Volume 4 Commentary: Insights for Co-constructing Transformative Family-School Partnerships that Increase Cultural Responsiveness, Justice, and Care

Camille M. Wilson

Over the past few decades, dominant educational reform discourse and policies have fortified a culture of US public schooling steeped in academic achievement goals and "accountability" mandates that are too often exclusively linked to standardized test scores. The pressure for educators to groom their students to perform well on tests has come to heavily influence every aspect of education, from preschool curriculum to teacher education programs, school and district professional development agendas, and, most definitely, teacher and principal evaluation. Additionally, the nation's enduring emphasis on test score accountability has exacerbated the tendency of school administrators and teachers to encourage and implement school-centric approaches to family engagement or "parent involvement" (Cooper, Riehl, & Hasan, 2010; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2009; Ishimaru, 2014). Educators, therefore, most commonly welcome families into schools to inform them of set curricular and assessment objectives with hopes that families will help insure their children meet such goals, and ultimately score well on tests. This dominant, top-down, parent involvement model falls short of fostering authentic and culturally responsive partnerships with families (Auerbach, 2011). Moreover, it particularly disadvantages children of color despite the fact that Latinx, African American, Asian American, and Native American students now comprise the majority of those served in US public schools (Maxwell, 2014).

In the opening chapter of this volume, coeditors Christine McWayne and Fabienne Doucet and their coauthor Jayanthi Mistry call upon readers to recognize the pervasive discontinuities between the structure, function, and culture of children's home and school lives while stressing how families are unsung assets to their children's educational progress. They urge educators to "flip the script" and embrace

C. M. Wilson (✉)
University of Michigan, School of Education, Department of Educational Studies, Ann Arbor, MI, USA
e-mail: camillew@umich.edu

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relational approaches to engaging families partly through initiating more respectful and dialogic communication, cultivating asset-based ideologies, and letting families have greater influence in developing educational partnership agendas. The editors, and other contributing authors, recognize schools as not only learning and achievement spaces, but also sites of culture, power, and socialization as they offer recommendations for developing improved family-school partnerships that are "culturally situated" and "culturally contextualized" (McWayne et al., 2019).

The volume's authors draw on an array of conceptual lenses (e.g., sociocultural, ecological, socioemotional, and critical) as they promote progressive partnership goals and strategies and frame the strengths and needs of ethnoculturally diverse students and families. The authors also address education holistically, paying attention to the institutional contexts of schooling and classroom-based practices, along with the politics, extracurricular programing, interventions, relationships, and historical legacies that help shape families' and students' broader educational experiences.

In the sections below, I reflect on the central question of this volume as stated in Chap. 1:

> How can family-school partnerships be most meaningful and effective, specifically, how can schools and teachers reconceive their role "with" families to support children's learning within diverse ethnocultural communities?

I first discuss key insights I gleaned from the various authors' answers to that question—identifying shared themes and some distinct contentions. I then pinpoint implications for enacting transformative family-school partnership practices. Along the way, I suggest how to conduct research on and with families to better understand the most equitable and effective ways of collaborating with them to support students' learning, development, and overall well-being.

The analysis I offer is informed by the volume's content along with my nearly 20 years of researching and collaborating with ethnoculturally diverse families, my social justice commitments, and my positionality as an African American mother of a Black, public school, male student. It is further influenced by the alarm and distress I feel about this current era of intense cultural and political polarization in the United States—polarization fueled by national leadership and oppressive policies that largely target people of color, immigrants, religious minorities, those who are disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+), and/or those with low incomes. Such polarization threatens the physical and emotional safety of school communities by potentially alienating and harming already marginalized students and families (Minkle, 2018; Wallace & LaMotte, 2016). The ideas, partnership approaches, and research highlighted in this volume affirm the importance of boosting educational equity and inclusion and disrupting status quo partnership approaches in order to counter xenophobia, racism, and other oppressive dynamics. The authors call upon readers to invite in, and build upon, families' culturally diverse values, knowledge, goals, and sensibilities. As I suggest in the remaining sections, educational partners can do so by implementing a range of actions geared toward benefiting children of all backgrounds and by forging more caring and just school communities.

