she looks like a jaguar, sitting respectfully, crisscross applesauce, spoons in a bowl [arms in lap].’ Then I usually give her one to reward that positive behavior, but also as a reminder to everybody else, ‘Oh, I’m over here playing with the legos, I’m supposed to be over there. If I was doing that I would have gotten a jaguar paw.’ So it’s reinforcing the positive behavior, and yet like, flashing red sign ‘hello! Everybody else! This is what you’re supposed to be doing,’” (Susan). The real purpose is to use positive reinforcement to elicit the proper behaviors in the school environment. The teachers try to stay away from negative reinforcement, at least ideally. There have been many class periods where I heard more redirects than positive comments, because they provide faster results. This is especially true as the year progresses.

These very explicit descriptions of the rules and expectations allow students to hear, over and over, what the norms are and an explanation of why they are important. The three big rules at Mezcla are to be respectful, have a safe and healthy body and to be responsible. Most of the explanations fall into the categories. That way the three big rules are also frequently reviewed.

By half way through the year, there is a decrease in the in depth explanations and shorter requests from the teachers are given. Only after this training, can the teachers begin to use

redirect and refocuses successfully. Otherwise they are just too abstract of terms that have no value or meaning for the students. Susan even explained that last year, she never really fully used redirects, because “it was too abstract,” and some of the kids in her class “just had not grasped it yet.”

The slow implementation gives time to those students who are not used to the structure used at Mezcla and can slowly acclimate to the expectations. Susan never actually fully used Redirects and Refocuses, because she felt her homeroom class was not ready for it. She was able to adjust the pace of the disciplinary system to accommodate her group. The underlying meaning of the redirect, refocus, Academy progression is that learning time is important and if you are not on task then you are losing valuable time. Although the teachers often repeated that the behavior is “interrupting your learning and your friends learning,” since “that’s really what [redirect] is for,” (Rose). Giving clear instructions also helps mediate bad feelings or stress that arrive from a student getting in trouble and not having known what they were doing wrong. In this way students who may initially not understand the culture and behavioral norms of the school’s culture, can have time and explicit instruction to learn, making the process a lot less confusing to the student.

The concept of “Slow to go Fast” was also incorporated into academic tools and learning. Students would learn how to use different tools (sound charts, classroom resources), peer help and school supplies so that later they could revert to that knowledge in order to complete harder

tasks. By doing this, the students could become self-sufficient in the classroom in that they were able to help themselves, even if that meant asking their peers or teachers for aid.⁹

If students enter during the year, or leave, it can complicate their training and time frame for learning. During my time, I only saw students leave, not coming, and was unable to observe that situation. The one Spanish-speaking boy who had missed the first semester was retained in kindergarten for second year, although Ally says she's not a big fan of the practice. However, she felt that he would benefit from progressing through the whole kindergarten program and would then be better prepared for first grade.

Importance of Language

By using a bilingual program, Mezcla allows Spanish-speaking children to have part of the day in their Native language. In addition it gives parents access to the educational setting as well which they do not have at an English only school due to language barriers. Communication between the teachers and parents is seen as paramount to the children's success at Mezcla.

For the Spanish students, it is important to be able to be comfortable in their native language for part of the day. It creates a congruency for them that can mediate stress and discomfort by created higher levels of consonance for them. That way they have less stress over understanding and not wanting to speak up. Susan addresses this, stating that kids are less likely to take risks and participate in class when “‘there’s nobody else here that can speak my language,’ you know, ‘there’s no one else here who looks like me and can understand what I’m saying... I’m not gonna speak up and raise my hand and I don’t even know what she’s asking

⁹ I spoke to Ally later on during my second year when I was not very active in the classroom anymore. Upon asking how the students were doing she sighed, “They’re...Ok. They’re not ready for first.” She explained how the beginning of the year had been hectic and confusing because they added a new teacher during the middle of the Fall semester. “We were behind so we scrambled to catch up,” resulting in them skipping over a lot of the training period inherent to “Slow to go Fast.” She said direct negative results and stated that the kids didn’t have the background knowledge like the last cohort had. This really shows how important the training period is for the students.

because I don't understand it.'” Susan does an excellent job of trying to make the English classroom more accessible for the Spanish students. For example, when she is reading a book, she asks the whole class to act out words with her and she re-explains the same sentence in easier words.

In addition, the predictable pattern throughout the day and school year, means that the kids know, even if English is hard sometimes, that they will be back in the Spanish setting. As mentioned by Sapolsky (2004), predictability mediates stress. In addition, since students take turns at being the expert in heterogeneous language groups, collaboration and equality is created for the Spanish-speaking students at Mezcla, which Allport (1954) states is crucial for better relations between two races or cultures.

Susan expands this to the actual academic content describing what it would be like to learn some academics in Spanish and then come to school in English:

“and maybe my family is Spanish speaker and they've taught me all the Spanish alphabet and now I'm looking at an alphabet that doesn't have a ñ, you know, 'what letter makes that sound because that's what I know.' Transferring that over. I mean their starting back from... a two year old basically and here they are 5, 6 years old trying 'ta... make it work.'”

By providing Spanish in school, Mezcla is ensuring that the knowledge Spanish students have been learning at home is transferable to school. This is only possible if their language is utilized to help them learn. This transferability can dramatically increase the value of their cultural tool kit at school, as what they have already learned can be used continually. It also helps make the boundaries between home and school less stark for the students, allowing ease in boundary crossing.

When I asked the teachers whether they considered language a deficit they unanimously responded no, “not in our school, because um, the dual language program, I think, at least evens

that playing field. Um, because everybody gets a turn at being an expert,” (Ally). In this way, the teachers and school have successfully eliminated one of the ways that Hispanic students may be seen as disadvantaged or deficient, as is common in less alternative schools.

The teachers also see the bilingual program as giving access to the parents. Many of my interviews were in Spanish, because the Mom’s would not have been able to do the interview in English. By having bilingual teachers, the parents can actually communicate and be part of the school community. Ally explains the importance of this: “You know, I couldn’t imagine that mom... she would never, never go into any other school building. If her kid got put in new school building, and it didn’t have that, sufficient number of bilingual staff, we would lose that mom. At least we provide access to the education. And to be participants in the kid’s education for the parents.”

Ally, Susan and Rose all saw home support and help from the parents as critical to the students success in school. Without it the students get less practice with school materials and lack the support to motivate them. Without the bilingual program many parents would be unable to help their students. Ally states that “We don’t cripple the parents and say ‘OK, here’s the homework in English, do your best.’ So, we send all the homework home bilingually. If it’s an English week, if it’s the Spanish week, we want to make sure that the parent’s have the option to help.” In this way, Ally shows how the bilingual program is not only aimed at helping the students feel comfortable at school, but also granting the parents the ability to participate in their children’s education.

