EXPANDING OUR NOTIONS OF POWER: A COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

by

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STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study describes and analyzes the experience of Mexican immigrant women who live in the United States without government authorization and who have participated as volunteer outreach workers through a local community-based organization. Specifically, I have sought to understand their views regarding the impact that engaging civically has had on their lives. Research decisions throughout the project were informed by empowerment theory and the principles of participatory action research. Grounded theory methodology served as the framework for conducting the data analysis process. Triangulation of data sources were used to strengthen the reliability and authenticity of the data and its analysis. Participant observations, in-depth interviews of research participants, focus groups, and participant analysis offered four sources of data corroborated in the analysis process. In addition, the strategies of peer review and participant feedback were built into the research design. This grounded theory analysis of a community-based participatory action research project addressed many of the concepts discussed in the literature on empowerment theory and civic engagement, and has contributed to an area of research that was previously lacking: the impact of volunteering on lay health advisors themselves. The substantive grounded theory developed through this project furthers our consideration of notions of power, including: what is power, what does it look like, and how does it function in day-to-day lives?

Causes and results are infinite in number and variety. Everything affects everything. In this universe, when one thing changes, everything changes. Hence the great power of man in changing the world by changing himself.

--- Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE OF AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door!
>
> From the New Colossus, by Emma Lazarus 1883
> Inscribed on the Statue of Liberty

Purpose of the Research

The research I conducted has several purposes that reflect the practical, theoretical, political, personal, and civic reasons for the study. These multiple purposes extend from my understanding of the relevant literature, from my social work experience, from my formal and informal education, from my theories of practice, and from practical and political necessity. Collectively, they represent the stance I bring to the field of social work research in seeking to know more about my topic: the experience of civic engagement of Mexican immigrant women. In the following section, I list and explain these purposes and how they were realized through this study. These objectives hold significance in that they represent a current vision for a line of research, a part of which the present study served to accomplish.

A Practical Purpose

Unauthorized Mexican migrants comprise 58% or 6.5 million of the total unauthorized migrant population living in the U.S., which was estimated at 11.2 million as of March 2010 (Passel, 2011). I believe that the field of social work has a significant role to play to address the needs of the millions of Mexican immigrants living in the United States without government authorization. Echoing Gutierrez, Yeakley, and Ortega (2000), social workers and social work agencies should be better informed and equipped to appropriately address the health and social service needs of this population. As a rapidly growing, yet heterogeneous group, Latinos, including Mexican immigrants, will have an increasing impact on social, political, and economic decisions in the U.S. One purpose of this research is to contribute to an understanding of the experiences of Mexican immigrant women who live in the U.S. without government authorization so that viable and effective interventions can be developed. This research acknowledges that Mexican immigrants living without government authorization are typically a "hard-to-reach" population who may not be well-served by traditional social services. Motivated by a holistic and empowerment-oriented perspective, my hope for this research is to contribute to the development of community organizations that are effective at offering a different type of social services to immigrants; social services that offer to immigrants opportunities for empowerment, in whatever way possible, and that acknowledge and support the human right to self-actualization.

A Theoretical Purpose

The theoretical reasons for this study are broad and indicate a desire for deeper understanding of a group of people that is marginalized, disenfranchised, demoralized, and illegalized and yet, live and work in the U.S. in large numbers while raising their children, utilizing public education, building communities, and generally impacting U.S. society economically, politically, culturally, and socially. The theoretical nature of this study is best represented by a cluster of questions which come from reflection upon my experience with and study of this area. These questions served as a guide for the research process and reflect a desire to make connections of a theoretical nature that can extend our knowledge of the theory and application of empowerment, and in turn guide other research endeavors.

This ever-expanding set of questions includes:

- What do the concepts of empowerment, civic engagement, and social action mean for one of the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged groups living in the United States?
- In what ways does involvement in a process of civic engagement affect the lives of Mexican immigrant women?
- What is the impact of being involved civically on their sense of self, social responsibility, and control over their lives?
- How does the experience of community action inform the view they have of their future, and the future of their children?
- Is participation as a volunteer outreach worker connected to an increased sense of empowerment?

- What motivates the women to volunteer in the community?
- Which of the key variables and concepts of empowerment theory are most relevant for this particular population?
- What other key variables and concepts are relevant to their experience?

The review of the literature in Chapter III is dedicated to examining the previous research that has sought answers to these and other questions and supported the need to conduct this study. Our answers to these research questions have helped us to examine the relevance of empowerment theory for Mexican women who live in the U.S. without government authorization and who engage civically as lay health advisors.

A Political Purpose

One purpose of this study is to contribute as a scholar to the current political debate regarding immigrant and immigration policy. The issue of immigration gets framed in many ways and encompasses many policies, including border control, employer sanctions, tracking systems, guest worker programs, and paths to citizenship. In part, my research is an attempt to view more holistically some of the people at the heart of the argument between deportation and paths to citizenship, tighter borders and welcoming arms with the hope that a deeper understanding of the experience of Mexican immigrants will lead to more respectful, just, and humane approaches to immigration policy.

A Personal Purpose

There are personal reasons for conducting this research. It is unlikely that I would be proposing to conduct this study if not for my experience over 13 years as a community organizer working within a community of Mexican immigrants. I began working with the Mexican immigrant community that is the subject of this research in 1998, the same month that I began the social work PhD program. The work in the community was long, intense, passionate, and utterly life-changing. What began as a small program to serve a small community has grown into a nonprofit, now called La Casa del Pueblo, which has served communities across Utah. Along the way, my experience in the community has guided my goals as a doctoral student, and vice versa, my doctoral education has shaped my approach to community organizing. One purpose of this research is to bring a sense of closure to this dual experience as community developer and Ph.D. student.

A Civic Purpose

In the spirit of participatory action research, which has informed my work with the community from the beginning, one civic purpose of this research is to offer to the women of La Casa del Pueblo a more formalized experience with conducting qualitative research in the community that can be used to further their own goals for community development, including, if relevant, assessment of the program in which they have been involved. This additional civic aspect of my research seeks to evaluate, in the most preliminary of ways, the role that La Casa del Pueblo plays in the lives of the women involved and whether La Casa del Pueblo has achieved its original purpose of empowering community members.

Despite its meager beginning, its lack of notoriety, and its commitment to a population that many would prefer to ignore or simply not see at all, La Casa del Pueblo has successfully engaged a community of Latino immigrants in a process of demonstrable social change. This social change is evidenced by the numbers of Latinos served by the organization through outreach, health promotion and health education, and by their behavioral change. At the same time, the real value of this unique organization may lie hidden in the unrevealed knowledge amassed regarding the mechanisms of empowerment, civic engagement, and social action at work in this grassroots effort. To uncover the answers to these questions requires hearing directly from the Mexican immigrant women who have had the opportunity to experience being part of this social change effort. This approach to understanding is itself a civic act and pursues a third civic purpose for this project: to give at least one group of Mexican immigrants an opportunity to directly influence the body of knowledge currently shaping social work practice with immigrants. In this respect, this research project has sought to give a voice to Mexican immigrants and, mirroring the social work practices it is exploring, offer another opportunity for their continued empowerment.

In sum, perhaps more than any statement of my philosophy, approach or biases, the outline of purposes for this research described above reflects the lens from which I have engaged in this study. In order for this lens to be further understood, I share the following information as background to the research.

Background to the Research

In an effort to locate myself, as the investigator, throughout this research process, I will begin by relating the events out of which this research has grown. After graduating from the University of Utah MSW program in 1996, I did a 2-year stretch in clinical social work, earning my Licensed Clinical Social Work status. Although this was an enjoyable and educational experience, I knew that I was seeking a different type of social work experience, one that would allow me to explore my theories of practice involving the importance of multidimensional and community-centered solutions to the many challenges faced by families in poverty. A continued connection with the Executive Director of one of my previous work sites, the Family Support Center, led to a volunteer opportunity with a new community planning initiative for a small city located in Salt Lake County called Midvale. Immediately, I sensed the relevance of this opportunity for me. During my first attendance at a meeting of this small group of community leaders, I could hardly contain my insistent thoughts that I would be hired to facilitate the development of this unique initiative. In fact, the group was preparing a state grant to seek funding for a Community Developer position, to be located within the Community and Economic Development Department of Midvale. Imagining that I could apply my years of social work experience and education to a community planning and organizing setting energized me far beyond any previous career opportunity or experience. Despite my pending social work doctoral program application, I instantly knew that if I was to land this job opportunity it would be worth any adaptation I would have to make in my plans to complete a doctorate within the next 4 years.

Six months after that first meeting, I landed the job and began an amazing journey into the world of community organizing. That was September 1998 - the same month that I began the social work doctoral program at the University of Utah. I was "green," motivated, and determined to put my ensuing doctoral studies to practical use in my new job. Armed with recent training on Results-Based Accountability, a community planning model developed by Mark Friedman (www.resultsaccountability.com), and the advice of my doctoral program mentor, Dr. Hal Lawson, who had written extensively about university-community partnerships, I jumped with both feet into my new role as facilitator of a new community development initiative. Our first several meetings as a planning team focused on identifying community stakeholders, priorities, strengths, barriers, specific objectives, and trends in locally-relevant data. To ensure maximum inclusion and participation, each meeting included Spanish and English speakers from the community, with every word spoken translated from Spanish to English and vice versa. In directing each meeting, I sought to ensure that at every meeting and on every committee of the Midvale Community-Building-Community Initiative, community members were present and heard first, before agency representatives could voice their opinions.

