Student Success in School in a Rural Community:

Examining Underrepresented Cultures and Marginalized Families' Perceptions of Success Across Educational Pipelines

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StoryCatcher

"Childhood is not the shortest age in our life but rather the longest because it stays with us until our death."

(Lombardo, 2001; Miller, 2002)

—The problem is systemic and begins in the early education years of learners, "...which have implications for the development pipeline as the learners grow up into adulthood."

(Hjorth, 2017, p. 77)

Purpose of the Study

To examine how underrepresented cultures and marginalized families' in rural communities perceive success across educational pipelines. The study was designed to examine generational patterns of values, beliefs, and attitudes that often create barriers to the success of underrepresented cultures and marginalized learners.

Rationale

One important factor that is often neglected in many studies and reports is the inclusion of the family voice and their perception related to student success in school and outside of the school environment.

What Led to This Topic?

RQ: What factors Influence the identification of gifted students in rural Colorado?

Top 3 Persistent Problems of Practice (Baseline):
1) Ability to identify GT students accurately and consistently. [Structural]
2) Ability to increase schoolwide awareness and knowledge of GT programs/process. [Outreach]
3) **Ability to provide consistent supports, follow-up services, and communication. [Cultural]**

Top 3 Emergent Interview Themes (Baseline):
1) Sense of G/T Identification Process
2) Sense of Readiness for Change/Improvement
3) **Sense of Community and Cultural Awareness**

Identified 5 Emergent Themes (Mid-Term):
1) **Recognizing barriers**
2) **Acknowledging the need for cultural competency**
3) Identification of gifted students
4) Growth = Identification of gifted students
5) Addressing needs of students   (Hesbol, et al., 2017; 2018)

Economic Significance
•Poverty rates are highest in rural counties.
•Reports illustrates a slower pace of the economic recovery in many rural areas.
•Identifying traditionally marginalized students as gifted learners is a matter of life quality and economic concern for rural communities.
(U.S. Bureau of Census, 2017; 2018)

COLORADO
Department of Education
Right 4 Rural Grant Program
United States Department of Education
Jacob K. Javits Grant Program

RQ: How do underrepresented cultures and marginalized families in rural communities perceive student success across educational pipelines?

Results: Fixed beliefs, patterns of strengths and/or limitations, and sociocultural barriers combined with a mix of social-emotional skills and traits strongly influenced each family's perception of school success. Understanding the significance of family milieu as a marker for school success was interpreted and is shared through a synthesis of family voice through portraiture and critical-auto-ethnographic discussion to inform teacher practice and policy.

Top 3 Emergent Interview Themes

- Belief in the American Dream.

- Lived experiences and subsequent attitudes involving school interaction operate on a relationship spectrum: love/hate, positive, and challenging.

- Historically family interactions with educators are mostly ambivalent.

Persistent
Problem of Practice

Educators from kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) struggle to identify the factors that influence the educational success of Latino/Hispanics and other minority groups

(Shulock 2014; Yasso, 2006; Valliani, 2013)

Examining generational patterns of values, beliefs, and attitudes is significant for educators and families for the following reasons:

1. The continued trending of low academic success of underrepresented cultures and marginalized populations;
2. Social and economic disparities in rural areas;
3. Concerns of social/emotional trauma within diverse populations;
4. Lack of quality educational access, including resources and support services and;
5. Life quality related to a sense of family and community well-being.

Site Location and Volunteer Criteria

Students
3,142

Gender
Female	48%
Male	52%

- Morgan County School District RE-3 is considered a rural distant district where the largest population center within the boundaries of the district is fewer than 25,000 (pop/17,000).

Diversity
A-
Based on racial and economic diversity and survey responses on school culture and diversity from students and parents.

Student Diversity
Hispanic	60.8%
White	32.9%
African American	4.2%
Multiracial	1.1%
Native American	0.5%
Asian	0.4%
Pacific Islander	0%
Students	3,142
Free or Reduced Lunch ❓	67.7%

Morgan County School District | RE-3

(Data: 2014 U.S. Census Bureau)

| 4%-10% | 11%-17% | 18%-23% | 24%-31% | 32%-43% |

RQ:
How do underrepresented cultures and marginalized families in rural communities perceive success across educational pipelines?