Action Areas for Reconceiving and Restructuring Family-School Partnerships

True educational partnerships are inclusive and democratic collaborations among educators, families, students, and often other community members who jointly contribute to enacting practices that nurture the learning, achievement, and overall educational well-being of students. For these collaborations to be most effective and supportive of students, they should be respectful of students and families, bring partners together as allies, encompass shared power and goals, and be democratic and socially just (Auerbach, 2011; Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Cooper, 2009; Cooper et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2009). Yielding such results involves educators affirming ethnocultural diversity and including families in educational decision-making (Henderson et al., 2009). It also means being mindful of how federal, state, and district policy contexts, programs, and initiatives affect the power structures of schools and the relational dynamics among family-school partners.

In keeping with the volume's attention to diversity, the contributors highlight a variety of family-school partnership research and initiatives pertaining to an array of sociocultural contexts across early childhood and K-12 settings that are relevant to both US-born and immigrant families. The authors' assertions converge to reveal five core themes and areas of action needed for reconceiving and restructuring culturally responsive family-school partnerships in meaningful and effective ways. The themes relate to (1) rejecting deficit-based ideologies about students and families, (2) understanding schools as contested cultural sites, (3) unmasking schooling's racist and colonial legacies, (4) validating familial and communal knowledge via culturally relevant instruction, and (5) conducting innovative, collaborative, and critical family-centered research.

Rejecting Deficit-Based Ideologies About Students and Families

As Jennifer Keys Adair states in Chap. 8:

> When intervention programs begin with the idea that parents, families or even children lack something, they are only justifying the idea that people need to become more like someone else (usually someone from the more dominant or powerful group who has rights and privileges).

This is true when it comes to pedagogical, curricular, and school partnership approaches overall—approaches that too often situate students of color as "at-risk" to fail and/or "different" in ways that should be remedied or acculturated. Such approaches prompt educators to (even unwittingly) interact with students and families in condescending, offensive, or other counterproductive ways.

In Chap. 2, Kay Sanders and Monica Molgaard point to the proliferation of biased ideologies in early childhood programs, such as Head Start, which serves families affected by poverty. The authors explain that Head Start programs have tended to cast the parents they serve (the majority of whom are Latinx and/or African American)[1] "as incompetent and in need of assistance". Likewise, Hiro Yoshikawa (Chap. 3); Gigliana Melzi, Adina Schick, and Lauren Scarola (Chap. 4); and Sandra Barrueco (Chap. 6) each stress the stigmatization Latinx families routinely experience given some educators' deficit-based ideologies and assumptions about their English and Spanish proficiency, their intelligence, and their immigration status. These biased ideologies are fueled by the impact of xenophobic policies, as the authors discuss. Moreover, in Chap. 8, Adair describes the discursive links between biased ideology, beliefs, and practice as she discusses how Latinx immigrant families are increasingly labeled as having a "word gap" or rather lacking "enough vocabulary" and sufficient literacy practices as defined by English-speaking, middle-class, family norms. In her collaborative study of Texas teachers and administrators, Adair found the majority of teachers in various types of schools refrained from engaging Latinx students in higher level practices, such as "making decisions, showing initiative, helping each other, reading together, choosing partners, discussing and sharing personal stories, and creating projects". Though teachers believed that such practices were generally advantageous, they felt they would not work with Latinx students due to what teachers perceived as the students' linguistic limitations. Adair added, "And the lack of vocabulary was blamed on what parents lacked or, in other words, Latinx immigrant parents' deficits". In Chap. 4, Melzi et al. stress similar cautions based on findings from their study of pre-K Latinx literacy practices and educators' problematic casting of Latinx families' literacy activities.

Given the proliferation of deficit-based ideologies and practices in schools that target students of color, the authors stress the need for educators to recognize and affirm students' funds of knowledge[2] and their family-specific and culturally relevant values and strengths. Doing so positions educators to embrace asset-based ideologies about students and their ethnocultural backgrounds. The importance of rejecting racist perspectives and "colonial logics" is specifically tackled by Sanders and Molgaard in Chap. 2 and by Charlene Montaño Nolan, Megan Bang, and Nikki McDaid-Morgan in Chap. 7.