In the very first of these intense planning meetings, as I was in the earliest stages of envisioning the planning process and the most effective ways to facilitate both planning for and implementing meaningful change in Midvale, a comment was made by a community member that radically altered my previous thinking about our approach to "improving outcomes for children and families in Midvale". This community member, an English-speaking Latina woman with another Latina by her side, looked around the

room of twenty or so agency directors, school principles, and city government staff and said "We've lived in this community for 7 years and we had no idea that all of your agencies were here in Midvale." I was instantly struck by the significance of this comment and continued to dwell on its import for many weeks. Its effect on my vision for community planning and change for Midvale was dramatic – I realized that creating new services would be useless and potentially redundant if we did not first ensure that community members were utilizing the services that already existed. In our very next monthly planning team meeting, I outlined a two-part strategy of 1)informing ourselves and the community of existing services and resources and 2)focusing on the creation of low-cost solutions required by our objectives that did not currently exist in the community. Then, 2 months later, I proposed to my Executive Committee a new project that I would implement and run as a program to complement the work of our community development initiative. This project, which I called the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program, set out to recruit Midvale community members in poor neighborhoods to serve as volunteer Community Health Outreach Workers.

It is at this point in my narrative when my story and the stories of the Mexican women involved in my study intersect. With executive permission and a small grant to offer stipends for volunteer service, I began with one Latina woman, named Carmen, who was referred by a local agency program director. Carmen spoke only Spanish and I spoke limited Spanish. Together with a volunteer interpreter, Carmen and I began the process of learning in depth about the community agencies doing business in Midvale. Quickly we added other Latina women to serve as Community Health Outreach Workers for the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program.

Our primary initial activities involved taking "field trips" to Midvale agencies to learn first-hand what they had to offer the community, how to access their services, and their level of cultural and linguistic competency. These early hands-on trainings were enlightening, both for us and for the agencies we visited. By going to them as potential recipients of their services, as all of the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor outreach workers truly were, we were able to assess from a practical and first-hand view the potential for each organization to provide needed services to our target community - the large group of Mexican immigrants living in Midvale. At the same time, we were able to provide immediate and relevant feedback to the agency directors hosting our "informational" visits to their sites. This feedback, coming directly from the Neighbor to Neighbor Program outreach workers, with little censorship or direction by me, suggested to the Midvale agencies the impact of their English-only application materials, their non-Spanish speaking front desk staff and service providers, their upfront fees, their bills sent automatically by computer despite previous free-service agreements, and even the sense of welcome and acceptance construed by their décor. Our empowerment process had begun! We continued to learn about as many Midvale-area services as we could, following each on-site training with the outreach workers conducting door-to-door outreach and education to their own neighbors in their apartment complexes and surrounding neighborhoods.

Over time, as our knowledge and expertise developed, we began to offer more detailed information to the community regarding specific health issues that impact Latino populations, and specifically, the immigrant Latino communities. We pursued grants that fund health promotion to address specific health problems. In collaboration with the

Midvale Community-Building-Community Initiative, we organized health fairs, parent conferences, and other events to offer more services and information to the community. We worked with other community agencies to develop new services for the Midvale community, such as dental care and women's health care. Based on requests from Latino immigrants in other neighborhoods, we gradually expanded our service area to include other areas of the Salt Lake Valley. In keeping with our program model, we began offering volunteer opportunities to Latino community members in those areas. Quickly we realized that we had grown beyond Midvale as a target community. In response, we – Carmen, Claudia, Ramona, Teresa, Alicia, Juan, and I (the core organizing group of the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program) – made the decision to pursue non-profit status for our rapidly growing organization. We anticipated that becoming an independent non-profit would allow us to more effectively serve areas beyond Midvale. In July 2003, with the blessing of the Mayor and staff of Midvale City, I completed the steps to incorporate the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program into the potentially statewide organization, Comunidades Unidas. Our work efforts and goals multiplied, and we began to rely more heavily on volunteer outreach workers from the Latino immigrant communities that we were focused on. We experienced many of the growing pains typical of such organizational change – those associated with developing a board of directors, seeking larger sources of funding, and managing a larger set of programs and services. Yet, the expansion into Comunidades Unidas was largely positive and in keeping with our original aim of empowering the Latino community of Utah. Then, in July 2005, with just 2 years as a nonprofit under our belts and much left to be done to secure a long future of organizational success, I left my position as the executive director of Comunidades

Unidas in order to attend full-time to the completion of my dissertation. For the first time in the 7 year history of Comunidades Unidas, the position of executive director was selected by a board of directors. As with any organizational change of that magnitude, new directions were taken. Unfortunately, these new approaches had a negative impact on the original staff and volunteers of Comunidades Unidas. From their reports to me, volunteer trainings were discontinued, staff hours were cut, and grant objectives were not being fulfilled. Over a period of several months, the volunteer outreach workers and staff voiced their concerns to the Executive Director and to the President of the Board of Directors, but to no avail. Finally, in March 2008, a group of 40 of the volunteers requested a meeting with the Board of Directors to air their grievances and to inquire into the future direction of the organization. The next day, Claudia was fired from her position as Outreach Coordinator and in response, Tere, Ramona, and Carmen resigned from their positions.

It was quickly decided that a new nonprofit organization should be created. A meeting was held of the former staff and 15 of the volunteers at Claudia's home in April 2008. At that meeting, Gabriela Cetrola agreed to serve as the first executive director of La Casa del Pueblo, the organization formed to serve as the "new" Comunidades Unidas. It was determined that 6 leading volunteers from the community would serve as officers on the board of directors. The work of re-creating an organization began with applying for 501c3 status and seeking new funding sources. Then, in the fall of 2009, Gabriela experienced health issues that made it impossible for her to continue as the executive director of La Casa del Pueblo. In order for the organization to complete its current grant contracts, I agreed to step into the role of executive director again. During this time, I

was also actively interviewing the participants of this research project. Then, in August of 2010, with the current grant contracts held by La Casa del Pueblo completed, the board of directors and I agreed to put additional grant-seeking on hold while I finally completed my dissertation.

My experience in the development of Comunidades Unidas and La Casa del Pueblo has been multifaceted – it has been an experience of friendship, learning, growth, mistakes, dreams, and ideals. I will always be connected in some way to La Casa del Pueblo and to the women who created it with me. From the very beginning, my approach to both the community development initiative and the outreach program was participatory, research-based, and empowerment-oriented. Although in those early years, I was less familiar with the notion of participatory action research than I am today, I firmly believe that through my role as the Community Developer for the Midvale Community-Building-Community Initiative and as the Director of the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program, Comunidades Unidas, and La Casa del Pueblo, I fostered a community-based research process of assessment, planning, action, evaluation, and re-planning that fully involved those community members most impacted by the process and outcomes of our planning efforts. I consider it to be my good fortune that my experience as a doctoral candidate has allowed me to continue to immerse myself in a project that has held so much significance for my life. At this time, I feel that it is only logical that I would apply my developing skills as a social work scholar and participatory action researcher to reflect upon the history and work of the organization that I had the honor of initiating and to consider its impact on the many individuals who have truly made it what it is today.

My Research Question, Propositions and Biases

The primary question explored through this research is: What is the impact of volunteering in the community as a lay health advisor on the lives of Mexican women who live in the United States without government authorization? My proposition, based on my social work experience, has been that engaging in the community, specifically one's own community, to try to bring about needed change to improve lives, leads to a sense of empowerment for Mexican immigrant women who have had little previous opportunity to feel empowered in their lives. Through the process of providing pertinent information on health and wellness issues and community resources to the people who live in their community, I believe that the women involved in La Casa del Pueblo are empowered to make decisions that positively impact themselves and their families. My dissertation research was designed to explore the soundness of this belief.

Importance of the Research

I believe that this study has both theoretical and practical implications for social work and related fields of social inquiry and practice. From a theoretical standpoint, this study builds upon the existing literature that seeks to understand the experience of immigrant women, specifically Mexican immigrant women, who live in the U.S. This study also contributes to our understanding of the salience of empowerment theory for understanding the experience of Mexican immigrant women. In addition, the results of this study add to an understanding of the potential for Mexican immigrants to contribute to U.S. society through local civic engagement. This research also holds practical significance in its potential to shape social work interventions with marginalized groups

of people who experience multiple barriers to meeting their basic human needs through an in-depth look at two social change strategies: parent support groups and the use of lay health advisor programs to promote health.

CHAPTER II

PARENTS ANONYMOUS AND LA CASA DEL PUEBLO

> In assessing the problems of immigrant clients, social workers can build on the strengths that have been shown to sustain the viability of immigrant families, particularly reliance on cultural attachments and values and social support from family, kin, and community. In the context of the limited support currently provided by government to this segment of American society, social workers must respond with creative community-based initiatives that draw directly on the vitality of immigrant families and communities. (Padilla, 1997, p.604)

In this chapter, I provide a description of the organizations and programs that serve as the "programmatic context" for this research, in particular, the Parents Anonymous parent support groups and La Casa del Pueblo. Prior to conducting this study, I viewed the professional practice under investigation to be the volunteer training and outreach work of Comunidades Unidas, now called La Casa del Pueblo, the nonprofit organization that grew out of the work of the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program of the Midvale City Community-Building-Community Initiative. In my conceptualization of this research project, I failed to recognize the significant interaction that Comunidades Unidas/La Casa del Pueblo has had, almost since its inception as the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program, with another community-based program that started in Midvale - the Parents Anonymous parent support groups at the Midvale Boys and Girls Club, and how that interaction would impact the results of this study.