Home Visits

As part of Mezcla’s programs, teachers do home visits. These allow the teachers to explain the program and the homework to parents, as well as get to know the student’s home life.

In addition, the teacher is a physical representation of school in the child's home. Kindergarten is the most important year for this, as many of the parents, and especially the student, are completely new to school culture. Ally, as the only Spanish speaking kindergarten teacher, is the one to visit the Spanish homes, even if the child is technically in someone else's homeroom class. Otherwise the parents would get nothing out of it. These home visits allow Ally to "establish rapport with a family," which is important:

"Especially in kindergarten, if this is the parent's first kid going to school here, their like... 'wow' you know. And literacy levels with families living in poverty are not always the greatest. So when we send home pages and pages that explain norms and regulations about school, it's so overwhelming. It just doesn't get read. You know, and so, if I can take the time to face-to-face to trouble shoot, it does benefit me as a teacher, because I know the parents are on the same page as me," (Ally).

Here Ally mentions how it is a time to trouble shoot and explain the "norms and regulations" bringing some of the school culture to the parents so that they know what is expected of them as parents and of their children. It is a way for Ally to explicitly talk to the parents and let them know about some of the cultural norms they may not be aware of in school. Ally further speaks of the "transition for the kids to fit into school life" and since there are "certain tasks asked of them in school" having "practice at home doing [the tasks], [the parents] are gonna make that transition for that student easier."

Although Ally does not explicitly use the term of repeated cultural tasks and tool kits, it is very clear that she sees a high value in giving students a lot of practice at the schools cultural tasks. Through the home visits Ally is able to tell parents how to help give their children practice. Susan and Rose have similar sentiments:

"But for kindergarten it's great, because you get to go in and teach them about home work, you know, this is the first time that their student, especially if it's their first child, has had to do homework of any kind and the importance of continuing some of those structures at home, that they see in the classroom," (Susan)

“So, it shows you [the teachers] what [the kids] learned. Expectations that are at home, and then it shows you when they come [to school] that we’re not just trying to teach them academically, like, that we’re trying to, not break, but re-teach appropriate expectations maybe? Or re-teach school behaviors, things that are OK at home but not at school,” (Rose).

By using the terms “structure” and “re-teach” Susan and Rose are also getting at cultural norms and tool kits that the students have yet to learn. They recognize that school is a type of “field” and that certain rules apply there. Not all the students have the tools, or the habitus, to function successfully in the school field. Maintaining some of the structure from school at home is important to mediate the boundaries between home and school.

By actively engaging the parents in the process of helping the students learn the norms and expectations in the school setting, they are further breaking down the boundaries that the students have to cross. Ally tries to break down the “power differential” where the parents defer to the expertise, making clear to them that “we can collaborate, we can work as a team.” However, in order to successfully do this, parents must understand the school’s culture and learn how to help their students under its rules. When Ally succeeds, the students are given pervasive support that Morgan (2008) says is so important in order to learn a new cultural tool kit. Rosa explains that the home visit from Ally gave her the tools to help her son, Jesus, with his homework: “because the teacher came once, she gave me a paper... She told me some things so that I could help him to copy his letters and learn to write a little. And the material the teacher gave me, when he does have homework to write something, I can help him with those materials.” In this way, the parents can have more power where school is concerned. “They like it that I come in and explain ‘this is how you do the homework’ because this is a different culture for them,” (Ally). Home visits give parents a better understanding about the school’s culture. This may also help the children as the parents understand what happens when they are not at home.

Home visits can last between half hour to two hours depending on the family and their questions. After the initial home visits, Ally very carefully targets students where a follow up home visit is necessary. For the year 2012, she has picked ten homes to re-visit.

All three of the teachers find it important to “approach each kid more individually” (Rose), and can do so after they have learned more about their situations from the home visit. The parents see this value very clearly when the teachers take the time to visit them at home and know that the teachers “focus on individual students,” (Marisol). Knowing about the situations at home gives the teachers a better understanding of behaviors at school. It also means students can have their home lives validated, respected and taken in to consideration at school.

Having learned that one of her students often had to go to her mom’s night shifts with her, Ally could respond properly to the student’s tiredness:

“the kid is having an off day, if I know the kid and the situation I’m like ‘You know, I bet this is going one.’ I can make the decision in my head and take into account what I know about that family... and know the right question to ask with that student you know... she’s super tired, ‘Did you go to work with mommy last night?’ And she’s like ‘Yes.’ ‘Do you want some rest time?’ ‘yeeees.’”

It would be “easy to assume that the kid is just naughty,” but if “you dig a little deeper you know [that] the kid could be off for a perfectly valid reason, because they’re pretty vulnerable to their environmental changes,” (Ally). When teachers have this kind of background knowledge, punishing children for “misbehavior” that stems from “responding to the stress at home” can be avoided. Ensuring that the child is not constantly in tension with the schools rules elevates their experience as well as their self esteem (Ally) in the cultural setting.

It also ensures that the teachers are asking the right questions. I was outside on one cold day with the kids during recess. Angela, a slim and rather demure Hispanic girl, was looking rather sad. I asked her what was wrong, and after a long, hesitant pause she said her stomach

hurt. I asked if she had eaten something bad, after which she immediately sunk her head down and twisted her body with limp arms. I sat down with her and she rested her head on my criss-crossed legs. Finally one of the teachers came by and what was wrong. I pronounced that she had a stomach ache. “Oh!” She said and addressing Angela, “Are you hungry?” Angela nods, perking up at having the issue identified. She got escorted inside and sat for the rest of recess with a bowl of fruit loops and some string cheese. It turns out that Angela doesn’t always get enough food, but the teacher was aware of the situation because she had had contact with the parents during home visits.

Susan points out that “the most important piece of Mezcla, and every school for that matter, is that we educated every child. Um, and, at Mezcla I could say that it’s really each individual child.” This is made possible through home visits which really show appreciation and respect for the individual child. Although the kids may have a shared cultural background and share similar experiences, home visits drive home the need for individual attention.

It is for these reasons that the home visits are so important. They make the culture of the school explicit to the parents, and create continuity between the two settings for the students. Ally stated that home visits also help bring parents into the school which “it does break a lot of barriers to have parents come into the [school] building.” That way the boundaries between home and school are less pervasive and easier to cross. Home visits are also seen as showing respect and interest in the students individually. In addition, home visits help develop *confianza* with the Spanish parents, a type of trust bond. It will be discussed in the next section.