Inclusion Criteria (4 of 4)	1	2	3
Currently have child/ren attending Morgan County School District-R3 (Columbine, Green Acres, or Pioneer)	✓	✓	✓
Self-identify as Hispanic, African American, Multiracial, Native American, Asian	✓	✓	✓
Consistent interaction with school personnel (Ranging 1-3x/wk or 1-3x/m on average)	✓	✓	✓
Share a family artifact that can be photographed during the interview (i.e. photo, art work, crafts, letters, etc. that represents your feelings about school success.	✓	✓	✓

| Parameters (2 of 6)			
Qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch Program	✓	✓	✓
Newcomer Status	-	-	✓
Self-identify as an English language learner	-	✓	✓
Extended family members living in household	✓	✓	✓
Extensive community involvement	✓	✓	✓
Child/ren in middle/high school and/or college/career	✓	✓	✓
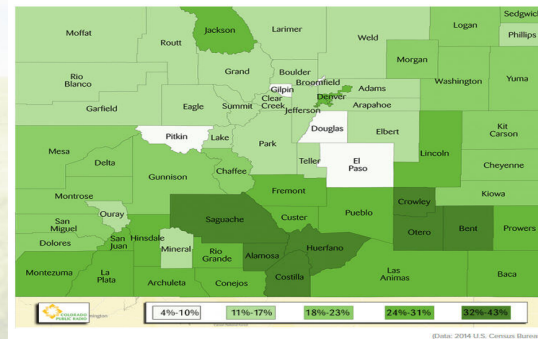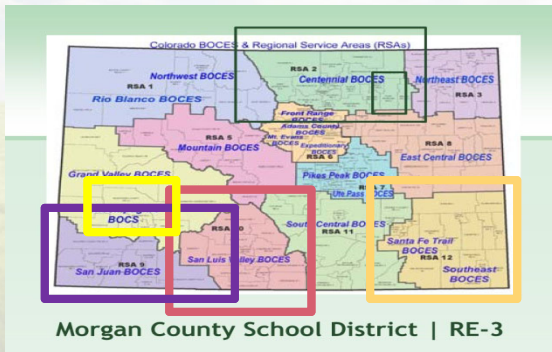
Family Demographics

Data Quality – FAMILY 1		
Position of Interviewee(s) in Family (first language: English; decision-maker)	Age/Gender	Role of Interviewee(s) in Family (level of education; provider; translator*)
Girlfriend/Mother (GF)-White	F/27	Unemployed-GED-Ft. Morgan Native
Son1's (Father/Boyfriend)-White	M/36	Employed- HS Drop-Out
Son 2/s Father/(Uncle)-White	M/39	Unemployed-HS Drop-Out
Son 1 (Son1)-African American Mother	M/16	High School-Online, Baker, Pioneer
Son 2 (Son2)-White	M/14	Middle School
GF's Daughter-not present-Latino Father	F/8	Elementary School/Columbine
GF's Son-not present-Latino Father	M/4	Kindergarten

Data Quality – FAMILY 2		
Position of Interviewee(s) in Family (first language: Spanish; decision-maker)	Age/Gender	Role of Interviewee(s) in Family (level of education; provider; translator*)
Mother-Latina (ELL)	F/35	Employed-Grocery Retail-ELL Student
Father-not present-Latino	M/37	Employed-Construction-Drop-Out
Mother's Sister-not present-Latina	F/24	Employed-Grocery Retail-ELL Student
Daughter [Child 5]-Latina-(Bilingual)	F/18	High School*
Child 1-Latina	F/12	Middle School
Child 2-Latina	F/10	Elementary School/Green Acres
Child 3-Latino	M/14	Middle School
Child 4-Latina	F/8	Elementary School/Green Acres

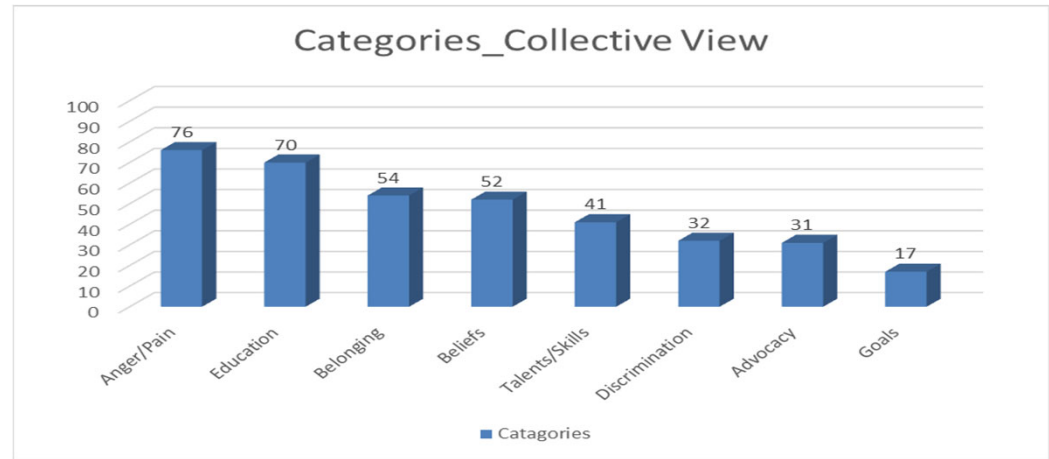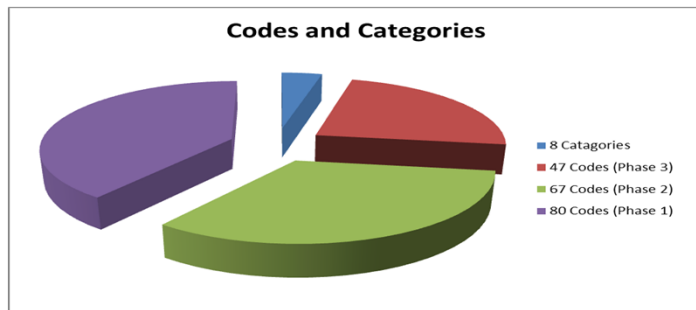| Data Quality – FAMILY 3		
Position of Interviewee(s) in Family (first language: French; decision-maker)	Age/Gender	Role of Interviewee(s) in Family (level of education; provider; translator*)
Mother-Benin West Africa/Beninese (Bilingual)-Law Degree in Benin (ELL)	F/35	Employed-Teacher Asst. @ Columbine Elementary School-MCC Student
Father-Benin West Africa/Beninese (Bilingual)-Accounting Degree in Benin (ELL)	M/39	Employed-MCC Work Study-Accounting -MCC Student
Son1 [child 1]- Beninese-(Bilingual)	M/21	Metro State University-Denver
Son2 [child 2] - Beninese-(Bilingual)	M/17	High School
Daughter1 [child 3] - Beninese-(Bilingual)	F/16	High School
Son3 [child 4] - Beninese-(Bilingual)	M/14	Middle School
Daughter2 [child 5] - Beninese-(Bilingual)	F/12	Middle School/Elementary-Green Acres
British English is taught as a second language in Benin, West Africa.		