This significant programmatic interaction, and its relevance for the participants of this study, became clear from the first focus group and interviews conducted. In responding to the question, "Can you tell me about your experience as a volunteer in the community and how that experience has impacted your life?", the research participants did not separate the experience of being a volunteer in the community from their experience of participating in the parent support groups – they responded by talking about their experiences with both programs and the critical impact that both have had on their lives and on the lives of the people in their families and communities. It was apparent that they did not view the Parents Anonymous groups and the Comunidades Unidas/La Casa del Pueblo volunteer outreach work as distinct programs, and instead saw them as two aspects of one program or organization. In fact, in 2003, the Parents Anonymous support groups, no longer supported by the Midvale Boys and Girls Club, were transferred to La Casa del Pueblo for continuation, in actuality joining them as two programs within one organization.

It is clear to me now that due to the co-occurrence of these programs in time and place, and the practical manner in which they were functionally linked by the women utilizing the programs, it is not feasible in the current study to parse out the effects each program separately had on the women. The women, all selected as participants in this study because of their service as volunteer outreach workers, had also all participated for some time as members of the weekly, Spanish-language parent support groups led from 1999 to 2001 by Gabriela Cetrola, and after that point by Teresa Rodriguez. The prevalence of the women's responses regarding the importance of the parent support groups, what they had gained from them, and how the support groups led them to the volunteer outreach work is, in itself, a significant finding of the research as it highlights the synergistic effect of offering both parent support groups and volunteer

training and outreach work. Now having the benefit of hindsight coupled with the evidence from this research, I can affirmatively state that the parent support groups were a critical component of the success of the volunteer outreach worker program.

The Parents Anonymous Program

The Parents Anonymous parent support groups started in Utah in 1999 by the Midvale Boys and Girls Club as part of a family services grant they received. Since that time, the groups have operated under the Parents Anonymous Inc. guidelines. "Weekly, on-going Parents Anonymous Groups are co-led by Parent Group Leaders and professionally trained Group Facilitators and are free of charge to participants. Parents Anonymous Groups provide a safe environment where parents talk with each other, provide mutual support and experience parent leadership, shared leadership and personal growth" (Parents Anonymous Program Series, 2001). At its peak of funding, the Parents Anonymous program facilitated 15 support groups, including co-occurring Parents Anonymous children's groups, across the Wasatch Front. Currently, two Spanish-speaking weekly parent support groups are being facilitated in Utah.

La Casa Del Pueblo

La Casa del Pueblo is an organization developed by a small group of Mexican women that seeks to both empower and serve Latino immigrants in Utah. Initially begun as a program to educate community members of the services available to them, La Casa del Pueblo has grown over a period of 13 years into an independent nonprofit organization with multiple sources of funding and several different programs. La Casa del Pueblo was created in response to the input of two Mexican women living in a small Utah city who pointed out that few Latino community

members are aware of the vast number of resources and services available to assist families. As a response to this lack of awareness of services, the concept of peer-based neighbor to neighbor outreach and education was conceived as a culturally and linguistically appropriate way to inform the Latino immigrant community about available services and options for health promotion. Through an initial $7500 mini-grant received in January 1999, La Casa del Pueblo was begun with one Mexican woman who volunteered to work as an outreach worker in her neighborhood. Since that time, La Casa del Pueblo has served hundreds of Latino families and individuals in many Utah communities through door to door outreach and education, community organizing, and community development. The original philosophy of La Casa del Pueblo was: to empower people by educating them about available services in the community, to create a supportive community by encouraging neighbors to know and help each other, to decrease mobility by increasing the use of resources, and to increase the feeling among community residents that they live in a safe and supportive community. The individuals and families served by the organization are at high risk for a number of poor health outcomes due to several compounding factors, including: poverty; social isolation; lack of transportation; lack of health insurance; low levels of education; cultural and linguistic barriers; a lack of knowledge of risk for HIV/AIDS, diabetes, birth defects, and other diseases; and a lack of familiarity with and trust of the U.S. health care system. La Casa del Pueblo outreach workers provide information in Spanish to the community on numerous topics including: the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid, local community health clinics, women's health care and screening, pre- and postnatal care, immunizations, English as a Second Language classes, domestic violence, HeadStart, mental health resources, vocational programs, diabetes prevention, tobacco prevention, and HIV/AIDS prevention. In addition, La Casa del Pueblo works with other

organizations to implement infant car seat safety programs, health and dental fairs, parents' involvement in their children's education, and a variety of other programs for the Latino community.

La Casa del Pueblo ensures that its efforts represent the actual interests of the community members served by the organization in several ways. First, the program personnel hired by La Casa del Pueblo are former volunteers with the organization. They are first-generation immigrants from Mexico and native Spanish-speakers. They have limited formal education; however through their work in La Casa del Pueblo, they have gained significant expertise in issues of health and wellness, in accessing community resources, and in mobilizing and organizing communities. All of the outreach staff of La Casa del Pueblo have come to be viewed as leaders in their community and as resources for support and assistance in seeking services and negotiating through the health care system. Secondly, La Casa del Pueblo utilizes a peer education, neighbor to neighbor approach to access the underserved Latino immigrant population. Within the organization, little if any distinction is made between the volunteer outreach workers and the community members that they serve. Volunteers with La Casa del Pueblo experience the same barriers to accessing health care and other social services as the community members they serve and they come from the same social, cultural and linguistic background. Like the staff of La Casa del Pueblo, the volunteers come directly from the communities that they serve and continue to live as neighbors with the recipients of their services. La Casa del Pueblo volunteers are viewed by community members as trusted allies who know first-hand the struggles experienced by Latino immigrant families. This trust in both La Casa del Pueblo staff and volunteers on the part of community members allows for a natural, ongoing, and effective system of feedback and program quality improvement. Finally, La Casa

del Pueblo utilizes its staff and volunteers to engage in collaborative local community planning with a wide range of service providers in each targeted geographic area to ensure that community resources are culturally and linguistically appropriate, visible, and accessible to our target population. As a result of this unique approach, the Latino communities targeted by La Casa del Pueblo benefit in three mutually-reinforcing ways: (a) Community members receive information, education, and assistance to address their family's most pressing needs. (b) Community members have the opportunity to serve their communities as volunteers in a multitude of health-promoting and community-building activities and through that volunteer service, they develop their own skills, experience, and capacity through expert and certified training and internship. (c) As volunteer community leaders are developed within the community, the community becomes more organized, proactive, and prevention-focused. More community members, including families of adults and children, offer to serve as community volunteers and begin to work together to solve their communities' problems and to build on their communities' strengths.

La Casa del Pueblo volunteer work began, and continues to be, largely in the form of community outreach. The volunteers are trained to serve as lay health advisors (LHAs) through their involvement in the following activities: 1) they receive information on specific health concerns that impact the Latino community, these trainings include how to conduct community outreach and health education and promotion; 2) they conduct community outreach and health education and promotion to their family members, friends, and neighbors through door-to-door visits, support group meetings, and formal and informal gatherings for community events and holidays; 3) they participate as health educators in La Casa del Pueblo-organized health education and promotion events such as health fairs, conferences, and TV and radio interviews;

and 4) they collect community-level data for needs assessments, strengths assessments, and indicators of health outcomes.

Serving as both role models and peer educators within the community in which they reside, the LHAs that volunteer for La Casa del Pueblo do much more than distribute information and provide education and referrals to their fellow community members. Through the combination of their personal insight, extensive training, and the trusting relationships they maintain with the community, the LHAs are able to elicit and apply the wealth of pertinent community feedback, information, and observations that they have access to as they perform they work. In this way, the La Casa del Pueblo LHAs shape the vision, mission, goals, and interventions of the organization by providing constant feedback to the Program Directors regarding the needs, strengths, and desires of the Latino individuals and families that they serve.

La Casa del Pueblo relies on several theories of change to support its model of community action. Social Cognitive Theory informs the program in its view of learning as a social process that is influenced by interactions with other people (Bandura, 2004). The one on one peer-education approach of the program brings to the Latino community a new level of concern and awareness for individual and community health. This new level of concern and knowledge in turn reinforces and shapes proactive, prevention-oriented behavior among community members. The "safe," private consultation between the volunteer outreach workers and the community members allows individuals to gain a sense of self-efficacy in utilizing new behaviors. La Casa del Pueblo also embraces empowerment theory in its model of practice "because it broadens a person's social understanding and connects her with others in the same situation; empowerment broadens a person's horizons, imbues him with faith in social change, and accords him the ability to change" (Sadan, 2004, p.81).

Finally, the La Casa del Pueblo Program seeks to epitomize the Popular Education theories of Paulo Freire (Wallerstein, 1992). Freire's conceptualization of Popular Education focuses on the participatory nature of learning and views "learners as active participants in a dialogue of equals with the teacher rather than as passive objects trying to absorb expert knowledge" (McQuiston, Choi-Hevel, & Clawson, 2001). In this way, both the lay health advisors and the community members they serve are seen as "co-speakers, co-learners, and co-actors" (Castelloe, Watson, and White, 2002) in the work of La Casa del Pueblo. Freire's belief in reciprocal teaching and learning and the value and strengths of all individuals is promoted in each interaction undertaken within the program. This participatory, reciprocal exchange of ideas and information is seen by La Casa del Pueblo as the most important element in promoting positive change at the individual, group, and community level for the immigrant community.