The Families' Perspective

The school is well liked by the Hispanic students and their parents that I spoke with. I rarely saw any of the children truly upset in the classroom, although they did mention not liking certain activities from time to time. The children, by the end of the year were comfortable in the classroom and willing to show me how to complete certain activities: that is, they were able to walk me through the individual steps as they had learned it throughout the year. This shows that the children are readily progressing through their academics in a way that builds on itself. In addition all the parents (excluding one missing data) that completed the survey reported that their child was always happy, unanimously circling fives for “always.”

The mothers had nothing bad to say about the academics and claimed “it is a good school,” and “Me gusta como manejan todo [I like how they drive/manage everything],” (Marcella). They feel connected to the school and its teachers, and have enjoyed watching their children grow throughout kindergarten.

When I ran the consensus analysis on the 15 participants with whom it was possible, there was a lack of consensus with an eigenratio of 2.87. I believe that, had I been able to run the numbers including participants who circled all fives, there would have been a consensus. However, this shows that there is still a large amount of variance among the parents. This may stem from the fact that some are very recent immigrants while some of the parents grew up in the U.S. When I ran statistics and frequencies through SPSS for the same items only one question showed a high level of variance. This means that parents have similar expectations from school and themselves as parents of students.

I will now reflect the three main parts of the program (Slow to go Fast, Language and Home Visits) from the view of the parents and students to show how the program at Mezcla is

working for the affected parties. This section will also include a fourth topic, *Confianza*. *Confianza* is a form of trust that the Spanish-speaking parents at Mezcla recognized as very important. Through the schools programs and connections the parents felt that they were able to form this bond with the teachers. I see as a culmination of all the things Mezcla and the kindergarten program are doing right in order to make the school and home less segregated

“Slow to go Fast”

The slow to go fast system is a little harder to analyze as the parents didn’t know much about the exact curriculum methodology. However, when I asked the kids later in the year whether they could tell me some of the rules in the class and if the rules were fair, they responded yes and could give me some examples, some even using the three big blanket rules; in order to be a good student you have to have “a safe body,” (Sophia). How deeply the students understand the underlying meaning of the redirect system, I’m not sure. They often referred to re-focus as a synonym for time-outs, instead of acknowledging the true meaning underneath pertaining to lost learning time and the need for attention redirection.

The jaguar paws however are internalized by the kids effectively. They receive a clear message about what they did right, and take great pride in getting their paws, showing them off to me and at home. As Myra describes with her daughter: “And it’s really cute because she, tells me about it, you know... sometimes I see it and if I’m not really paying attention she’s like ‘Mom... do you know why I got it?!’ And I’m like ‘no, tell me!’ and she’s like ‘well this is why...’” The children are able to actively recall what they did correctly and further internalize what being a good student means. Later on the students reacted when the teachers asked for good behavior for different tasks without explicit instructions.

As for academics, the slow to fast system seems to work as well. The parents were enthusiastic about their children's progress stating that "the children are learning quickly," (Arcelis). This is because clear steps are created for the students to learn, and each step is completed in turn.

The children in the classroom are first taught how to use school materials and what help there is for them. For example, at the beginning of the year a lot of time is invested into learning the alphabet using a sound chart. The sound chart provides small pictures next to the letter to remind the children what sound it makes. Using a short tune, the class recites the sound chart with hints and reminders from the teacher, including how to move the mouth properly. It is not until later that the sound chart is made available as laminated sheets of paper that the children can retrieve on their own at need when they are engaged in writing assignments. The students, once it has been established, go and get sound charts on their own. Not only could they retrieve the sound charts but they could actively use them on their own. They did so even though I was next to them as a resource knowing that it was a way to complete their task alone. They were then able to complete more advanced tasks of spelling out words.

This example shows how a significant amount of time was invested early on, so that the kids could later spell on their own. The sound chart tool grows with them as they begin to take on harder tasks. And the kids utilized the sound charts frequently, making it a huge success. The children continued using the sound chart when they moved on from one letter words to spelling out full words, making the transition easier, as sounding out letters was second nature to them at that point. In this way, the teacher's method of teaching how to use school materials pays off later in the year when the kids are progressing through different levels of academic skills.

Language

All of the Spanish students I spoke to said that Spanish was easier to understand and to talk in. The English class is harder for them, because “I don’t understand everything that is being done,” (Roberto). Most like speaking English; the two languages are “equal,” (Sophia) especially for those that have older siblings that speak some English with them. However, when asked which class they like best and which teacher, Spanish settings invariably won out over the English settings. It was also very noticeable that Spanish students were more willing to individually speak up in the Spanish classroom, though as a group they participated fine in English class.

Most of the children I had conversations with preferred to speak in Spanish. Two of the girls switched comfortably back and forth between the two languages and seemed to enjoy doing it. However, for the rest of the students, comfort came with hearing Spanish, and I could tell some of them relaxed when I told them they could speak to me in whichever language they chose. A few quickly responded “Spanish!” This alone was telling the level of comfort the students receive from having the option of speaking in Spanish to at least one of their teachers.

For the parents, having the bilingual program is extremely important for their own sake, as well as their children’s. In response to the question “It is important that the children maintain their home language: Spanish,” there was a mean of 4.92 with only .08 variance. When asked if their child was actually maintaining their language, there was a mean of 4.61 with a variance .618, implying that, for the most part, the parents felt that Mezcla was living up to their expectations.

By providing a bilingual setting, the program allowed parents to fit in: “I feel good/comfortable at Mezcla because many people speak Spanish. They speak to one if one

needs something. I don't need an interpreter," (Rosa). The parent's presence is validated through the use of their native language. Only a few of the mothers know sufficient English to effectively converse in it. Guadalupe describes her difficulty with her son's English homeroom teacher: "His teacher, we can't understand each other, because we are from different cultures. She, she does not speak Spanish. And I, I don't speak English. Therefore, when I need something I have to go to the other teacher who gives classes to my son at times." Even though there are resources for her at this school, it is still an annoyance when she can't directly speak to her son's homeroom teacher. If all the teachers spoke only English, there would be no one for Guadalupe to talk to at all. "If they did not speak Spanish, I would not be able to communicate with them, because I don't know English," (Arcelis). Mezcla, with limited resources is doing its best to serve all of its parents, even if it is not always as ideal as it could be as is the case with Guadalupe.

The mothers also comment on the homework. They appreciate that it gets sent home in Spanish so that they can help their students study at home. At an all English school, many of the Hispanic parents with whom I spoke would have a hard time helping their child with homework, and would know little of what is going on at school. Arcelis explains that when it comes to English, "The problem is with me, that I won't be able to help with their homework." Those that had older children at Mezcla admitted that when homework did start coming home in English, they were not able to help. Marcella used the example of her older daughter: "I have some problems, because sometimes, she says '*Mami* I don't understand [the homework]!' [and she responds] '*Aye!* Neither do I!'" The parents' gratitude for bilingual homework shows how important it is. It provides equity, allowing all parents to aid their students with their homework.