Educational Pipeline
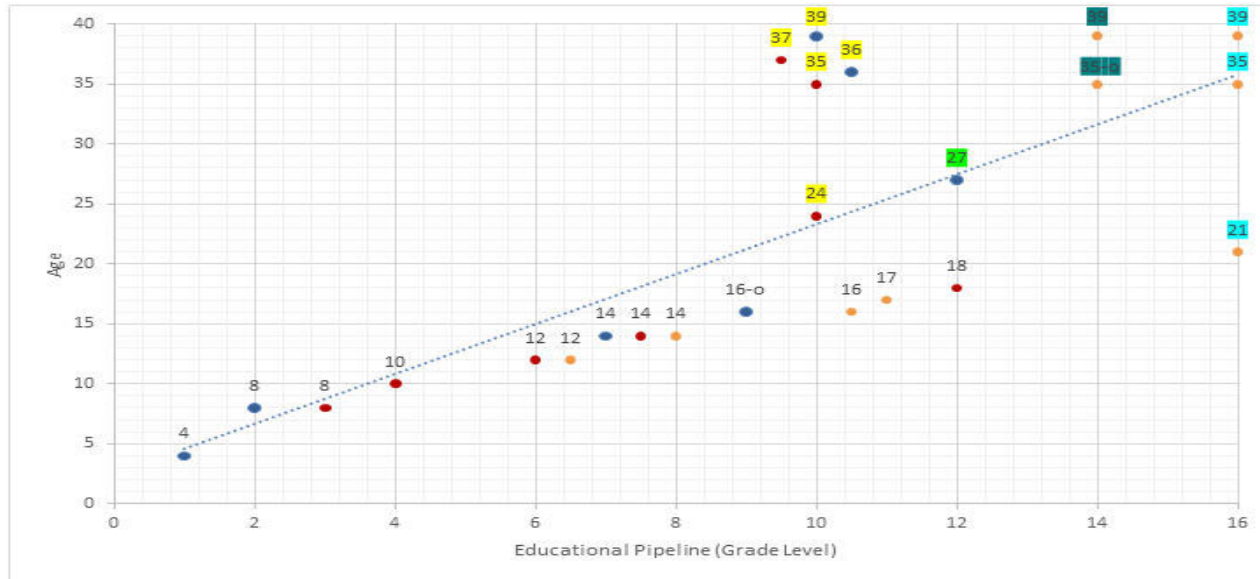
Three culturally and economically diverse families across the educational pipeline.
(Family 1 ⬤ ; Family 2 ⬤ ; Family 3 ⬤; Dropout GED; College; College Degree, o-online)

RQ: How do underrepresented cultures and marginalized families in rural communities perceive success across educational pipelines?