In Chap. 5, Greg Fabiano and Kellina Pyle also address gender issues by cautioning educators to resist overlooking the importance of engaging fathers and "not approach the father as deficient in a skill or ability". The authors emphasize how fathers significantly contribute to their children's "school readiness, vocabulary, self-regulation, and academic achievement" and should therefore be valued and spe-

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[1] This is based on 2013–2014 statistics regarding the racial-ethnic backgrounds of Head Start students reported by Child Trends Databank. (2015). *Head start*. Available at https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/head-start

[2] See N. González, L. C. Moll, & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

cifically recruited to be active members of educational programs and school partnerships. Fabiano and Pyle profile a behavioral parent training (BPT) program that meaningfully engaged elementary school fathers of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The program integrated team sports, particularly soccer, to spur enjoyable interaction among fathers, students, and staff. The authors assert it also created opportunities for fathers to learn about and model effective academic encouragement and skill-building practices for their children. They linked part of the program's success to its strength-based orientation toward fathers.

Understanding Schools as Contested Cultural Sites

In Chap. 1, McWayne, Doucet, and Mistry posit that, "Schools are examples of cultural communities because they share particular values, understandings, and mediational means (such as the tools and systems of written literacy) which are historically institutionalized and privileged in the valued activities of this community". The culture of US schools, however, is not typically nuanced and adequately reflective of the nation's vast heterogeneity. Schools, instead, commonly project what Delpit (1988) classically called a "culture of power" that privileges shared rituals, norms, and expectations about teaching, learning, assessment, and engagement (p. 282). Consequently, educators often take the lead in creating and imposing a schooling culture in which students and families are either validated or stigmatized, or even penalized, based on their conformity to both written and unwritten academic and behavioral codes. Such codes largely reflect the nation's dominant, white, middle-class culture (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2010; Delpit, 1988).

In Chap. 2, Sanders and Molgaard address the phenomenon of white cultural dominance in schools. They, along with numerous other authors in the volume, stress that schools are powerful sites of cultural socialization and identity development in which students and families experience either cultural affirmation or rejection, nurturing or stifling, depending on educators' ideologies, school curriculum, instructional practices, and schools' policies and organizational culture. Discussions of how this is particularly so in early childhood settings are offered in Chaps. 1, 2, 4, and 7. Overall, research discussed throughout the volume shows that the nature and nurturing of school culture are complex and contested. Furthermore, the educational opportunities, barriers, accolades, or stigma students and families have can vary given how their specific ethnocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds are regarded as aligning with dominant social and cultural norms. So, given educators' positions of authority, it is essential that they recognize the power they wield as they engage families in partnerships.

While the majority of public school students are of color, as Melzi, Schick, and Scarola explain, approximately 80% of teachers are white. The authors suggest this can be a strong source of cultural discontinuity in family-school partnership goal development and practice. They, however, assert that such discontinuity is not a

fixed trait. Rather, they contend it can be leveraged to increase students' academic and sociocultural exposure and introduce "children to a breadth of learning styles and expectations." Still, similar to other chapter contributors, they stress that family-school partnerships should be "culturally grounded," implemented with a "bidirectional approach," and incorporate "comprehensive, culturally-and linguistically-attuned approaches that encompass child, parental, familial, community, and program influences." The authors further recommend partnerships be adaptable since culture itself is fluid. Indeed, having such attributes is key to family-school partnerships avoiding cultural dominance or rigidity and, instead, operating with asset-based orientations toward all families.

Unmasking Schooling's Racist and Colonial Legacies

In Chaps. 2 and 7, authors' discussions move beyond general multicultural discourse to explicitly and powerfully name the oppressive role that racism and colonization continue to have in schools and thus in school partnership successes and failures. Sanders and Molgaard acknowledge in Chap. 2 that racism and the racialization of people of color are pervasive in US society; hence it is imperative that educators avoid color-blind approaches to collaborating with families and identify and tackle racial inequities. They explain:

> A racialized society is one in which there are racial inequities in socio-economics, education, health, housing, and psychological well-being. While there is no biological basis for race and racial categories, from a critical race perspective, in a racialized society, racism is normative rather than an abnormal or atypical societal condition (Delgado, 1995). By racism, we do not only mean personal acts by individuals, but also, societal systems that support and reinforce white privilege.

The authors go on to offer various examples of how the dominant culture of US schooling and family-school partnerships is steeped in white privilege, which lends to the systemic marginalization of families of color in many schools.