It also gives the parents control and the ability to do something in order to help their children's success.

The Spanish language is also important because of its cultural value to the parents. Spanish is seen as "the part from me," (Lola) while English is the part of the children. They use a possessive vocabulary around Spanish, clearly delineating how it is *their* language and is important just because of that. It is "definitely a heritage language in the family," (Ally) and is therefore part of children's "roots," (Marcella). Arcelis states that "like losing their language, it is their culture." Denying the Spanish part of the students would mean neglecting the part of them that is tied to their parents and home culture.

The Spanish-speaking children at Mezcla are facing two cultures, the Hispanic from home and the American from school. Both are a part of them and all mothers agree that both languages are very important to learn so that they can function in the US, but still communicate with their families. "If they only know one language, well, they will only have halves of their nationality, right? And if they speak both languages, they can understand both the halves," (Arcelis). By having a school that lets them learn both their languages, they are having both parts of them validated and supported. This way all of them, both halves, can feel consonant in the school setting depending on what class they are in.

Home Visits

Home visits were greatly accepted among the Spanish parents. The parents all loved having home visits. They acknowledge how much time and effort the teachers are offering them in order to help their children. Arcelis says "they are giving me their time. They are giving to me by coming, because they are losing time they could use for themselves, for their families, and

they are using it for us.” Arcelis comment shows how valued these visits are and that the parents have an understanding of how lucky they are to be receiving them.

All the Spanish parents stated that it was a good experience in which they received valuable information including what their students will learn and “how they will study,” (Lola). They also appreciate being able to “see what the teacher of my child is going to be like,” and going to the school to do so can be difficult with work or other children to care for (Rosa). Home visits give them the opportunity to make a connection, even when they can’t afford to visit the school for various reasons.

They also comment on how useful home visits are for them to learn about the school and what to expect. Rosa comments on how Ally gave her ways to help her son when she visited: “Yes, I can help him with homework, because one time the teacher came, she gave me a paper... she gave me a few things so that I could help him copy letters and learn to write a little. If he needs to write something, I can help him with this material.” For Rosa, having the one on one time with Ally in her home gave her tools to be academically supportive for her son. Arcelis also describes how “She [the teacher] taught me how to help [my daughter] how to read. That first we must learn the vowels.” In this way, parents felt they were receiving tools to further help their students. This type of empowerment strengthens parents’ commitment to helping their children at home with academics.

When asked on the survey “I can help my child with homework” on a five point scale, five being always, the mean was 4.71 with 23 out of 28 circling a five. These parents show that they have the capability to engage in school materials with their students at home. This allows students to bring a part of school home and engage in it with their parents. This further helps to

break down some of the barriers poor Hispanic students at Mezcla may face when entering school.

Marisol describes how “every child is different; every child has its... way of being. The home also reflects what they like,” and that it is important for the teachers to know these individual preferences, likes and dislikes. They recognize that through the home visits “they can see how the children are... Sometimes there are children with some problems or something,” (Rosa). They know, when the teachers do home visits, that not only do they get to ask questions, “they can see how the children are... Sometimes there are children with some problems or something,” and are given valuable information, but that the teacher is also getting to know their student individually. When asked: “The teachers focus/pay attention to my child” on a five point scale, 21 out of 28 circled five and none circled below a three. The mean was 4.70. These results suggest that the parents really see their students getting the attention and “focus” they want and expect the teachers to give them. Home visits are one way the Ally solidifies this for the Spanish families.

The students I did ask about home visits said it was fun that the teacher visited and that “I got to show her my room!” (Katrina). It was fun for them to be able to show off what was theirs. Katrina eagerly jumped to show me her room when I visited her home. Roberto also presented me with many important artifacts when I was at his house, such as his coloring book, toy guitar and the family photo on the wall. It was important for him to share a part of himself with me, and I assume it was the same with Ally. Ana even said that “Yes [I like home visits]. So that they [the teachers] see what I do in my house and they can see my house.” Myra also pointed out how home visits allow the students to “see the interest between parents and the teachers.”

This can help create a strong tie between home and school that makes it easier for the students to cross the boundary between the two.

The home visits demonstrated to the parents a strong investment on the part of the teachers. Through the home visits a rapport with the teachers was started for the parents, and they were able to feel more comfortable with Mezcla. The students enjoy the visit and seem to feel special because of it. Home visits really help build a connection for both the parents and the students that helps to mediate the boundaries.

Chapter 5: Is it Working?: Signs of Success

This chapter presents further evidence of success for the program at Mezcla at mediating boundary crossing for its Hispanic students. It is already clear that “Slow to go Fast”, Language and Home Visits are received well by the parents and students. These three parts of the program are successfully coming across to those it’s meant to help. Beyond these three points there is further evidence that the program is working at this stage for these students.

First I will present some quantitative evidence of success. This is based on the surveys collected from the participating Hispanic parents. The logic that I follow is that if parents are comfortable and connected to the school, it will reflect upon their children and to a certain extent be passed to them. In this way, I take parents comfort level with the school as a measure of how the students may feel about school in general. That students feel exactly the way their parents do is a fallacy. However, Rose, Susan and Ally, emphasize that students with parents invested in their education have more support and success in school.

For the quantitative information I further utilize consonance correlations with stress related questions. Research presented by Dressler (2005) and Gravlee, Dressler and Bernard (2005) state that those people who are less consonant tend to experience more stress. In this case, the survey was assessing the cultural consensus the parents have about being a student’s parent and whether they were consonant with that role. Surprisingly, there was very little correlation between level of consonance and stress related questions. This actually speaks in favor of Mezcla Elementary.

Finally, I will present a discussion on *Confianza*. As far as qualitative findings go, *Confianza* represents the culmination of Mezcla connecting with its Hispanic families. The trust-bond of *Confianza* represents both an ongoing connection between the parents and the school as

well as a comfortable relationship between the two. The quantitative and the qualitative presented here represent outcomes resulting from a program really working to aid and benefit its Hispanic families and most importantly its children.

Quantitative Evidence of Success

First of all, questions pertaining to fear or nervousness in English situations consistently showed trends toward the increase of stress. Being scared or being nervous are signs of stress. When asked “I am nervous or am scared when I am in an English Environment,” 17 participants out of 28 circled sometimes and always. The similar questions, “I am nervous or am scared when I need to speak English” and “It is difficult to ask for what I need or voice my opinions in English situations,” had 16 and 17 responses to sometimes or always. What the responses suggest is that over half of the participants experience stress in English conversations and situations. If they only had access to an English only school, they would feel at odds with the environment and would be exposed to uncomfortable and unwelcoming situations. This would only serve to fortify the boundary between home and school. The barriers for the parents and their children would be increased due to language differences.