Methodology | Data Analysis and Procedure

Codes and Categories
- 8 Catagories
- 47 Codes (Phase 3)
- 67 Codes (Phase 2)
- 80 Codes (Phase 1)

Categories_Collective View

Anger/Pain 76, Education 70, Belonging 54, Beliefs 52, Talents/Skills 41, Discrimination 32, Advocacy 31, Goals 17

■ Catagories

In order of overall frequency the following 8 categories are described as significant components within each family system:

1) Pain/Anger (Self-Awareness)
2) Education (Pipeline/Barriers)
3) Belonging/Fitting-In (Social Awareness)
4) Beliefs/Traditions (Culture)
5) Talents/Skills/Interests (Social-Emotional)
6) Discrimination (Decision Making)
7) Advocacy (Relationship Skills)
8) Goals (Self-Management)

Conceptual Framework and Interview Qs
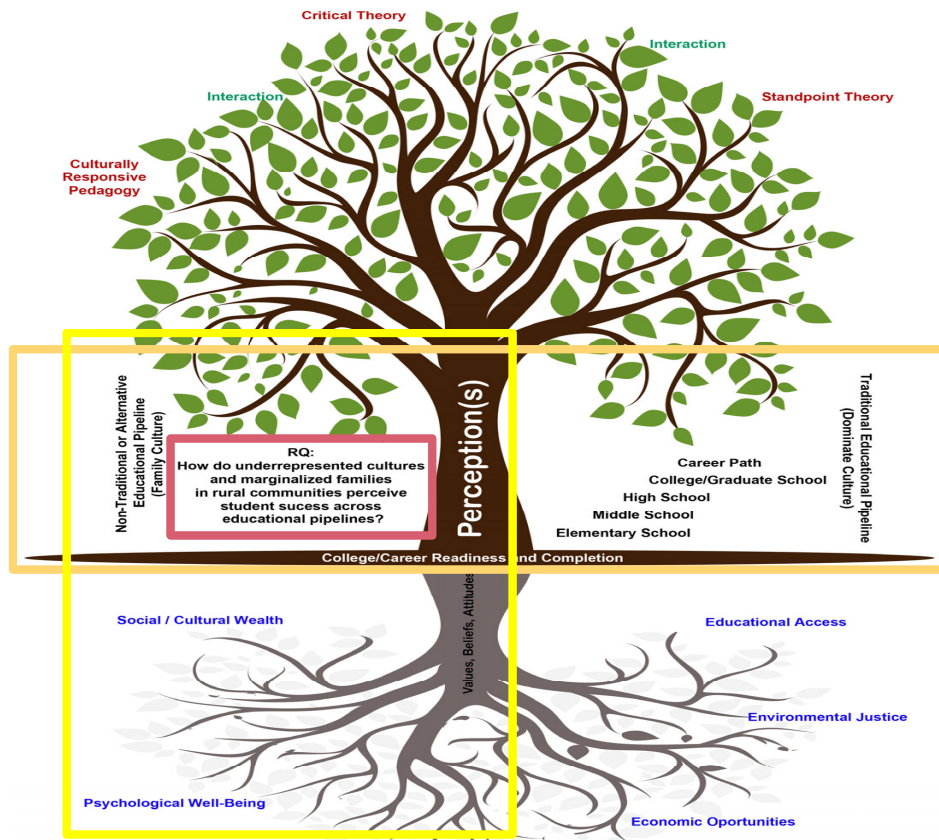
RQ:
How do underrepresented cultures and marginalized families in rural communities perceive success across educational pipelines?

Interview Questions:

1. Data Quality – Family Demographics

1. Please share a story about your family and your background.
2. Describe your first meeting with people from your child/ren's school.
3. What goals do you have for your child/ren?

1. What ways are the goals you have for your child/ren in school supported?
2. Describe your child/ren's strengths.

1. What would help make you feel more comfortable or included regarding educational decisions (or community activities) at your child/ren's school?
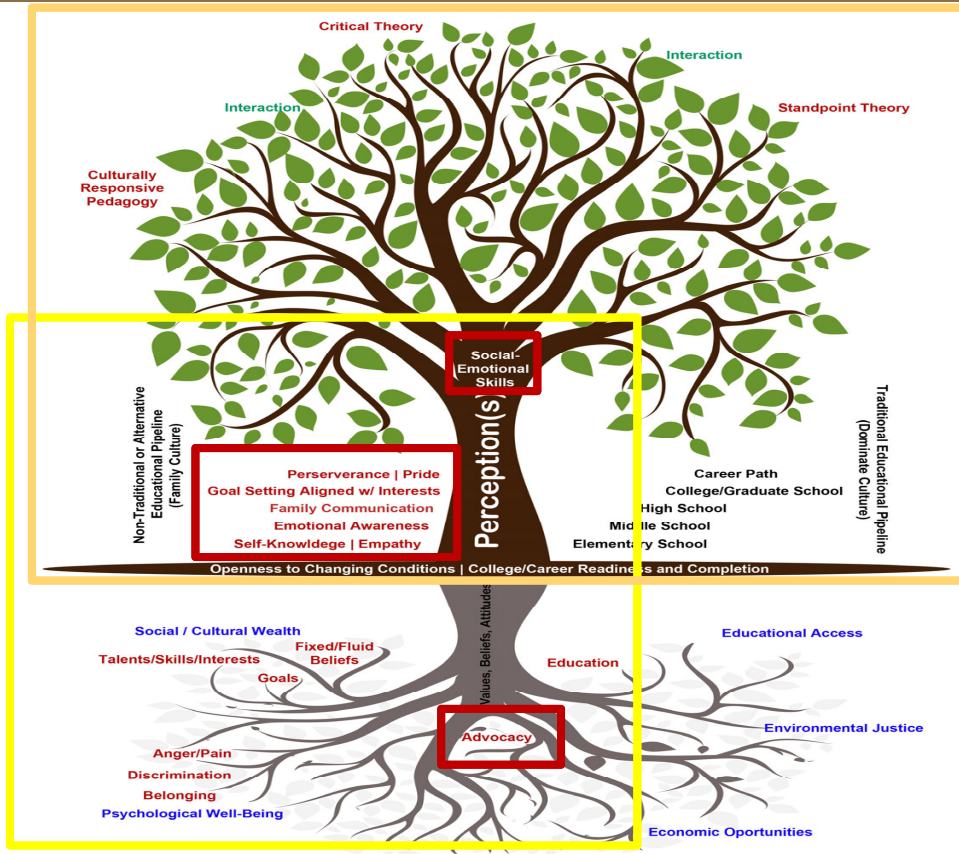2. Is there anything else you would like to share?