Racial marginalization can occur in schools despite the efforts of many well-intentioned educators when educators lack sufficient racial consciousness and the will to disrupt the status quo. Indeed, racially marginalizing forces are embedded in school systems by design. Nolan, Bang, and McDaid-Morgan make this historical argument poignantly clear in Chap. 7 as they consider the educational experiences of Indigenous peoples in settler colonial nations like the United States and Canada. The authors explain that for centuries, "settler colonial nations have routinely created and enacted policies across generations intended to dismantle, disrupt, and assimilate Indigenous peoples through forced changes in familial structures and educative processes." They offer examples of how Indigenous peoples have faced conquest, forced removal, and "dispossession of lands and waters" that have had disenfranchising and traumatic effects on families—effects rarely acknowledged in schools. Nevertheless, a slew of racist public policies, educational initiatives, biased curriculum, and teaching practices have worked to erase, demean, or ignore

Indigenous families and cultures in ways that remain extremely salient to contemporary family-school partnership contexts. Nolan et al. go on to emphasize the importance of supporting partnerships with Indigenous families that are culturally informed by Indigenous values, traditions, and meaning-making.

Macro level political contexts related to the racialization of Latinx students and families in schools are detailed in Chaps. 3 and 6. Yoshikawa, in Chap. 3, describes the relevancy of families' immigrant status and the xenophobic history of US immigration policies. He contends that this, along with economic policies and practices, has villainized undocumented immigrants of color, while exploiting their labor. Yoshikawa conveys how the stress of racialized violence, harassment, surveillance, and opposition take a harmful socioemotional toll on immigrant children from families and communities impacted by such dynamics. Similarly, in Chap. 6, Barrueco explains how austere socioeconomic circumstances like performing extremely long hours of manual labor, frequent mobility, insecure and unsafe housing, and family separation affect the children of migrant workers and farmworkers. She conveys how these conditions—along with policies, biased treatment, and the false perceptions to which these families are often subjected—can traumatize children in those families. They can also hinder their learning, educational engagement, and relationship building in schools. Barrueco, however, emphasizes the families' sacrifices and their commitment to education, thereby humanizing their plight so educators can better understand their specific educational needs.

Altogether, authors across the chapters indicate how racialized and xenophobic dynamics can undermine families' trust in schools, restrict their presence in schools, and constrain their communication with educators. The authors' specific findings and analyses regarding the racist and colonizing effects of systemic marginalization on Indigenous and Latinx families are aligned with findings regarding African American students' and families' experiences that I and many others have described (Cooper, 2007, 2009[3]; Fields-Smith, 2009; Louque & Latunde, 2014; Posey-Maddox, 2013; Wilson, 2015, 2019). For instance, factors from the historical effects of slavery, literacy bans, and racial segregation laws to contemporary stereotyping, biased discipline policies, urban school privatization movements, and the racist violence fueling the current Black Lives Matter movement affect African American students' and families' educational opportunities and learning. Such factors also influence African American families' school partnership attitudes, disposition toward educators, and educational engagement activities as a whole (Wilson, 2019).

Authors' work in this volume points to the necessity of educators unmasking their ignorance and/or avoidance of the racialized realities and colonial legacies of US schooling. As Sanders and Molgaard assert, "Child care teachers are racial ethnic socializers," as are K-12 teachers. So such socializing should be done with socially just and culturally affirming intent. Ultimately, creating truly inclusive and equitable family-school partnerships requires educators at every level to intentionally counter the imposition of whiteness/white privilege, color-blind stances, and other biased approaches to family engagement and collaboration.

[3] I published under the name Camille Wilson Cooper prior to 2011.

Validating Familial and Communal Knowledge via Culturally Relevant Instruction

Collaborating with ethnoculturally diverse families in responsive and equitable ways demands that educators recognize and validate the socially and culturally relevant knowledge that families have. Authors of this volume remind us that parents, kinfolk, and community members draw upon such knowledge to teach and socialize children outside of school, yet they do so in ways that—if respected and leveraged in classrooms—can facilitate children's academic learning. This was evident in the COACHES soccer program involving elementary school fathers that Fabiano and Pyle described in Chap. 5.