As part of my quantitative work, I used the consensus analysis to calculate each participants consonance. Since using ORDVAR showed that there was low agreement on item 6, I left out that item when calculating consonance. This is because low agreement indicates the item not being part of the cultural model. *Consonance* is how much an individual meets the consensus standards or is able to fulfill the cultural model (Dressler, 2005). In theory, those that have less consonance may experience higher levels of stress or discomfort in the given cultural

setting. As a person's score for consonance increases, they are becoming less consonant. This is because the consonance score represents how far the individual scores from the consensus.

To look at this I created scatter plots and ran Spearman Rho correlations with consonance scores and the stress items on my survey. I used Spearman Rho as it takes into account the nonparametric data and small sample size. I did this using SPSS. The most notable finding is that there were no strong correlations that have to do with stress in the school setting.

For the correlation of Consonance (without item 6) and the parents self reported attendance of school programs yielded a very low coefficient, $r(28) = -.09$. This means that although there was a very slight decrease in attendance as consonance decreased, for the most part, all parents were attending school programs such as conferences, open houses, graduations etc., at similar rates. Figure 2 shows a box plot of the correlation distribution. It shows how grouped the responses are and that there is no clear linear relationship. However, the scatterplot also shows that none of the participants responded below a three.

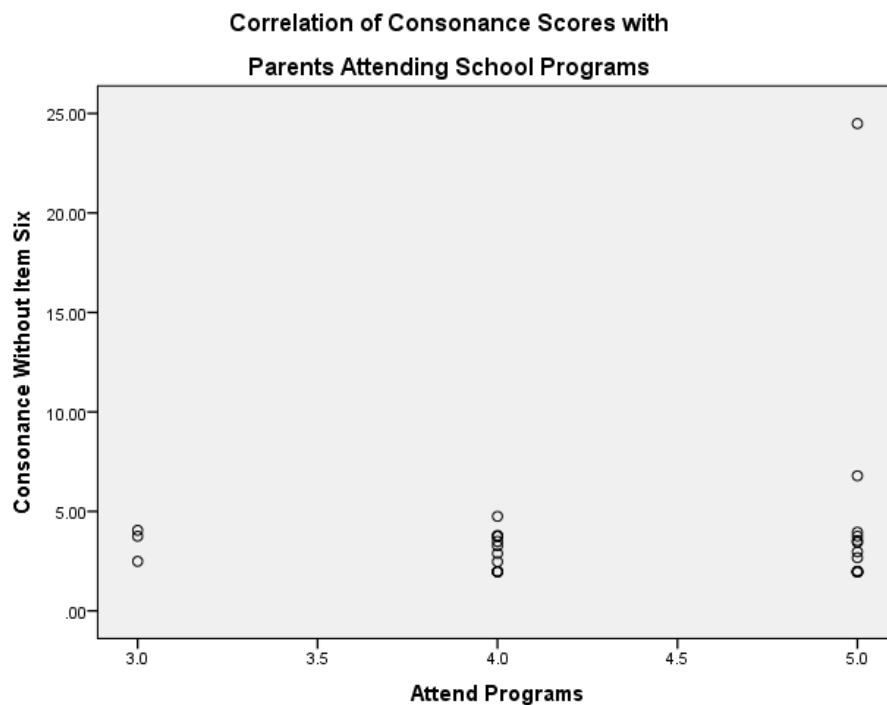


Figure 2

In addition, when Consonance scores were correlated to the item “I am scared or nervous of speaking with the teachers at Mezcla,” the correlation coefficient was $r(28) = -.135$. This is also a weak correlation. When examining the scatter plot in Figure 3, it is clear that there is no real linear relationship. In this case most of the responses are grouped towards the response 1 being never. Even the person with the highest consonance score, being the most dis-consonant as they are the furthest from the consensus, does not indicate stress when communicating or speaking with the teachers at Mezcla. This also shows that most of Hispanic parent participants feel comfortable speaking with the teachers.

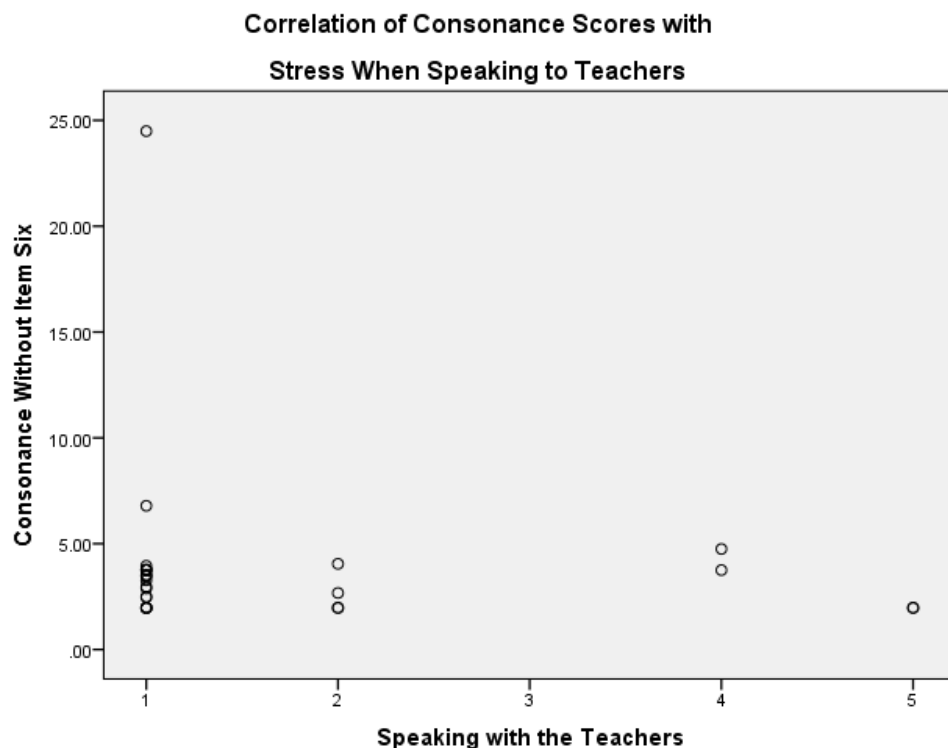


Figure 3

Most importantly, *confianza* with the teachers is not correlated with consonance with a very low coefficient, $r(28) = -.11$. *Confianza*, as will be discussed more below, is a type of trust-bond that most of the Hispanic mother’s with whom I spoke have formed with the teachers of their children. If any of the parents can maintain this type of trust with the teachers, despite level

of consonance, then Mezcla is doing things right in order to connect with the parents. Figure 4 shows the scatterplot of the correlation.