Social and Family History (Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes)

Evaluation (Effect of Process)

Design (PPP/Continuous Improvement)

Conceptual Framework |REVISED

Intersection of Observations:

- Generational family values, beliefs, and attitudes influence and model how we think, shape, feel, and practice intrapersonal (self-talk) and interpersonal (verbal or non-verbal visible exchanges of messages) interactions.
- Self-regulation of emotions is learned and reflected upon within each family belief-system; and strong emotions often manifest or can be triggered into reactive behaviors prior to self-recognition, identification, and understanding (Brown, 2008; Miller, 1997; Yeager, et al. 2013).

Cycle of Belief:

- Belief systems mostly operate on 'auto-pilot', the space between stimulus and response, family and social norms are filtered through a belief-habit cycle and are absorbed without much awareness.
- Families do not question the value of education, but they do question the merits of the system.
- Despite this contradiction, internal and external barriers related to educational success do not detour families in their belief that hard work and merit will eventually bring the reward of economic success and social well-being.

Conceptual Framework Revised:

- Uneven growth is influenced by a variety of internal (quality of seeds/story and soil, placement or proximity to others, etc.) and external factors (weather conditions, access to sunlight, water, care, etc.).
- The bridge to a positive outcome or mindset consistently points to advocacy efforts as the key to reducing gaps related to resources and social capital—advocacy is the (invisible) key for the creation and development of social capital.

Emergent Themes | Implications

"…we came here to the U.S. for a better future…a better life for our children." -Mira

"…I have ADHD…when I work on cars' I feel calm." "…I used to be really…pretty smart." -Tucker

"…the problem is not the staff, the problem is the teachers." "…I see their faces…I decided to take classes online." -Joya

Positive

Love/Hate

Challenging

- **Belief in the American Dream.** A sense of gaining a better life for self and their children through the educational pipeline was the most common theme. Each family shared knowledge and attachment to their children's talents, skill, and interests. Merit is reflected as a system of screening throughout the educational pipeline as a common characteristic and belief within this rural setting.

- **Lived experiences and subsequent attitudes involving school interaction operate on a relationship spectrum: love/hate, positive, and challenging.** Positive interactions are often diluted given the level of willingness to change/shift existing mindsets between family member and educator.

- **Historically family interactions with educators are mostly ambivalent.** Perceptions of struggle, conflict, and/or judgment often produce guarded interactions related or connected to past negative, limiting, or traumatic experiences.
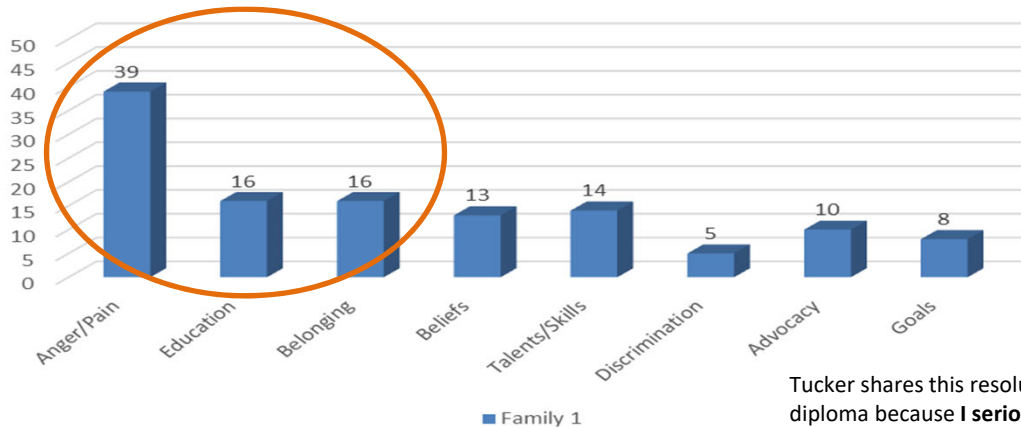
Top 3 Emergent Themes