As the organization has evolved with the increased knowledge and skills of its staff and volunteers, and in an effort to meet the changing needs of the community, the purpose of the organization has expanded. Today, the vision of La Casa del Pueblo is that all Latinos in Utah will have access to the resources they need to be healthy, to be educated, to develop careers, to raise strong families, to celebrate their cultural diversity, and to become leaders in their communities. The mission of La Casa del Pueblo is to provide Latinos with the opportunity to serve their communities as volunteer Community Health Outreach Workers, advocates, educators, and leaders through a comprehensive program of individual and community capacity building, training and development, and community planning and organization.

CHAPTER III

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Preview of the Relevant Literature

In this chapter, I critically review several relevant topics addressed in the literature based on the key ideas put forth for exploration by my primary research question and research proposition. According to Padgett (1998, p. 31), "the literature review shapes the study, prevents reinventing the wheel, and promotes cumulative advances in knowledge." My goal for the literature review is to provide pertinent background information to the reader, to discuss previous research studies that address aspects of my topic, to identify relevant concepts that can inform the data analysis and interpretation process of my research, and to reveal alternative theories to my hypothesis.

To begin, I delve into the literature on empowerment theory, revealing an implicit proposition contained within my research question – the possibility of and potential for empowerment. This section serves two purposes: 1) to describe the theoretical philosophy underlying my research, which shapes my conceptualization of and response to my research, and 2) to suggest the possibility that, for the Mexican women of CU, the act of being civically engaged in their community leads to a greater sense of empowerment in their lives. Here, I unveil the implicit theory which has guided my work with the Latino community over the last thirteen years and remains today to

shape the approach to my dissertation research. From this examination of the relevant literature on empowerment theory and practice I hope to draw attention to particular concepts and subconcepts that can serve as starting points for the data analysis phase of the research.

Next, I look at the concept of disempowerment and how it relates to Mexican immigrants. I offer a very brief history of immigration policy in the United States to show the grand scale of political forces at work in the lives of immigrants from Mexico. From there, I address the demographic profile of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico, describing many of the more immediate challenges faced by these immigrants. This segment of my literature review is meant to reveal the "cause for concern" (the statement of the problem) that requires additional social work research in pursuit of just and effective solutions.

Finally in the review, I look at the notion of civic engagement and, in particular, civic engagement in the form of volunteering as a lay health advisor. Based on arguments from the literature, I concur with the idea that the activity of volunteering in one's community can be viewed as a form of civic engagement and explain why this form of civic engagement (as opposed to other forms, such as voting) is particularly relevant to my population of interest. In order to describe and understand the impact, if any, that volunteering as a lay health advisor in the community has on a particular group of Mexican women in Utah, I first look at the literature on civic engagement and empowerment, then the research on Latino immigrant civic engagement and empowerment and Mexican immigrant civic engagement and empowerment. I then specifically review what is known about the impact of working as a "lay health advisor,"

as this best describes the civic activities of the volunteers of CU. Finally, I describe three alternative concepts or theories that may relate to our study.

Please note: Throughout my proposal, I most often use the terminology "Mexican women who live in the U.S. without government authorization" to address the population of interest in this study. In my review of the literature, however, there are instances in which I utilize the terminology adopted by the study under review.

A Theoretical Framework and a Research Proposition

Underlying its broad and multiple pursuits, the field of social work recognizes the primacy of its role in advocating for social justice for oppressed and marginalized groups of people (Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998). Empowerment theory, a theoretical framework embraced by many social work educators and practitioners (Wallerstein, 2002), epitomizes this role as it puts forth a methodological approach for assisting oppressed groups to increase their real and perceived power. Integral to empowerment theory is the notion that it is incumbent upon social workers to identify power differentials as they are at work in our society; to recognize the detrimental impact of these differentials on individuals, families, and communities; and to take action with those most impacted to decrease these differences in power. Clearly, in a social and political system driven by money and the control of resources, the process of shifting and equalizing power is no easy task. However, according to empowerment theory, this is the role social workers must play in our society, without regard to perceptions of attainability. In fact, it is the empowerment practitioner who sees that such perceptions are socially and politically constructed, in part creating the conditions of powerfulness

and powerlessness that maintain an unequal and unjust system of society. These practitioners, recognizing that empowerment is itself a political act, are prepared to engage even the most marginalized and most powerless members of our society. Mexican immigrants to the United States are one such group that deserves the attention of the social work profession. Recent events in the United States have brought immigration policy to the attention of policymakers. The time is now for social workers to engage Mexican immigrants and the larger community in a process of gaining political and social power.

What Is Empowerment?

The term "empowerment" has been broadly defined in the field of social work. It includes notions of personal, organizational, and political power, ranging from a psychological sense of self-efficacy, to the ability to influence others, to access and control over resources. Empowerment is referred to as both "a process and an outcome" (Gutierrez et al., 1998, p. 19; Wallerstein, 2002). "The process of empowerment means a transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of more control over one's life, fate, and environment"(Sadan, 2004, p. 13). Gutierrez (1990, p. 149) has defined empowerment as "a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations." Rappaport (1995, p. 802) cites as a definition of empowerment "an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources." Rappaport also describes

empowerment as having "individual determination over one's own life" as well as a "democratic participation in the life of one's community" (1987, p. 121). He stresses that "empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights" (1987, p. 121). Empowerment has been construed as a limitless resource (Gutierrez, 1994; Rappaport, 1987; Wallerstein, 2002).

Empowerment Theory and Practice

Various empowerment researchers have offered conceptualizations around different aspects of empowerment theory and practice. A primary tenet of empowerment theory is that "societies consist of separate groups possessing different levels of power and control over resources" (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 202). "Power is (1) the ability to influence the course of one's life, (2) an expression of self-worth, (3) the capacity to work with others to control aspects of public life, and (4) access to the mechanisms of public decision making" (Gutierrez et al., 1998, p. 8). Power occurs on three levels in empowerment practice, described as personal, interpersonal (Gutierrez et al., 1998), and political (Gutierrez, 1991 & 1995; Sadan, 2004).

The personal level deals with feelings and perceptions regarding the ability to influence and resolve one's own issues. Gaining power at this level is often referred to as psychological empowerment (Friedman, 1992; Pilisuk, McAllister, & Rothman, 1996; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Desired outcomes of empowerment at the personal level include self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-acceptance, being in self, self-esteem, feeling you have rights, and critical thinking (Gutierrez et al., 1998). Power at the

interpersonal level involves those experiences with others that facilitate problem resolution (Gutierrez et al., 1998). Outcomes at this level include knowledge and skills, assertiveness, setting limits on giving, asking for help, problem-solving, practicing new skills, and accessing resources (Gutierrez et al., 1998). Empowerment theory explains the relationship among these aspects of power. For example, Sadan describes the connection between personal and interpersonal empowerment as "a process of internal and external change." "The internal process is the person's sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems. The external change finds expression in the ability to act and to implement the practical knowledge, the information, the skills, the capabilities and the other new resources acquired in the course of the process" (Sadan, 2004, p. 76). Similarly, Wallerstein (2002, p. 74) states that "the concept of participation creates the link between the individual and organizational level" when operationalized as "sense of community," "perceived neighborhood control," and "neighborhood participation."

"Empowerment theory suggests that changes in beliefs and attitudes contribute to the participation of individuals in social change and assumes that individuals will work for the collective good if they develop a sense of critical consciousness" (Gutierrez, 1995, p. 229). This understanding views political empowerment as a result of the personal and interpersonal experiences of power. This aspect of empowerment theory links empowerment to civic action in that political empowerment emphasizes "the goals of social action and social change" (Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991, p. 25). The interconnections between personal, interpersonal, and political empowerment are suggested by other researchers. For example, Wallerstein (2002) delineates the concept "community

empowerment" to describe "a multi-level construct" (p. 74) that "embraces political change and vertical relations" (p. 73). Sadan (1984, p. 75) says that "empowerment is an interactive process which occurs between the individual and his environment, in the course of which the sense of the self as worthless changes into an acceptance of the self as an assertive citizen with socio-political ability. The outcome of the process is skills, based on insights and abilities, the essential features of which are a critical political consciousness, an ability to participate with others, a capacity to cope with frustrations and to struggle for influence over the environment." Finally, Hardina's view of empowerment practice is also comprehensive:

> The intent of an empowerment approach to community practice is to foster social change at all levels: individual, group, organization, community, and society. Consequently, an intermediate goal of empowerment-oriented organizing should be to foster real social and economic change in low-income communities. Empowerment efforts should focus on improvements in community life, moving beyond the development of social capital or the creation of informal networks and formal links with institutions. Outcomes should be expected to include the development of business and job opportunities, reductions in crime and substance abuse, and improvements in the health and/or educational status of residents. Finally, the ultimate goal of an empowerment approach that increases the political participation of residents should be to bring about changes in legislation or institutional policies that improve economic, social, and political status of community residents. (2003, p. 31)

To end, Sadan's theory on empowerment offers an additional component to empowerment theory of particular relevance to social workers. In her view, empowerment includes: "individual empowerment – which focuses on what happens on the personal level in the individual's life; community empowerment – which emphasizes the collective processes and the social change; and empowerment as a professional practice – which sees empowerment as a means of professional intervention for the solution of social problems" (p. 75). For Sadan, empowerment is aimed at changing three dimensions of a social condition: "people's feelings and capacities; the life of the

collective they belong to; and the professional practice that gets involved in the situation." (p. 13), and she views all three dimensions as "necessary to increase people's control over their lives" (p. 13). These theories of empowerment have tremendous overlap and reciprocity, and are supported by recent evidence. [Please see "the Health Evidence Network synthesis report on the effectiveness of empowerment strategies to improve health and reduce health disparities" (Wallerstein, 2006, p. 2) for a recent in-depth review of 500 studies on empowerment practice.] For me as a social worker and participatory action researcher, these ideas serve as both validation of my past efforts with La Casa del Pueblo and as guidance for this study. They are the theoretical framework through which I have engaged with my research.