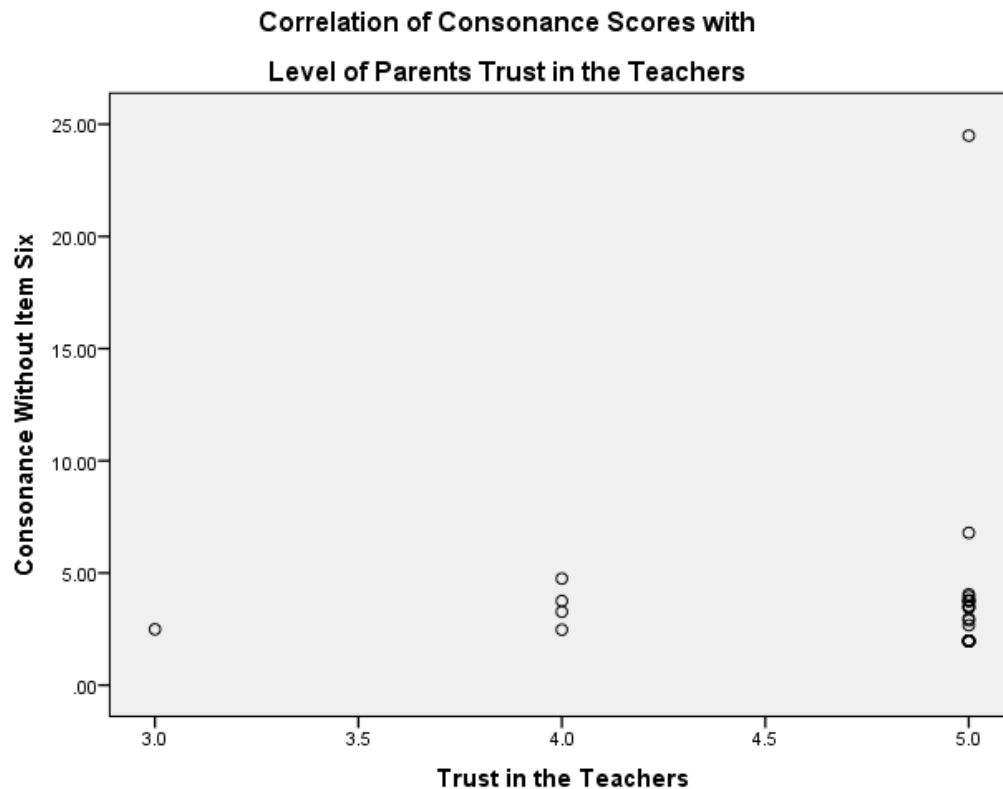


Figure 4

What the lack of correlation shows is that even the parents who may not be a “model parent” of a student, they are still able to form a trust with the teachers. In this way, the teachers are reaching out to those parents who may really need it, and to those children that may have more trouble crossing boundaries due to lower support from parents.

What these findings show is that even those parents that have less consonance with the model of being a parent of a student, are able to feel comfortable at Mezcla elementary. It means that stress is mostly low, despite not living up to the standards of being a student’s parent. This can only strengthen the connection between home and school, which ultimately will help the student when crossing the boundary between the two.

Confianza

The basic translation of *confianza* is trust. However, after having multiple parents use the word in interviews it was clear to me that it is not as simple as that. Ally also explicitly used *confianza* instead of the English word for trust to explain to me what type of bond she forms with the parents during home visits. So I asked a few parents about what *confianza* means.

In order to win *confianza* with someone “you have to chat about your own problems and give another person *confianza*. *Confianza* starts with chatting,” (Guadalupe). The trust does not come from deferring to expertise, but from getting to know a person, and each person giving mutual trust. Ally often shows trust in the parents when, during home visits, she asks them to help their students. You “talk so you can relax,” (Guadalupe). As pointed out by a respondent on the survey, “If one has *confianza*, they have good communication.”

Confianza is a cyclical relationship and does not really work if only one person shows trust in the other. On the survey question “Do you have *confianza* with Mezcla and the teachers,” one respondent wrote: “I have *confianza* with the school and with the teachers as well. Because they are the pillars of our children and for us [the parents], because they confide/trust in us and we in them with our children.” The reason this respondent gives for *confianza* existing is because both parties are trusting the other. This means that the teachers need to be open and understanding of the parents. This is possible because of the unique program at Mezcla. Many also mentioned that the respect the teachers show the parents is very valuable in this relationship.

Honesty is a way that the teachers show respect for the parents. Good and bad is important in *confianza*. It is the act of trusting that you will hear the truth, but also that the other person will be receptive to both. The parents trust that the teachers will be honest with them. They want to hear both the good about their students, but also the areas that need improvement.

In connection with the teachers and school, the home visits and the individualized attention teachers provide enables *confianza* to develop. *Confianza* develops “because [the teachers] chat, on a variety of things,” (Marcella) when they visit or the parents get to ask them questions. It is a sign that the parents “are *tranquillo* [relaxed/calm] with the teachers,” (Arcelis). Home visits consist mainly of the parents talking and chatting with the teacher. Ally says that she brings her concerns to the table, and the parents can bring theirs, so the discussion is not one sided. Although parents describe having *confianza* in the school, it is mainly “only with every teacher of my child,” (Marcella).

Naturally, this is linked to Ally speaking Spanish with the parents. Home visits would have little use if the parents and the teachers could not communicate properly. And even if subjects were covered, they would most likely be much more rudimentary. In addition, *confianza* could not really form as the parents would not be assured to find out everything, because they may not understand it.

Survey responses from the parents show that as a group they put a lot of trust in the teachers. The mean answer to the question in a general format “I know teachers are experts and know what is good for my child,” was 4.67 on a 5 point scale. When asked the same question, but about the teachers at Mezcla specifically, the mean was 4.81. This shows that the parents expect to trust teachers and can actually do so with the teachers at Mezcla.

In addition, when asked “I am nervous or scared of speaking with the Mezcla teachers” the mean answer was 1.64 on a five point scale. Twenty out of 28 participants circled one (never) and only two circled always. Though some still maintained they were nervous or scared to speak with the teachers at Mezcla, it is a low number. This supports the connections that the parents are making with the parents, and that they are generally comfortable speaking with the

teachers. This helps to avoid increased stress and avoidance of the school setting on the parents' part.