1) Belief in the American Dream for a better life and future for self and their children—(idea-motivation)

2) Interactions with the school system perceived as an opportunity and/or barrier—(spectrum-mindset)

3) Historic interactions and/or recent experiences involving traumatic affects—(discrimination-trauma)

Perception – Love/Hate

Family 1 - White Multi-Racial

Chart values: Anger/Pain 39, Education 16, Belonging 16, Beliefs 13, Talents/Skills 14, Discrimination 5, Advocacy 10, Goals 8

■ Family 1

- Bullying
- Sense of Belonging/Fitting-in
- Aspirations to succeed
- Poverty

Solutions:
- Larger lunch portions (FLP)
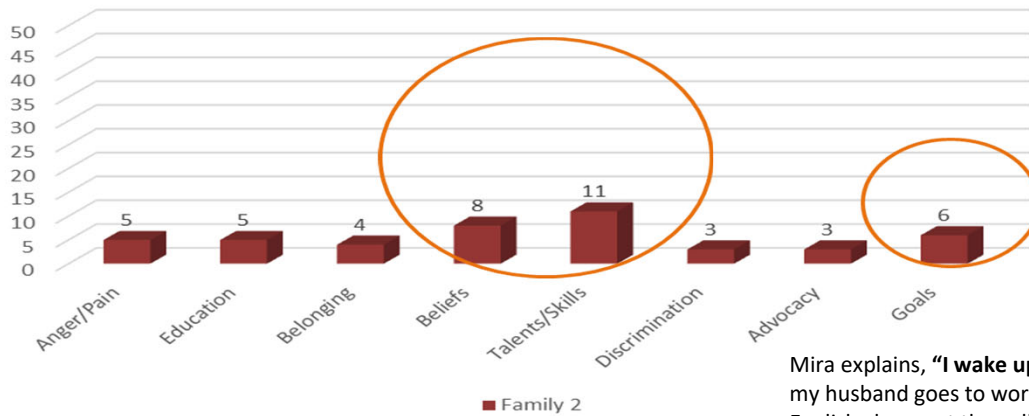- One-on-one personalization

ARTIFACT:

**"Choices, Chances, Changes.
Choice to take a Chance
or your life will never Change."**

Jack explains, "My wife sent that to me one day.... My wife that passed away... That's why I keep it because her and I were...we were struggling through our addictions...at the time...at the same time"

Tucker shares this resolution, "...something that is important to me is getting my diploma because **I seriously want to be the first...one of the first in my family to get a high school diploma."**

Brenda states in response to goal setting, "...no not really... only because **I was bullied and hazed....** terribly so.... So, all I ever really wanted to do... was to just drop out of school... I was tired of always... I don't know why man... that I was just that one in school...that just... I guess it was because **I just didn't want to fit-in**." About her children's goals, "**...These are questions I never even thought about...?"**

Brenda says, "When I was going to school, they would.... **I had every reason to have an 'F' but they would pass me** just to move me along... That's the s*** that's becoming all too normal they don't care about the kids...I mean... I mean not all of them..."

Tucker adds, "In my point of view.... like okay... I think... there is a point to go to school... But what's funny is that **they don't teach us what we're actually...supposed to learn** in the real world."

Perception - Positive

Family 2 - Latino

Chart values: Anger/Pain 5, Education 5, Belonging 4, Beliefs 8, Talents/Skills 11, Discrimination 3, Advocacy 3, Goals 6

■ Family 2

- Cultural Wealth/Talents
- Goal Orientated
- Aspirations to succeed
- Poverty

Solutions:
- More schools and teachers
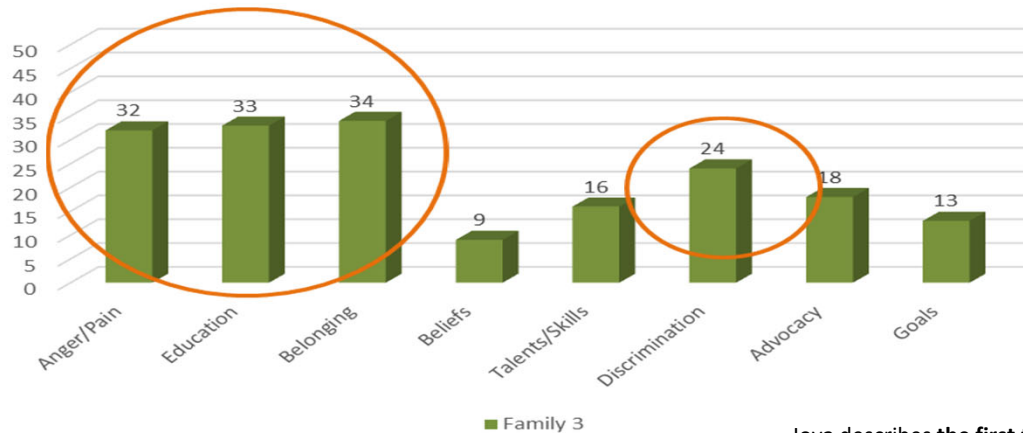- Opportunities to share opinions

ARTIFACT:

"Education is the Best Thing You Can Have..."