In addition, in Chap. 7, Nolan, Bang, and McDaid-Morgan describe how "Indigenous families and communities are predicated on relationality and interconnectedness across generations and include extended kin relations" that unite youth and elders in activities that foster intergenerational learning and cultural pride. They further state that: "There is now robust research to demonstrate that young people who are deeply connected to their peoples, lands, and waters are also more likely to be resilient in formal education" since such youth, "are more likely to pursue and persist in higher education" after gaining "some exposure to Indigenous history and culture in their schooling." One example they offer based on Jerry Lipka's (1994) research pertains to "Yupik women us(ing) polar coordinate geometry and pattern work in the making of grass coil baskets."[4] Thus, children in this Indigenous culture likely have culturally relevant exposure to mathematics in ways that have proven practical and productive for their communities, yet are rarely incorporated and leveraged in traditional schooling.

Several authors specifically discuss the significance of teachers incorporating familial knowledge and cultural norms in classroom-based literacy practices. For instance, in Chap. 4, Melzi, Schick, and Scarola disrupt the deficit-based casting of Latinx immigrant families' home literacy practices to suggest educators focus on families' contributions versus any comparative gaps. For example, they point to research that suggest Latina mothers "from diverse socio-economic backgrounds prefer to approach reading as a sole narrator who tells an engaging story and encourages the child to listen actively rather than contribute to the creation of the story." They further assert that many other mothers also favor culturally relevant stories of their heritage rather than mainstream "commercially available storybooks" in the United States. The authors therefore point to effective culturally responsive partnership practices such as those that have engaged families in creating "storybooks inspired by culturally laden narratives" and ones that have used "*fotonovelas* (comic books), traditional poems, songs, jokes, riddles and oral stories" or dual-language texts and theater arts activities. Melzi et al. call on educators to "draw on family members' skill-sets and expertise" and invite them into classrooms "to lead lessons

[4] In this discussion, the authors reference Lipka, J. (1994). Culturally negotiated schooling: Toward a Yup'ik mathematics. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 14–30.

and share their knowledge." Their recommendations, along with those discussed in Chaps. 2, 6, 7, and 8, align with McWayne, Doucet, and Mistry's call for "school curriculum that reflects children's familiar knowledge and prior experience" in Chap. 1. The volume, in total, stresses how vital it is to affirm the range of experiential knowledge and multilingualism found among ethnoculturally diverse students and families.

Conducting Innovative, Collaborative, and Critical Family-Centered Research

Conducting research that is aligned to the values, principles, and findings shared in this volume means doing so in ways that contextualize families' cultural backgrounds and educational dispositions through strength-based and humanizing lenses. Authors across the volume emphasized that additional research is needed on the structure and implementation of culturally relevant educational initiatives and partnership approaches, as well as more studies on how family-school partnerships influence students' educational experiences and outcomes. Such research must be culturally informed to be valid. Several authors suggest that ensuring ethical and cultural integrity in research about ethnoculturally diverse families necessitates building trust with ethnoculturally diverse research participants and ensuring reciprocity and care as researchers interact with youth, families, and community members. It also means being more open to implementing collaborative research partnerships with families so they coconstruct the inquiry process and help interpret the findings that address their lives. Adair, for instance, shared an innovative collaborative inquiry approached called video-cued ethnography in Chap. 8, which involves research participants (e.g., youth, families, and community members) in making and editing films that showcase educational issues and scenarios true to their lives from which educators and other community members can learn.

The work of several contributors further pointed to the need for researchers to assume critical epistemological stances and counter "Western epistemic supremacy," as Nolan, Bang, and McDaid-Morgan state. This means decentering westernized and Anglocentric ideals about family structure, educational engagement, and academic success to understand and represent families on their own terms. Doing this will entail many researchers embracing paradigmatic shifts when it comes to the research methods they employ. So, as with many of the practical recommendations that authors offer in this volume, methodologically "flipping the script" can also help researchers be relational, inclusive, and just. As Adair shared, this entails maintaining a learning stance and elevating participants' expertise—steps she associated with enacting "humility." She reflected on research she conducted in several nations across the world to assert:

> What I did not understand then, and continue to work on now, is that humility is about engaging in ways that are recognizable, appreciated and welcomed by those from whom and with whom we want to learn. Withholding expertise or disengaging is just as arrogant

> as taking full control of educational situations and assuming one's ideas are exactly what people need. It is not being timid or reluctant, nor is it about being confident or in charge. Being humble means listening carefully enough to the community we are studying to hear what they want even if it is not what we expect, desire or think is best. Humility is about being sure of one thing: that the insider's view of the world is the most important part of data collection in any research situation.