There were a few occasions when parents would drop off their children and strike up a conversation with Ally. The conversation would flow from school related subjects to family topics. Ally had an understanding of what to ask about the family beyond school related subjects. I believe that this kind of comfortable relationship between the parents and Ally is in part due to the *confianza* they have developed. Even Rose describes how with "Spanish speaking families I have made connections... it's like a very deep family connection." Although she does not have the vocabulary to know the term *confianza*, it sounds very much like it.

The deep trust of *confianza* invites parents into the school, because they feel comfortable with the teachers. This way the home and school are bridged through the parents' presence in the school setting. Having *confianza* breaks school from being an "intimidating place for [Spanish] parents," (Ally). And as Felipe describes, it reduces stress for parents, because they know their children are safe. Felipe, a Hispanic father, uses the example of students waiting for the bus after school:

"At school, everything is good. This is to have *confianza* in the school. Because, for example, when my girl was in kinder[garten], I took her to school many times. And the teacher, when the [students] go to the bus, she was with them. Not like before: [students] leave, they leave. Maybe they arrive at the bus, maybe not. Here [Mezcla], no! The teachers take them to the bus, and stay with them. I went, and I saw the teacher with them."

It is therefore so important that Ally, and other teachers, put the effort into developing *confianza* with the Spanish parents. It gives them further access to the school setting, helping bridge the boundaries between home and school for themselves and their students. Being able to provide them with their native language and completing the home visits are part of *confianza*. In

this way, all the parts of the kindergarten program function together in order to mediate the cultural differences the students face when they enter school.

Chapter 6: Limitations and Conclusions

The first and foremost limitation for this study was time. The late start to the study meant that one cohort of kindergarteners was observed toward the end of their school year, while the other was observed at the beginning. It would be beneficial to see one group throughout the whole year as well as throughout their years at Mezcla elementary. However, I believe seeing some of the system in place toward the end of the year without prior understanding allotted me some interesting observations at the beginning of my research. A longitudinal design would allow more developmental tracking and understanding about the children who progress through Mezcla's program. This was not possible under the current restrictions, but would be valuable for future undertakings.

Having more time would also allow the research to assess how well the efforts of the school maintain a positive influence during the students' progression through school. Even more, it would be interesting to check in with these students at the end of elementary, middle and high school to see if they are succeeding better than their counterparts who did not attend Mezcla or a program similar to it. The program's importance would be questionable if there are no lasting effects to speak of. This would also point at other structural issues that need to be addressed in the greater school boundary.

The lack of English parents' participation was also a setback. I had hoped to get the perspectives of both English and Spanish families on the program at Mezcla. However, due to district and school confidentiality, I was only able to reach families through letters home and was therefore confined to volunteer based sampling under the current research project. As only two English families responded, and then never answered my phone calls to organize an interview, I changed from planning a comparative study to looking more closely at the Spanish families,

describing them within their own entity. There is value in this as well, as it creates a better understanding of the specific group being researched. Future research at schools similar to Mezcla should consider the potential for a comparative study and its values.

The volunteer based sampling also did not allow me to take gender into active consideration. It would be very fruitful to consider gender as part of the schooling and student experiences. Since I was constricted by time and was conducting research alone, I would have felt my focus being spread thin if I had added gender to my agenda. However, there is great merit in looking at and understanding gender differences within a bilingual program such as Mezcla has. This can include issues of a primarily female faculty interacting with the students, gender disciplinary differences as well as gender roles taught to the students depending on their cultural background at home and in school.

Further, although I addressed the disciplinary system as a whole, it would also have been interesting to look at differentiations between gender and language setting. Differential discipline depending on the language context could affect the students' perception of the language. Also, genders could experience the disciplinary system differently. It may also point at students acting differently depending on which language environment they are in, which may in turn suggest different levels of stress for the students. Again, I had thought of these issues, but felt it would be over reaching the scope of the present research. It holds great potential for further investigation at Mezcla as well as other schools.

As explained in my methods section, UCINET posed some unexpected problems for my research. I will not be able to know whether the Hispanic parents had official consensus or not as I had to drop eight surveys due to all fives being circled. I had rechecked the rest of the survey to make sure the person had filled out the rest correctly and therefore believe that I had at

least 26 valid surveys. Due to this, and the non-consensus outcome from the remaining participants, it is questionable how useful the consonance calculations were.¹⁰ However, the evidence from using ORDVAR suggests that my data may very well of yielded a consensus above the 2.89 eigenratio that UCINET produced. Therefore I felt it was still acceptable to continue with the analysis. Future research could target these methodological difficulties.

In addition, the survey itself was a short version of what a consensus analysis should be. Weller (1988) states that there should be at least 20 items for consensus analysis. Mine consisted of eleven items. I did not feel comfortable giving too many more, nor with using a seven point scale, because of the population I was working with. Many of the parents have never taken a survey of this type or been involved in any research. Extending the survey may have made it even more confusing and unmanageable to them. As it were, I feel doing the surveys in person may have yielded better results. However, I did not have the time to do every survey in person as I was conducting this research alone.

There was also an issue with how I was gaining participants. Since the school could not give out numbers, and most of the children were bused to school, my only opportunity to reach parents was through written material sent home in the Thursday folders. This already limits my participants to those that were literate enough to read, understand and sign my forms. It would be good, in future studies, to also find a way to include those parents whose literacy is low. Also, because of this, I made sure to repeat the purpose of my research in person, in case some parents had signed without reading the form.

¹⁰ The authors of UCINETE have assigned a 3.0 eigenratio as a cut off for consensus (that is anything above 3.0 shows a consensus). However, there has been little evidence produced that shows 3.0 being a useful number to this end. New methods in addition to UCINET consensus analysis should be considered, because of the programs limitations. Using Ordvar was one step in this direction.

Finally, although proficient in Spanish, I found myself limited during Spanish interviews. They tended to run short, averaging around 25-30 minutes. Although this is not atypical of more focused semi-structured interviews, I felt that at times I was unable to ask the correct follow up questions. It was not until the last few interviews that I seemed at ease and the conversation flowed better. However, as mentioned before, most of the mothers were very welcoming and supportive of my Spanish skills, and I still think a lot of the interviews yielded good information. What I found, through my interviews, conversations with students and observations, was a school actively engaging their Hispanic population at Mezcla, making their language and culture seen and respected within the schools boundaries.

Mezcla's program was targeting many ways in which it could aid those students who lack "school readiness skills" and the cultural training to participate successfully. In Mezcla's case this meant aiding poor and Hispanic students. The kindergarten teachers recognize how difficult school is for those students whose native language is Spanish, who have little contact with school activities in the home or who have parents that are disengaged from school either because they do not have the cultural knowledge or face illiteracy. The recognition of these barriers has made Mezcla instate many ways to mediate them in their program. I identified three major parts that aid in boundary crossing for the Spanish Students: Slow to go Fast, Language and Home Visits.