Mira shares, "...something that I live by and hear a lot is that education is the best thing that you can have... It is something you can show anybody. But most of all it is important for your children...for your children to see that you value education for a better life."

Mira explains, **"I wake up and I am always doing something...**the kids go to school my husband goes to work, I clean the house and go to work at the store. I also, attend English classes at the college (MCC) several days a week. Still, **I wake up with happiness every day because everybody is doing something—and my family is occupied.** I am happy most days."

"...I want to help with whatever I can-even though **they may want a career that we may not be able to pay for**...but maybe **I can help them find help to live their dreams and find a career job**—and be successful in that career." Mira says, hopefully.

Rena shares, **"So, I always sit down with my siblings and we talk about what we want to do when we get older..."** I ask them, "What do you want to be, and you know, I... Since I was a little girl...I always **wanted to be a doctor** and I think I still have that career in mind. My brother said, **a police officer** or something like that....my sister feels the same way as my brother... I think she wants to become a police officer. **My other sister says she wants to be an orthodontist."** Rena smiles showing off her purple colored braces.

Perception - Challenging

Family 3 - West African Newcomer

Bar chart values: Anger/Pain 32, Education 33, Belonging 34, Beliefs 9, Talents/Skills 16, Discrimination 24, Advocacy 18, Goals 13

Legend: ■ Family 3

- Judgment
- Sense of Belonging
- Discrimination/Self-Awareness
- Aspirations to succeed
- Poverty

Solutions:
- Cultural competency training
- Social-Emotional development

ARTIFACT:

"…if you want to succeed in something don't do it alone…but do it together …unification of people in our nation… to be together…working together…"

Joya and Marcel explain, "We have a pierced jar…and this jar has holes everywhere and if we put water in it everything will flow down and out; but if everybody puts their hand over a hole—everything stays in—our life is a jar and we need to put our hands over everywhere that has a hole; and never leave a hole open and that can keep you up."

Joya describes **the first time they meet with school personnel,** "When we were here our first time they sent a paper around and **asked if you want interpretation or not and we said yes**—and what language...and we said French—**and this was great but... they did not provide anything...it was kind of weird and disappointing."**

"...because I remember people...a lot of people...just talk, they say some words...**words, just words but they never realize the impact of those words in your life**; and those **words can put you down or those words can put you up...**and in my case the words put me up. Because **I just have to show people [who judge] that they are wrong...and keeping this one thought in my mind makes me strong...**and I just keep doing what I have to do..."

...all my children, **overall their strength is being involved in activities. This gives them a lot of strength since** in many of these activities **they sometimes face a lot of discrimination. But that gives them...all of them...the courage to keep continuing..."**

Intervention | Reflection and Summary
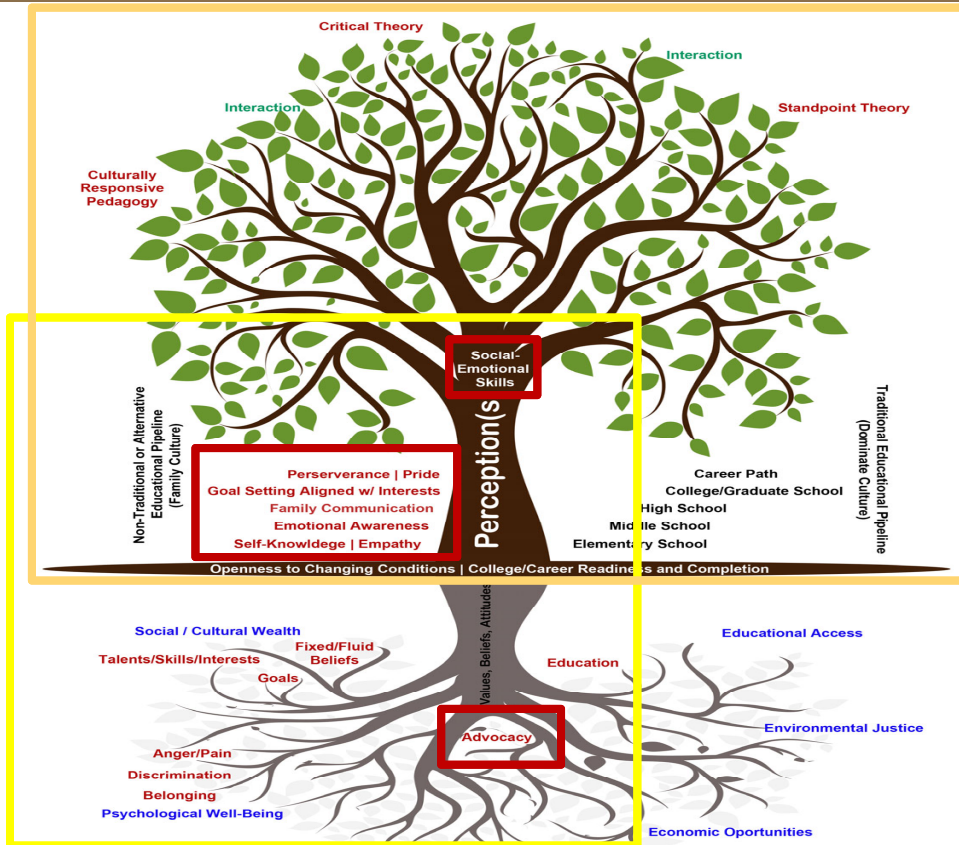
Openness to Changing Conditions