Demonstrating such humility, deference, and respect for ethnocultural communities is especially important when considering both the historical and contemporary dynamics of structural inequity that family members have encountered.

As Barrueco alludes to in Chap. 6, many ethnocultural communities are mindful of how research and members of various institutions can harm, exploit, and misrepresent their communities by offering overgeneralized, stereotypical, and at times blatantly racist findings. Of course, there is a legacy of pseudoscientific and otherwise biased research that has gravely harmed communities of color (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Hence, ethnoculturally diverse families and communities are naturally interested in how they and their children will benefit from research processes: They want to ensure there will be no harm. Communities of color are often especially concerned about being fairly and holistically represented. In light of the racial and colonial contexts earlier referenced, it is imperative that educational researchers be mindful that many research participants have heightened vulnerabilities given a combination of ethnocultural, racial, and socioeconomic factors.

Barrueco, reflecting on her mixed methods work, stresses the need to: "ensur(e) that the measures selected are scientifically and culturally sound"; use surveys and other instruments written in appropriate language and dialects; and ask questions in lay, accessible, and culturally sensitive ways that are not commonly found with conventional tools like Likert scales. The examples she shares signify the necessity of all researchers critically examining the methodological norms they employ, even if already progressively situated (e.g., participatory action research, critical race counter-storytelling, etc.) to ensure they are culturally appropriate. Drawing upon critical lenses in family-school partnership research is essential given the power-laden nature of partnership work and engagement practices.

Final Implications for Co-constructing Culturally Sound Transformative Partnerships

Throughout this volume, the authors have called for family-school partnerships that incorporate more humanizing, anti-racist, anti-bigoted, and inclusive practices. This entails educators affirming the worth and strengths of all families and providing students of all ethnocultural backgrounds equal educational access, quality, and mobility. In support of this charge, I build upon the contributors' offerings to suggest additional strategies for developing and sustaining family-school partnerships that transform the status quo. Employing these strategies will lend to students' care, empowerment, justice, and ultimately, their improved learning. The strategies

involve countering divisive and exclusive cultural politics, sharing power and promoting the structural inclusion of diverse families, and honoring families' agency, resistance, and leadership.

Countering Divisive and Exclusive Cultural Politics

First, I contend it is imperative that we as educators, researchers, and concerned community members more pointedly acknowledge the politics of education and the current divisive political era that is deeply affecting marginalized, ethnocultural students and families.

For instance, as I write this commentary, the United States appears to be concluding an atrocious period of state-sanctioned family separation and exclusion targeting Latinx family members who arrived in the United States seeking asylum from violent and oppressive Central American regimes. Families were torn apart as children were forcibly separated and housed in detention centers or "camps" while parents and other adult family members were jailed. While US government officials debated the legality of the families' arrival and treatment, the forced separation of these families proved to be one of many events that have resulted from xenophobic policymaking in the United States over the past couple of years. As of the 2018–2019 academic year, the family separation and detention tactics will affect the culture and climate of many schools as the deeply traumatized children who remain in the United States (whether or not reunified with their families) enroll in schools and require intense emotional support, social service assistance, and socioeconomic resources (Minkle, 2018). These children and their families, like all others, will need to be engaged with equity and care; and educators will have to learn new lessons about developing family partnerships given distinct contexts of political exclusion and trauma.

Adair, in Chap. 8, highlighted the pervasiveness of xenophobia around the globe and the tendency of dominant cultures to develop and foster deficit-based ideologies about, and practices toward, immigrant families who are culturally different from them. She noted various incidents of families being engaged—and ineffectively so—only on educators' and other community interveners' terms. Families' goals and their children's needs were subsequently overlooked. Adair addressed important international contexts and global forces, asserting that, "parent involvement, education and engagement interventions do not consider systemic, global-political forces that sustain the inequity and marginalized positions that push parents and families towards services and support in the first place." Thus, she like several authors in this volume urged readers to engage more in systemic critique rather than individual blame, and thus devise systemic solutions to the marginalizing forces that hurt families. This appeal is apropos across international settings and in the United States too. As earlier discussed, xenophobic response to ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse students and families in schools is not a new phenomenon; rather it is a reaction that has been prominent since the founding of US public schools and one that has targeted US-born families as well.