A Research Proposition

At the heart of my belief in social work and social change is the notion that "more control over one's life and one's environment is an important component in the life of every human being, and citizens who are in control of their lives and participate in decision-making with regard to their future and their environment make an important contribution to democratic society as a whole" (Sadan, 2004, p. 15). The next section of this review looks at the notion of disempowerment and shows in detail why empowerment, as both a process and an outcome, is especially important for Mexican women who live in the United States without government authorization.

What Is Disempowerment?

"As a term, empowerment contributes to the discourse on social problems, since it exposes the extent of oppression, discrimination and stigma in the lives of vulnerable populations, especially in a society with an egalitarian democratic vision" (Sadan, 2004, p. 19). The relationship between poverty and disempowerment is discussed in the literature. Challenged by a lack of economic, material, educational, community, and personal resources, families in poverty have little political influence or collective power (Mondros & Wilson, 1994). Living in poverty often results in psychological disempowerment as well, so that chronically poor individuals may feel little sense of efficacy or control over their lives (Mondros & Wilson, 1994) or may lack "trust that their participation in the interpersonal or political processes will make any impact" (D. Derezotes, personal communication, December, 2006). The daily struggle to obtain adequate minimum resources for survival severely limits any opportunity to engage in power-generating activities, whether on a personal or community level. The negative consequences often correlated with living in poverty further impede a family's opportunity for personal or political empowerment (Pilisuk, McAllister, & Rothman, 1996).

In her work on empowerment theory and practice, Gutierrez (1990, p. 149) links the experience of powerlessness directly with the experience of being a woman of color and states that "lack of access to many social resources" has the dual nature of being both a cause and effect of powerlessness. Wallerstein (2002) documents powerlessness as "a core social determinant" in her review of several health studies. "These studies suggest that living in an environment of physical and social disadvantage – being poor, low in the

hierarchy, under poor working conditions or being unemployed, subject to discrimination, living in a neighbourhood of concentrated disadvantage, lacking social capital, and at relative inequity to others – is a major risk factor for poor health" (p. 73).

If these propositions are true, then they would certainly apply to Mexican women who are in the U.S. without government authorization today who experience multiple stressors and a severe lack of access to social resources. The challenging experiences noted in the literature have the potential significant effects on the experience of Mexican immigrant women, both those who engage civically and those who do not. In our analyses work for this project, I will carefully attend to the presence of these issues in the data and will seek from my co-investigators and research participants a greater understanding of the role these challenges play in their experience of civic engagement and their sense of empowerment.

Disempowering Challenges Facing Immigrants From Mexico

Padilla (1997, p. 595) argues for social work's attention to "immigrant policy" which deals with policies that promote immigrant integration into the U.S., such as those related to "social welfare, health, education, and housing and employment programs." Padilla emphasizes to social workers the importance of the "policy context of providing social services to immigrants" (p. 595). According to her, "attention to the changing demographic characteristics of immigrants, their primary areas of need, and the opportunities and limitations of current immigrant policies can provide the foundation for appropriate social work intervention" (p. 595). Drachman (1995, p. 194) makes the

same assertion. In the following sections, I strive to set this foundation, in this case for appropriate social work research with immigrants from Mexico.

A Brief Review of the History of Immigration Policy in the U.S.

U.S. immigration policy in the twentieth century reflects the varying importance of immigrant labor to the U.S. workforce. "Immigration policy until World War I was dominated by the desire to provide unskilled labor for American farms and industries" (Fogel, 1977, p. 244). The Immigration Act of 1924 established country of origin quotas, initiating the onset of large-scale illegal immigration, primarily from Mexico, that largely went unregulated. In the1930s, the Great Depression spurred on "rigorous enforcement" of immigration law, "which banned persons likely to become public charges and required the submission of various documents by visa applicants" (Fogel, 1977, p. 244). This enforcement of immigration laws, coupled with high unemployment rates in the U.S., led to the massive deportation of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico. During World War II, a Mexico-U.S. contract labor agreement and the subsequent Bracero program allowed for temporary legal entry and work status for many Mexicans working in U.S. agriculture. At the end of the Bracero program in 1965, U.S. growers, accustomed to having access to cheap foreign labor, began hiring illegal Mexican immigrants, many of whom had formerly been legal workers under the Bracero program.

In 1986, the Immigration Control and Reform Act was passed (Lowell & Suro, 2002). This law allowed individuals who had lived in the U.S. since before January 1, 1982, and individuals who had worked in agricultural settings for 90 days between May

1, 1985 and May 1, 1986, to apply for legalization (Gelfand, 1989). Appropriated in the law was four billion dollars for State Legalization Implementation Assistance Grant funding to "help offset state and local costs associated with the provision of public health, public assistance, and educational services made available to the newly legalized" (Gelfand, 1989, p. 26). Many unauthorized Mexican immigrants (as well as many other immigrants) were then able to apply for legal status and subsequently receive needed health and welfare services. However, 10 years later, with the drive to reform the U.S. welfare system and as a backlash against illegal immigration, most immigrants, both legal and illegal, were cut off from public services. The Welfare Reform Act of 1996, including the Illegal Immigration Control and Immigrant Responsibility Act and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, imposed new restrictions on eligibility criteria for immigrants (Padilla, 1997). The vast majority of legal immigrants and all illegal immigrants were banned from receiving Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and Temporary Aid to Needy Families. Due to the severe limits imposed by the 1996 laws, it was estimated that 1.2 million immigrants were pushed into poverty, with 450,000 children estimated to become poor due to the new laws (Keigher, 1997).

Surprisingly, the shift from the Clinton Administration to the Bush Administration in the year 2000 brought new discussions about the need to relax U.S. immigration policy. Bush campaigned as both pro-immigration and pro-Hispanic (Carney, 1999). Once elected, President Bush continued his push to ease restrictions on immigration. In his letter to the congressional leadership of both parties, Bush wrote, "It remains in our national interest to legitimize those resident immigrants eligible for legal

status, and to welcome them as full participants in our society. But we will only be able to do this if the path to legalization encourages family reunification" (Palmer, 2001). Despite initial opposition to any easing of immigration policy by some Republicans, a Senate bill was passed in the first week of September 2001 that would allow "some immigrants who came into the United States illegally or who have overstayed their visa to pay a $1000 fine and apply for residency while in the United States" (Palmer, 2001, p. 1). However, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 derailed progress on this bill and complicated further efforts to make it easier for unauthorized Mexican immigrants to apply for legal permanent residency in the United States. Then, moving in the opposite direction, between 2001 and 2006, several acts of Congress passed, including the 2001 USA PATRIOT Act, giving the federal government broad powers to control immigration, unauthorized immigration, and unauthorized work, largely through increased security and border control measures. Since that time Congress has failed to pass any immigration reform bill that would offer opportunities to Mexican immigrants currently in the U.S. without government authorization. States, such as Arizona and Utah, have begun to pass their own laws regarding immigrant policy, many of which are hotly contended by both sides of the immigration debate and are being challenged in court.

Experience of Mexican Immigrants who are Living in the U.S. Without Government Authorization

In Utah during 2002-2004, between 55,000 and 85,000 undocumented migrants resided in the state (Passel, 2005, p. 14). Utah is one of just five states that have the "very highest ratio" (between 48-54%) of undocumented migrants to the total foreign-

born population in the U.S. (p. 15). The Pew Hispanic Center warns "the new growth states with high shares of unauthorized face special challenges because many do not have the social infrastructure needed to deal with newcomer populations" (Passel, 2005, p. 15). "In Utah, Mexican immigrants earn on average $18,138 per year, with documented immigrants earning $19, 523 and undocumented immigrants earning $16, 467" (Holzner, Jameson, Maloney, Abebe, Lund, and Schaub, 2006, p. 19). Although the specific status of undocumented immigrants living in Utah has not been well reported, survey research on the health status of Utah Hispanics has identified several issues of concern for Utah including: access to health care, health insurance coverage, depression, low birth weights, obesity, and diabetes, among others (Bennett, 2010). Comparing Hispanic rates to the statewide rate shows the disparity in health outcomes for this population.