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):
- Ability to be self-aware of how your emotions and body language impacts self /others. Be aware of how your body feels/voice sounds.
- Ability to consider/understand others' perspectives.
- Ability to model fairness , respect, and share experiences.
- Ability to receive/give constructive feedback during collaboration.
- Ability to get to know individuals while respecting boundaries.

Cultural Competency Skills:
- Ability to be less judgmental and more flexible in understanding and response to how others interpret and respond to interactions, events, and the world.
- Ability to identify, reflect, and challenge one's own cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes. and assumptions.

Policy Implications:
- Provide evidence to support the value of adult /child SEL.
- Share stories and findings with families and educators.
- Translate research into practice (Intervention Workshop)
- Develop collaborations and partnerships with practitioners, educators, and policymakers.

Note: *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (*CASEL) has secured SEL language in five pieces of pending legislation.

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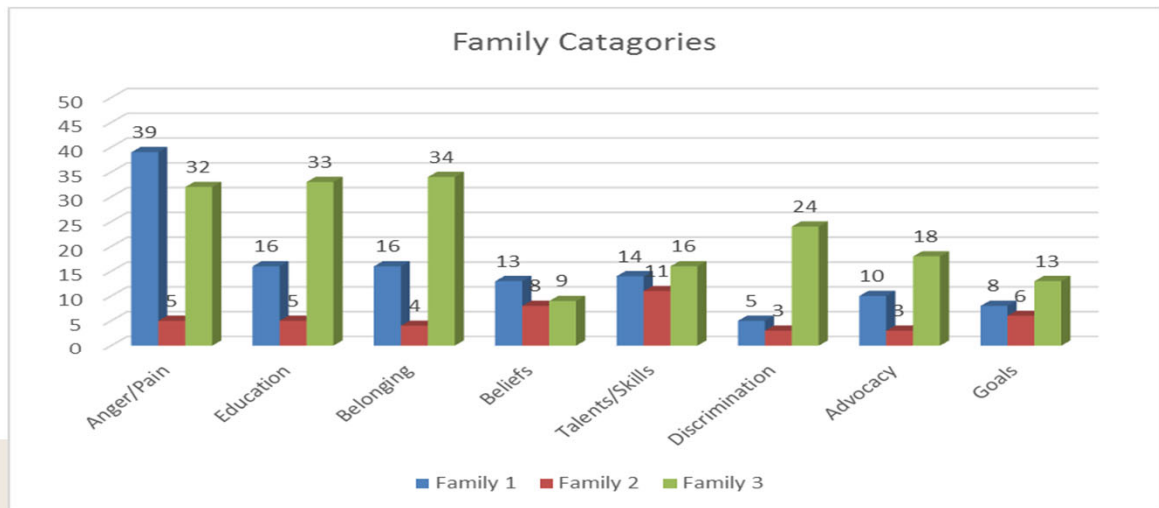
Reflection and Summary Discussion

Educators from kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) struggle to identify the factors that influence the educational success of Latino/Hispanics and other minority groups.

(Shulock 2014; Yasso, 2006; Valliani, 2013)

Families' LIST of Observations:

- Larger lunch portions (FLP)
- One-on-one personalization
- More schools and teachers
- Opportunities to share opinions
- Cultural competency training
- Social-Emotional development

Family Catagories

	Anger/Pain	Education	Belonging	Beliefs	Talents/Skills	Discrimination	Advocacy	Goals
Family 1	39	16	16	13	14	5	10	8
Family 2	5	5	4	8	11	3	3	6
Family 3	32	33	34	9	16	24	18	13

Persistent Problem of Practice:
1. Continuous trending of low academic success.
2. Social and economic disparities in rural areas.
3. Concerns of social/emotional trauma.
4. Lack of access, resources and support services.
5. Life quality of family and community well-being.

Top 3 Emergent Themes
1) Belief in the American Dream—(idea-motivation)
2) Interactions perceived as opportunity and/or barrier—(spectrum-mindset)
3) Historic interactions/experiences involving trauma—(discrimination-trauma)

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THANK YOU!