These three components, as discussed above, are actively acknowledged by the teachers as aiding their ability to serve the Hispanic student population at Mezcla. "Slow to go Fast" is a way for them to model what it means to be a student and teach basic school readiness skills before accelerating academically later on in the year. The children show how much they build their skills on the earlier training and lessons. This method gives more time to allow students to learn about the school culture and to understand it, before asking for good performance in it.

That way, students can begin to navigate the school's norms without being constantly penalized for lacking academically. The concept of "Slow to go Fast," and the cultural undertones of it, is not something I've seen represented at other schools nor have I come across it in the literature, at least not implemented as it was at Mezcla. Therefore, I see it as something fairly unique to Mezcla.

Language allows students to learn in their native languages and understand what is happening at school without that particular barrier. It also means that all students, both English speaking and Spanish speaking, take turns at being experts. The language component in combination with the curriculum's focus on peer mentors, means that Spanish and English speakers may rely on each other for help. For the parents this was the most important part about Mezcla, and because of the bilingual program, they felt welcomed and respected within the school's boundaries. It also meant that the parents could have meaningful conversations with at least some of the teachers at Mezcla although not all were bilingual. This makes sure that a large barrier in the way of communication is lifted.

Home visits serve the teachers as a way to individually know the children, but also take time to explain things and trouble shoot with the parents. The parents truly appreciated the time that was dedicated for them and felt like they were able to make a connection with the teacher. During this time important information about school was conveyed to the parents, and it opened the doors of Mezcla to them. At the same time, the children were proud to show their house and found the experience to be exciting and fun. The teachers gain valuable knowledge about the family and are better able to assess situations in the classroom because of it. Home visits help build an understanding about the students that give the teachers the ability to mediate some of the problems the students face in the classroom.

Reay (2004) points out how critical parent involvement has become as part of school success for children. This was echoed by Rose, Susan and Ally. Parents are expected and relied upon to help the children academically within the home at Mezcla. The home visits and the inclusion of Spanish in Mezcla's institution give its Hispanic parents a way to communicate with teachers and to learn about the school's expectations and norms. As expressed in the interviews, parents are given some of the tools necessary to help their children, in other words they are given some cultural capital or additions to their existing cultural tool kit that can result in help for the students.

The kindergarten teacher's efforts and the program used results in a more open and welcoming environment to the Hispanic population at Mezcla. This is supported by the quantitative evidence presented. Although there was varying levels of consonance for parents fulfilling the role as a student's parent, there was no correlation to stress questions. This shows that most parents felt comfortable with Mezcla.

In addition, the efforts resulted in the development of *confianza*, a deep trust-bond, for the parents I spoke with. The opportunity to talk with the teachers, allowed many of the parents to trust in the school and feel comfortable with the teachers. When this type of connection is formed, the children also can see the active communication between their teacher and parents which further breaks down the barriers between home and school. In addition, feeling comfortable allows parents to avoid stressful situations when it comes to interacting with the school's setting. I see *confianza* as one of the most telling signs that what Mezcla Elementary and the teachers are doing is working well for the school's Hispanic families.

Many Hispanic students find themselves a minority, marginalized and lost in the school setting. They face many barriers to being successful within the boundaries of school. However,

at Mezcla I saw a large proportion of Hispanic kindergarten students allowed to speak their language, actively learning English and engaged in their school work. For the most part they were enjoying their days spent in the kindergarten. And, as Ally pointed out, many of them were making incredible growth. The cohort that was now in first grade was very well prepared and tested out of kindergarten at very high levels comparatively to what they could have been.

The school is still growing as well. There are still rough parts and they are still facing many obstacles within the bilingual program. They do not always have enough bilingual staff and paperwork is not always correctly translated. Ally and the kindergarten teachers do what they can to continually adjust their program and methods to continue to adapt to the bilingual program and to continue using Tools of the Mind. Despite being frustrated with bureaucracy hurdles at times, the teachers love working with both languages and the respective student populations.

The bilingual program and curriculum in the Mezcla Kindergarten is one example of how to actively incorporate minority children into the school's setting. It gives them time to adjust to the new culture and to teach the children, as well as their parents, the tools necessary to succeed in the school. This will not be translatable to all schools. Mezcla's make-up is unique in that it involves only two main cultures: Whites and Hispanics. If a school has numerous prevalent cultures it would be hard to create a program for all the languages.

Some ideas, such as the home visits and the theories behind the Tools curriculum may still be applicable in other situations. "Slow to go Fast" should also be analyzed within different school contexts. The Hispanic students at Mezcla are not the only ones who face a hard transition between home and school. Treating kindergarten as a new culture for all students would provide a training period for all those entering the culture. Important to note by the

faculty and staff would be that the points of tensions for students may be different depending on their cultural background, habitus and cultural tool kits.

It is important to note that the students are still, even with Spanish integration, asked to conform to the U.S. school system. They are still being tested for grade level competence and completing similar tasks to children at other schools. The difference is, that the Hispanic students at Mezcla are given the opportunity learn and experience the schools culture before being asked to perform in it. The first half of their kindergarten is focused on modeling school norms and behaviors as well as developing crucial skills including social and school readiness (such as holding a pencil, reading left to right, how to treat school materials).

Mezcla's Hispanic students are given support in learning to play the game that is part of the school's field or boundary. However, success means the students must conform to the dominant cultures expectations despite the bilingual program. I believe that Mezcla may provide more respect and understanding toward the non-dominant culture, perhaps making the students feel more comfortable switching between the two cultures, their roles within them and the home-school boundaries. This is also reflected by the connections the teachers are making with the parents. By developing these bonds, the Hispanic children at Mezcla are given more support for school success as there is successful parent-teacher communication. I would also argue that the mediation between home and school provided by Mezcla helps reduce stressful situations for the students. However, I was unable to directly measure this and think it would merit future research including measuring cortisol level and other stress biomarkers. Despite being asked to function within the dominant culture present in school, these students are given support to do so.

As pointed out by Edward T. Hall, "We should never denigrate any other culture but rather help people to understand the relationship between their own culture and the dominant

culture. When you understand another culture or language, it does not mean that you have to lose your own culture,” (Intercultural Communication Institute, 2012). With understanding also comes the ability to function within the new cultures or, for the purpose of my research, within the schools culture. Mezcla is providing cultural tools vital to school success to its Hispanic students. By doing so, they are granting the new Hispanic kindergarten students access to school and an education at Mezcla giving them more equity within the field of school. There may be more to do, but they as a program are taking big strides in the right direction to helping their student population.

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