> Hispanics had a high poverty rate (19.5% compared to 10.0% statewide) and poor access to health care (21.3% lacked access to needed care compared to 15.9% statewide). Hispanics were the least likely of all Utah racial/ethnic groups to have health insurance coverage. 35.7% reported being uninsured, compared to 11.1% of all Utahns. This rate has risen since 2005, when it was 25.8%. Hispanics had a higher rate of major depression (8.2%) than all Utahns (4.2%). The majority of Utah adults were overweight (56.4%), but Hispanics had an even higher rate at 62.2%. Many Hispanics were physically inactive (31.1% vs. 18.6% statewide) and few Hispanics consumed the recommended daily servings of vegetables (14.2% vs. 22.7% statewide). The Hispanic diabetes death rate dropped from 24.3/100,000 people in 2005 to 20.8/100,000 in 2010. However, diabetes continued to be more prevalent among Hispanics than all Utahns when adjusting for age. (Bennett, 2010, p.13)

Across the U.S., Mexican immigrants face serious challenges to their well-being. These stressful conditions have been documented by many studies and include the need for and lack of access to health care (Clark, 2002), the need for and lack of access to mental health care (Salgado de Snyder, 1987; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005), the need for legal representation (Hondagneu-Sotelo,1995), low levels of education and job training

(Kochhar, 2005; Shields & Behrman, 2004); limited English proficiency (Shields & Behrman, 2004); poverty (Shields & Behrman, 2004); racism (Shields & Behrman, 2004; Solis, 2003; Villanueva, 2002); and the stress of immigrating and the fear of deportation (Drachman, 1995). These conditions are addressed in the sections below. For the sake of simplicity, they are organized as separate issues, however, treatment in the literature indicates the enormous level of interaction among these factors, which undoubtedly compounds the high level of stress experienced by Mexican immigrants.

The Need for and Lack of Access to Health Care

The health needs of Mexican immigrants have been widely noted. In their review, Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri (2002, p. 191) outline several pressing health issues impacting undocumented Mexicans in the U.S. These include limited and inconsistent access to health care; lack of protection for work-related injuries or employer injustice; the spread of tuberculosis and other communicable diseases, such as rubella, HIV and AIDS, and other sexually-transmitted diseases; reluctance to seek medical care for children due to fear of deportation; and lack of recourse and treatment for incidents of sexual or physical abuse. Most immigrants lack health insurance (Clark, 2002; Padilla, 1997; Shields & Behrman, 2004). In a study of 80 Latina immigrant mothers, Zambrana, Ell, Dorrington, Wachsman, & Hodge (1994) found patterns of delayed care for children and use of emergency room services for primary care needs. In a qualitative study of "Mexican-origin mothers' experiences using children's health care services" (2002, p. 159), Clark's interviewees expressed the challenges of accessing health care in the U.S. "Mothers encountered difficulty with non-Spanish-speaking providers and systems,

perceived overt discrimination against immigrants at times, and had expectations that providers would offer intervention, explanation, and personalismo."

The Need For And Lack Of Access To Mental Health Care

Mental health concerns for Mexican immigrants have also been well documented in the literature (Padilla, 1997; Salgado de Snyder, 1987; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). In an exploratory study on the effect of immigrant status on Mexican families, Salcido (1979), using a sample of 25 documented and 25 undocumented immigrants, found that undocumented Mexicans were significantly more stressed than documented Mexicans. Similarly, a study of the psychosocial status of immigrant Latino mothers (most of whom were from Mexico) found a high incidence of mental distress, including feelings of nervousness and depression (Zambrana, Ell, Dorrington, Wachsman, & Hodge, 1994). Sullivan & Rehm (2005) reviewed 13 studies and one theoretical piece on the mental health of undocumented Mexican immigrants. They found the following themes in their synthesis: "failure in the country of origin; dangerous border crossings; limited resources; restricted mobility; marginalization/isolation; stigma/blame and guilt/shame; vulnerability/exploitability; fear and fear-based behaviors; and stress and depression" (p. 249).

Poverty, Lack of Education, and Racism

Several years ago, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995) conducted an ethnographic study utilizing 18 months of observations and in-depth interviews of 44 undocumented Mexican men and women in the San Fransisco Bay area. Through her sociological

feminist approach to understanding Mexican immigrant settlement patterns, she highlighted the role that women play in "creating patterns of permanent, year-round employment, provisioning resources for daily family maintenance and reproduction, and building community life" (p. 21). Hondagneu-Sotelo's study offers a rich understanding of the experience of the women in her study during her time with them. Her conclusions regarding the impact of the high cost of living, including the need for medical care, schooling, and child care, are relevant to this study.

> To cope with these circumstances, undocumented immigrant families combine strategies. They try to cover expenses by employing as many wage earners as possible, and they cut living costs by sharing residences with other families, or by taking in boarders and lodgers who sleep in living rooms and garages. Individuals and families share and borrow resources among kin, 'comadres' and 'compadres' (godparents) in their social network, and they may rely on older women kin for relatively inexpensive child care. (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995, p. 29)

Several other studies have described these coping strategies used by undocumented Mexicans to deal with poverty (Chavez, 1990; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Padilla, 1997). However, as Padilla (1997, p. 604) points out, "social workers need to be cognizant of the pressures on family members associated with their common coping strategies, such as overcrowded living conditions, long work hours, school dropout by older children to work, and gaps in the availability of help. " Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995) observes the limitation of Mexican immigrant coping strategies as well. "Immigrants share resources, but they live in a consumer-oriented, capitalist market economy. The basic package of necessities – housing, clothing, medical attention, transportation, household goods – are available primarily on a cash basis. Reciprocity among immigrant kin and friends may stretch scarce resources, but it does not produce needed resources. These must be purchased in a capitalist economy" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995, p. 30).

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995) identifies a disturbing result of this aspect of "settlement" into the United States for Mexican immigrants, namely the acquisition of financial debt. In the families observed by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995), the carrying of debt stemmed from both "medical services and consumer items" (p. 30) including household items sold door-to-door and legal services, purchased on credit. She notes that "many of these women were clearly unhappy about the quality of medical care which they had received in the U.S., and the seemingly surreptitious way in which they had become indebted" (p. 31). "Quite literally, long-term residence in the U.S. entails high human reproductive costs, and this leads to seemingly interminable cycles of debt for many young immigrant families" (p. 31). Salgado de Snyder (1987) also found evidence of stress for undocumented Mexican women due to "not having sufficient money to pay debts" (p. 484) in her quantitative phone survey research of 140 undocumented Mexican women in Los Angeles. Drachman (1995, p. 195) posits that the stress of poverty for immigrants is equal to the stress and danger of political persecution. "Undocumented people tend to lead invisible lives for fear of deportation" (Drachman, 1995, p. 193). According to Castex (1994, p. 294), their "legal status affects mobility, employment availability, the ability to assert rights, and even the ability to plan for the future on more than a day-to-day basis."

However, at median weekly earnings of only $300, poverty and debt are reality for many Mexican immigrants (Kochhar, 2005). "Earnings are especially low among women, those who speak no English, and those who do not have a U.S. government-issued ID" (p. iii). Correspondingly, extremely low levels of education are common among Mexican immigrants. From the same study of 4,836 Mexican migrants, Kochhar

(2005, p. iii) found that 72% of the respondents "lack even a high school education." As mentioned, limited English proficiency is common among Mexican immigrants (Clark 2002, Kochhar, 2005; Shields and Behrman, 2004). Finally, add to this list of challenges "a long history of stigmatization, economic exploitation, and racial exclusion" (Shields and Behrman, 2004, p. 8). This racism toward Mexican immigrants is well-documented in the literature (Solis, 2003; Villanueva, 2002).

Stress of Immigrating and the Fear of Deportation

"Undocumented people are individuals who have no current authorization to be in the United States" (Drachman, 1995, p. 193). Undocumented people either enter the U.S. illegally or "enter legally under a nonimmigrant status for a temporary period (for example, students or tourists) and…remain in the United States after their visas expire. Undocumented people are subject to deportation. They are ineligible for federally funded cash assistance programs and many other social services" (Drachman, 1995, p. 193).

Unauthorized immigration from Mexico to the U.S. is a very dangerous and serious undertaking. Mexican men, women, and children risk their lives in severe environmental conditions with minimal provisions in order to gain access to opportunities for work that may exist in the United States (Doty, 2001). Solis (2003, p. 18) reports from the literature the numerous risks involved in crossing into the U.S. from Mexico illegally, including the physical dangers of being caught, robbed, killed, lost, sexually assaulted, or succumbing to dehydration or hypothermia. According to estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, approximately 485,000 people a year do attempt to cross illegally into the U.S. from Mexico, despite the grave risks (Passel, 2005, p. 16).

Over the last 30 years, many studies have cited as the primary reason for immigration from Mexico to the U.S. the desire for employment or economic improvement (Doty, 2001; Fogel, 1977; Gelfand, 1989; Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri, 2002; Passel, 2005; Salcido, 1979; Salgado de Snyder, 1987; Shields & Behrman, 2004). Salcido (1979, p. 309) reports in his study of "undocumented aliens" that "more than half stated they came in search of a better life. The opportunities to escape poverty and to obtain better paying jobs were the chief reasons for immigrating to the United States." However, this does not mean that all Mexican immigrants to the U.S. were jobless in Mexico. In 2005, the Pew Hispanic Center found that "unemployment plays a minimal role in motivating workers from Mexico to migrate to the U.S." (p. ii). 95% of the respondents who had been in the U.S. for 2 years or less said that they were employed in Mexico. Still, from her ethnographic research on a small sample of undocumented Mexican youth and their mothers, Solis (2003) found that the mothers "saw being undocumented as a necessity for economic survival and social mobility that was unattainable for them in Mexico" (p. 26).