The need to implement family engagement and partnership approaches that explicitly counter xenophobic, racist, and colonizing ideologies and practices remains urgent, as does researching the goals, experiences, and engagement customs of various cultural groups. In addition to considering the strengths and needs of the Latinx and Indigenous groups focused on in this volume, continued attention to African American, Asian American, Muslim, and other religious minority groups—especially those routinely targeted with bias—is needed, as is attention to children of varied abilities, LGBTQ+ families, and those highly impacted by poverty. Overall, students and families who are not white, middle class, Christian, fully able bodied, heterosexual, and fluent in English are finding themselves very vulnerable to exclusion, bullying, and sometimes violence. As their vulnerability is heightened during fractured political times, so is the responsibility of educators to foster equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive school environments regardless of students' ethnocultural, racial, socioeconomic, religious, (dis)ability, linguistic, immigration status, or gender identity background.

Additionally, partnership practices and research need to be more responsive to diverse family structures. Fabiano and Pyle (Chap. 5) and Nolan, Bang, and McDaid-Morgan (Chap. 7) suggest the importance of educators being sensitive to, and accommodating of, varied family structures as opposed to structuring partnerships assuming that each student has a two-parent headed household. They note how children's family structures can be affected by various parental/familial custody arrangements and/or the presence of family elders living in the home. This influences which family members engage in school partnerships, when, and how. Such contexts should prompt educators to be more responsive and sensitive to family diversity.

All the dimensions of diversity mentioned have implications for how researchers should approach recruiting study participants, building rapport and trust, considering convenient times, places, and ways of collecting data, and determining with participants what kinds of questions to ask, conversations to start, ways to observe, documents to collect, and other research techniques to use.

Sharing Power and Promoting Structural Inclusion

Structurally revamping schools to be more substantively (rather than nominally) inclusive of diverse families is key to moving toward the transformative partnerships needed. Authors in this volume have offered great insights for diversifying curriculum, pedagogical techniques, and parent programs. Increasing the educational voice, choices, governance input, and reform influence of families to be more reflective of the nation's ethnocultural diversity is needed too. Hence, I urge practitioners and researchers to shift away from "delivery" programs and "intervention" tactics aimed at increasing family's school participation and instead focus on coconstructing educational programs, family outreach initiatives, and community engagement plans *with* families. It is essential that families, including students, be given

additional opportunities to share their values, educational priorities, and express their schooling ideas and concerns.

Green (2017) explicates a process of educators, students, families, and community members collaborating to engage in community-based equity audits that could be extremely helpful in advancing authentic partnership building. He describes how school communities can use the audit process to "disrupt deficit views of community," "conduct initial community inquiry and shared community experiences," form a "community leadership team," and "collect equity, asset-based community data" to jointly assess needs, set improvement goals, and develop inclusive and culturally responsive reform methods (p. 17). Green also overviews how participating in "critical community dialogues," along with other collaborative planning steps, is part of this process (p. 28). Additionally, researchers like Ishimaru (2014) and Su (2007) address ways families and educators can collaborate to develop bonding social capital within specific ethnocultural communities, and bridging social capital to unite members of various ethnocultural groups to increase cultural cohesion and coalition building in schools.

Honoring Family Agency, Resistance, and Leadership

Finally, while I and the other contributors to this volume have highlighted a range of inequitable circumstances affecting families, and urged educators to do their part in redressing educational injustice, it is essential to recognize that families have always enacted agency, resistance, and educational leadership. Families experiencing cultural bias and/or racism have rarely been passive partners; rather, they have employed a variety of advocacy and activism strategies to resist oppression and protect children's educational welfare and rights (Ishimaru, 2014; Wilson, 2015, 2019). Indeed, just as schools have always been sites of cultural socialization, they have always been sites of political resistance too. Families have helped each other know their rights and shared resources for the collective good of marginalized children and school communities overall. Moreover, their modes of resistance have often reflected specific cultural values and traditions. This is evident, for instance, by Indigenous peoples employing distinct cultural art forms to nurture their critical literacy and retain their cultural knowledge and language despite the assimilating tactics of schools, as discussed by Nolan, Bang, and McDaid-Morgan. Resistance efforts are also clear in African Americans and Latinx families implementing various forms of protest that derive from their civil rights struggles and community organizing legacies (Su, 2007; Wilson, 2015). Undoubtedly, a range of cooperation, dissent, confrontation, and coalition building efforts have proven vital to the survival and empowerment of many ethnocultural communities, so such efforts—which function as democratic tools—are worthy of greater understanding and respect.

In all, it is crucial that educators recognize and honor family members' agentic nature and need for self-determination. A wealth of research has shown that families have the capacity—and a successful track record—acting as educational leaders.

Families, in doing so, collaborate with educators, school staff, and community members to advance school reform that benefits not only their children but students and school communities at large (e.g., Auerbach, 2007; Cooper et al., 2010; Ishimaru, 2014; Su, 2007). While educators have not typically welcomed the more confrontational tactics of disgruntled families, it is important for educators to understand that such tactics reflect families' care, love, and often their fears (Cooper, 2009; Doucet, 2011). Hence, educators should work to constructively dialogue and establish shared ground with families. Community-based groups and other nonprofit organizations familiar with, and sensitive to, various ethnocultural communities can be helpful in building ties between educators and families. For instance, Yoshikawa described community groups in New York City striving to help advocate for the educational rights of immigrant children and families in Chap. 3.

Additional research on family and community-based advocacy and resistance is needed as well. Over the past few years, I have led a research partnership with an organization called 482Forward, which comprises community organizers who rally for justice-driven reform in Detroit schools. The partnership has partly encompassed my university research team and the community organizers collaborating on various participatory action research (PAR) projects aimed at informing their efforts to prevent school closure, increase family and community representation in school governance, and promote special education equity. Both adult and youth organizers have contributed to this research process, from the formulation of research questions to methods, data analysis, writing, and (re)presentations. Our collaboration has helped us cocreate a continual cycle of dialogue, mutual learning, adaptation, and reciprocity. The PAR aspects of our work have aimed to help empower families and communities in ways that align with the organization's mission. It has been a complex, yet utterly rewarding process. While I am not exclusively an action researcher, this partnership has inspired me to continue honing my collaborative inquiry skills and commitments.

For instance, in addition to writing for publication and including at least one community member as a coauthor on PAR-related manuscripts, my team has drawn upon our data to write practical pieces from which our community partners can immediately benefit. This has included a policy brief on school closure the organization used to inform its 2017 school closure opposition campaign in Detroit, and a research brief reporting the critical literacy praxis (Bishop, 2014) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) the organizers employ via their social media communication and lobbying efforts. The organizers shared that the research brief—which they disseminated to their funders and some other community partners—advanced their learning and critical self-reflection. Additionally, the organizers and my research team cowrote an internal guide to conducting PAR within community organizing contexts.

My experience, along with the discussions of implementing more progressive research methods in the previous chapters, suggests that more effort to embrace critical and decolonizing methodologies in family-school partnership studies is warranted. Indeed, research is "never neutral" and thus never apolitical (Patel, 2016). Thus, as with practice, research should be approached with explicit decolonizing and anti-racist intentions and techniques that promote egalitarianism—ideally in the

process, but always in the outcomes. This involves educational researchers conducting research with increased critical consciousness and valuing the Indigenous, critical, communal, and emancipatory epistemologies in which many ethnocultural values, customs, perspectives, and educational goals are rooted. Such effort is possible when enacting a variety of historical, qualitative, mixed method, and even quantitative methods. And, it is necessary for avoiding the distortions, erasure, stereotyping, and dangerous deficit-based frames that harm many ethnocultural communities and fuel inequitable education policies and practices (Patel, 2016).

Ultimately coconstructing transformative family-school partnerships in research and practice requires a willingness of all involved partners to disrupt traditional hierarchical dynamics and closed schooling and inquiry structures to yield greater learning opportunities and educational justice. Doing so will help ensure schools are "sanctuary" spaces of learning, cultural affirmation, emancipation, and care (Liou, Marsh, & Antrop-González, 2017). Families of all backgrounds can then be authentic partners in facilitating children's educational advancement.

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