> The social work literature shows that to different degrees, immigrants face a series of stress-producing events that result in the need for assistance and support; such events include separation from family and community, journeys of different durations and levels of danger, and relocation problems associated with finding housing and employment". (Padilla, 1997, p. 595)

Negative attitudes toward immigrants, lack of access to healthcare and other social services, language barriers, the stress of learning a new language, cultural barriers, fear of deportation, separation from family members still in Mexico, lack of opportunity to work or go to school, illiteracy, lack of education, mental health issues such as depression and low self-esteem, and limiting social policies - the last 30 years of social science literature

documents the impact of many of these disempowering conditions in the lives of Mexicans who have immigrated to the U.S. without government authorization. Salcido's assertion published in *Social Work* in 1979 remains relevant today:

> "The adjustment of immigrant families to a new environment and the stress involved in their illegal status should be a concern of social work. The social work profession must recognize that these people exist and have problems, and it must take a stand in assisting them". (Salcido, p. 310)

With the review of the literature for this project in mind, I am more aware of the potential connections that may exist between the common disempowering experiences of immigrating from Mexico to the U.S. without government authorization and the experience of volunteering in the community as a Mexican immigrant woman. New questions emerge, such as: "Does the civic engagement of Mexican immigrant women who live in the U.S. without government authorization serve in some way as a "coping strategy" or a "mitigating factor" in the context of disempowering immigration experiences?" and "Do the Mexican women in my study themselves draw connections between their role as a community volunteer and the stressors associated with immigration?" As stated earlier, these questions and concepts from the literature served as points to consider in the data analysis and theory-building components of this project.

Civic Engagement and Empowerment

The working definitions of civic engagement used in this study come from two national organizations. Thomas Ehrlich of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching asks (2002, Preface, p. vi): "What does civic engagement mean and what can colleges and universities do to promote it? He answers:

> civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. (Ehrlich, 2002, Preface, p. vi)

Michael Delli Carpini (2006) of The Pew Charitable Trusts states that civic engagement is

> individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. Indeed, an underlying principle of our approach is that an engaged citizen should have the ability, agency and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts. (p.6)

A number of researchers have looked at the relationship between civic engagement and empowerment (Peterson, Lowe, Aguilino, & Schneider, 2005). In a review of the social work literature on citizen participation and empowerment, Hardina (2003) provides a historical analysis of the relationship between these two approaches, examining the key concepts that link them together and that can be used "to construct a model of empowerment-oriented community practice" (p. 33). Viewed from an organizational perspective, these "empowerment activities include engagement and dialogue with constituents, leadership development, and the creation of organization structures that encourage decision making by program beneficiaries" (p. 33). In her conclusion, Hardina (2003, p. 33) emphasizes that "many of the strategies associated with both traditional approaches to fostering citizen participation and new innovations in empowerment-related practice are in use by community organizers." "However, we have not systematically identified the outcomes associated with these approaches, nor have we

attempted to link them with other social work practice modalities" (p. 33). Writing in the same vein, but from a different discipline, Campbell & Jovchelovitch (2000) propose the need for a "social psychology of participation" in which "the concepts of empowerment and social capital are identified as important starting points to address…community-level determinants of health." In their theoretical paper on the topic, Campbell and Jovchelovitch (2000, p. 261) point to a lack of research that identifies the impact of "interventions and policies aimed at promoting empowerment"… on "community-based processes and community-level outcomes." "Much work remains to be done in examining the processes whereby community networks and relationships impact on health. There is also need for attention to the mechanisms whereby such community-level factors are shaped by broader macro-social relationships, particularly amongst socially excluded groups, who often have the poorest health status. An understanding of these processes is essential if we are to understand the mechanisms through which community participation might serve as a health promotion strategy" (Campbell & Jovchelovitch, 2000, p. 261).

Building on a line of quantitative studies on the components of psychological empowerment, Peterson et al. (2005) discuss several other concepts related to community participation and empowerment that may be relevant to this research. Drawing from Zimmerman (1995), Peterson et al. (2005, p. 234) look at the notion of "social cohesion" to expand the understanding of the "intrapersonal and interactional components of psychological empowerment" which include perceptions of "efficacy, competence, and mastery" (p. 234) and a "critical awareness and understanding of the sociopolitical environment" (p. 235). "Social cohesion is an emerging construct that considers

community participation in the context of relational concepts such as shared emotional commitment and reciprocity among community members" (Peterson et al., 2005, p. 235). Social cohesion considers the "relational aspect of participatory experience" (p. 236) and may be critical in the promotion of psychological empowerment. By emphasizing the significance of experiencing a "shared emotional commitment and reciprocity" in the context of acting within "the sociopolitical environment," the concept of social cohesion offers to the present study a construct for considering the importance of the shared group context on the experience of the women of Comunidades Unidas. If the data from the present study indicate in this direction, the concept of social cohesion will be researched further.

The Experience of Civic Engagement for Immigrants

For this study, the research most likely to be relevant to the experience of the women involved with CU comes from researchers who are specifically seeking to understand the Latino immigrant experience of civic engagement in the United States and, in particular, the experience of Mexican women living in the U.S. without government authorization who engage civically as lay health advisors. The research that also looks at the relationship between civic engagement and empowerment for these groups is most pertinent. The subsequent review quickly focuses down to these studies.

Civic Engagement and Empowerment of Latino Immigrants

My literature search resulted in eight studies that have researched the topic of civic engagement with Latino immigrant groups that are not specifically Mexican immigrants.

These eight studies were published in the last five years and include four dissertations, indicating both the academic and practical relevance of the topic. Each of these studies looks at different aspects of civic engagement with their chosen study population. Of these, I am most interested in the studies that reveal the experience of civic engagement as it is defined by Latino immigrants who live in the U.S. without government authorization and, within that experience, the key concepts that can be used to inform our data analyses as we look for evidence of empowerment.

I begin with the one quantitative study I found on the topic. Using a 1997 phone survey of 1503 Latino immigrants from Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Dominican, and Columbian populations, DeSipio (2002) explored the relationship between involvement in community organizations and civic engagement, finding that "organizational activity spurs civic engagement. The skills, networks, and information provided through this group-focused community activity vest Latinos with the resources they need to take on more individualist forms of politics" (p. 14). This finding is relevant, but not completely comparable, to our study in that DeSipio treats organizational involvement and civic engagement as separate variables. In the case of the women involved in CU, these two activities are essentially merged. In DeSipio's study, civic engagement is defined by the researcher as "signing a petition, contacting the media or a public official, attending a public meeting, wearing a campaign button or placing a campaign sign in one's yard, attending a political meeting, working for a party or candidate, or contributing to a campaign" (p. 19). His operationalization of involvement in community organizations as participation in "labor unions, parent teacher associations, sports clubs, senior citizen clubs, fraternal orders, political clubs, home country clubs, social clubs, and clubs of

other types" (p. 19), which he calls "collective action" (p. 8), is more closely aligned with our portrayal of civic engagement. This shows the potential for lack of consensus on such definitions in the research on civic engagement and Latinos and limits the usefulness of DeSipio's study for ours. However, DeSipio's conclusions do support both research and practice with CU, in his suggestion that "a renewed focus on building the infrastructure of community organizational life…will have a rapid impact on civic life and school-based involvement" (p. 14). DeSipio does not use the word "empowerment" in his study; however, in viewing his findings from an empowerment-focused theoretical framework I venture that the experience of empowerment existed for some of his research subjects. It would be interesting to know if this is the case, and if those subjects who reported involvement in community organizations and engaging civically experienced feelings of empowerment more than those subjects that participated in one or neither of these activities.

Several qualitative studies have dealt with the topic of civic engagement and Latinos. Each of these defines, and understands, civic engagement in slightly different ways. In researching low-income Latino immigrant parents' involvement in their children's schools, Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004, p. 34) assert "a re-definition of the meaning of political participation for Latinos, in terms that transcend issues of affiliation to political parties or structures, and enters the domain of politics as practices which affect the daily lives and the future of the community, such as involvement in education. This approach to participation in everyday politics, such as school involvement, becomes central to the life of the community, since low-income Latinos tend to be marginalized from electoral politics by the absence of electoral institutions in their neighborhoods." Based on this

definition of civic engagement, Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004) and Ordonez-Jasis and Jasis (2004) offer qualitative evidence that participation in organizing to become more involved in the school of one's child leads to empowering experiences for Latinos and Chicanos (although their sample sizes are not reported).

Similar to CU, Ordonez-Jasis and Jasis (2004, p. 60) report that "from its inception, the notion of empowerment permeated all aspects of" the De Colores Community Learning Center after-school program in Dos Soles, California. Drawing from Cruikshank (1999) and Freire (1994) for their theory of empowerment, the researchers brought to the study the concepts of "local, self-contained community supported programs" (p. 58), "active participation of all stakeholders" (p. 60), and "a disposition that challenged power relationships in the community, changes participants' ideas about the causes of their powerlessness, and propels them to take collective actions to change those conditions"(p. 60). Based on the "personal accounts of the program participants," Ordonez-Jasis and Jasis (2004, p. 62) conclude from their research additional important aspects of the parents' sense of empowerment in relationship to the school. These values included: 1) utilizing "inclusive solutions to challenges" (p. 62), 2) "creating meaningful spaces where parents can formulate solutions and produce sensible alternatives based on their own experiences, traditions, and knowledge" (p. 62), and 3) "authentic participation and self-determination" of "minority parents and community participants" (p. 63), pointing to the significant role that the school and institutional partners play in creating these conditions.

In Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004), the researchers identify other aspects of empowerment through their qualitative research on a Latino immigrant parent-organizing

project at a public middle school. Again, similar to the approach taken by CU and this study, the researchers were informed by principles of empowerment and Participatory Action Research, such as "a careful reading of a community's communication strategies, values, and socio-cultural frameworks leads to a better grasp of its social and educational dynamics" (p. 35) and the use of narratives to make meaning out of experience. Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004) identify the empowering experiences of "sharing our opinions" and "convivencia" ("the flowing moments of collective creation and solidarity, the bonding that developed") as evidence of "the multi-level implications of these parents' emergent school activism and their collective engagement in a new terrain of grassroots organizing and advocating for their children" (p. 33). Again drawing from Cruikshank (1999), Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004, p. 37) emphasize three main components of the process of empowerment as consciousness, knowledge, and action. They viewed the experience of their participants as "self-affirming activism" in which the parents "developed their own voice as effective organizers" and "became effective school activists" (p. 40). Their research highlights the entwined nature of empowerment and civic engagement and directs us to look for evidence of this mutually-reinforcing relationship in our research. "It is precisely the element of social empowerment, that is, the community's collective capacity to transform the political and educational landscape by means of social mobilization and organizing, as well as through the development and expansion of their own public sphere, which ultimately has the potential to improve Latino schooling" (p. 34).

In her dissertation entitled "Redefining Civic Participation," Martinez-Cosio (2003) also points to Latino immigrants' involvement in their children's school as civic

engagement in a sociological ethnographic study of civic participation in City Heights, a multiethnic urban community in San Diego, California. Based on data from multiple sources and an extended period of time in the field, Martinez-Cosio (2003) draws compelling conclusions relevant to our research project. For this reason, I quote her at length:

> I argue that a narrow definition of participation hides the structural constraints that keep immigrants, the poor, undocumented residents, and refugees from opportunities to actively participate in democracy. Furthermore, these findings suggest that the variety of forms which participation takes must be recognized. An inclusionary approach might not only reverse the tide of civic disinvestment, but also may highlight the rich, yet untapped, social networks that exist in ethnically diverse communities across America. A commitment to creating opportunities for the growing Latino, Asian, and immigrant populations to enter the civic arena is needed, not only at the national level but at the neighborhood level where relational capital can be built. Greater efforts are needed to recognize the valuable work of women in urban areas in the creation and maintenance of strong social networks. (p. 267)

Based on her research, Martinez-Cosio (2003) makes clear her broad view of civic engagement for immigrants as "active political participation" (p. 266). Referring to "civic arenas as in the UN Elementary parent room," she observes that "undocumented immigrants actively participate in the parent board, they activate their social networks to recruit new parents, and learn to interact effectively with school administrators and teachers. Schools are one of the few social spheres open to the participation of undocumented immigrants, providing scarce opportunities for engaging those communities that are arguably 'hard to reach'" (p. 266). Two of the findings from this research are of particular relevance to our project – the importance of gender and the experience of empowerment. In Martinez-Cosio's study, "women play a key role in the maintenance of social networks and in making contributions to the informal civic sphere" (p. 261). Although Martinez-Cosio does not utilize her

research to explore issues of empowerment in depth, she quotes one African American research participant who adeptly raises several important considerations for empowerment theory that are relevant to reflect upon in our study. Again, I cite at length to capture these pertinent elements:

> …there were several elements to community empowerment which were political: making sure that individuals have a political voice, that everyone is being heard and not ignored; that there is mentorship and one-to-one relationships established; that economic stability is available to be empowered, such as homeownership; that you are able to control your own life as well as your grounding; that you respect the input that is given from community and individuals; and that you are willing to accept others' input rather than downplaying it or making it seem unimportant. That each group has a different power strategy and we should respect that; and join with individuals that are attempting to do something on their own that competes with existing powers. That empowerment is control…and one that communities want to continue to develop. The three priorities that are connected with empowerment are inclusion, communication and leadership development. (p. 167)

This description is rich with examples of the multiple meanings of empowerment that are relevant to community members and will likely provide several avenues for data exploration in our study.

Lawrence (2003), in her dissertation study on social capital in rural Collinsville, Alabama, which included ethnographic data from seven Latino men and three Latina women, makes a definite distinction between political participation and civic participation, thereby creating the space for observing Latino immigrant civic engagement. Lawrence's findings show that while traditionally understood forms of political participation, such as voting, are "very limited" (p. 107) for her research participants, other forms of civic engagement, such as participating in a community clean-up of the old Main Street theatre in Collinsville, are utilized (p. 119). Like many of the researchers cited above, Lawrence also identifies the school as a likely site of increased Latino immigrant civic participation (p. 120).

In 2002, the Association for the Study and Development of Community published "Lessons Learned About Civic Participation Among Immigrants," based on information they collected through the Civic Participation Initiative sponsored by the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants in collaboration with several individuals and organizations, including the Immigrant Empowerment Council, indicating that there is a significant amount of interest in this topic in our nation's capital. This study found that "helping one's neighbor is considered civic participation" and that "immigrants participate through their own traditional social organization and the structures (e.g., informal and formal organizations) that support the organization" (p. 10).

While employed at the Association for the Study and Development of Community, Lee (2005) completed her dissertation, "The Meaning and Practice of Civic Participation among Four Immigrant Communities," which responds to this same, now fairly long, line of immigrant research, with her asking, "What are the definitions of civic participation among these four communities" (Salvadoran, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Indian) of immigrants? Although her dissertation research question is related to mine, Lee's research sample, theoretical framework, context, and application are too different to be comparable to the present study. However, I agree with most of her suggestions for "Future Policy Directions" (p. 135) and "Future Community Directions" (p. 137), such as the initiation of a national association that links immigrant associations across the country that can act to counter "anti-immigrant policies such as the Homeland Security Act and the Patriot Act" (p. 141). Lee is clearly a strong advocate for immigrant civic engagement and research: "Stereotypes about immigrants could be dispelled through immigrant involvement in local civic activities, thereby increasing interaction between

immigrants with U.S. citizens. Influence on policies that affect immigrants is also more likely if immigrants get involved civically. After all, civic participation is the process through which immigrants can have the opportunity to share their values and send messages about their preferences and interests to decision-makers" (2005, p. 141). Neither of these two Washington D.C.-based studies addressed empowerment in their research.

Finally, Richard (2004) did a 3-year qualitative, participatory action research dissertation study of a "popular education program" that organized 20 immigrant women from Mexican, Salvadoran, and Hmong communities in Northern California. Similarities in program design, research methodology, and research questions make this study relevant to ours. "Popular education is based on the assumption that the world can be changed, and that ordinary people can make that change. One key principle of popular education is that participants are active subjects, not passive objects, in their experience of learning and action" (Richard, 2004, p. 48). In one of Richard's initial research questions, she asks: "Does collective learning and organizing among immigrant women change their lives, and if so, in what way(s)?" (p. 25). However, in answering that question through the findings of her study, Richard focuses on the increased civic engagement of the program participants, rather than on other indicators of a greater sense of empowerment. As with the researchers cited above, Richard (2004) finds that her participants' "experiences challenge dominant understandings about" (p. 159) the meaning of citizenship and civic participation, broadening these concepts to include engaging "with others for the better of the community" (p. 187) and "informing and educating themselves about their communities" (p. 168). Although Richard alludes to

evidence of increased empowerment for the women in the project (p. 184), her data collection methods did not address empowerment directly. She acknowledges that "it is far more difficult to document the impact participation had on the women's self-worth, sense of belonging, and ability to make change" than to document "the tangible outcomes of participation" (p. 183), leaving this aspect of the research for others.

Civic Engagement and Empowerment of Mexican Immigrants

I found nothing in the literature that focuses specifically on the experience of civic engagement and empowerment for Mexican immigrants. The research on Mexican immigrants that I review here brings up related issues relevant to our research, such as levels of Mexican immigrant civic engagement, the existence of Mexican immigrant hometown associations, and the role of Mexican immigrant women in civic participation.

Barreto and Munoz (2003) conducted a multivariate analysis of nonelectoral political participation among native-born Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, both citizens and noncitizens, using a sample of 457 Mexican immigrants. They concluded that "there is no reason to suspect that Mexican immigrants and noncitizens are not active participants in political life" (p. 445). Operationalizing political participation as volunteering for a political candidate, attending a public meeting or demonstration, and contributing money to a candidate or political organization (p. 436), they found that Mexican immigrants "are not less likely to participate" civically than Mexican Americans.

A related area of research on civic engagement and Mexican immigrants focuses on "Mexican Hometown Associations" (MHAs) (Zabin & Escala, 2001; Interhemispheric

Resource Center, 2003). MHAs are "based on the social networks that migrants from the same town or village in Mexico establish in their new U.S. communities. Members of these associations…seek to promote the well-being of their hometown communities of both origin (in Mexico) and residence (in the U.S.) by raising money to fund public works and social projects" (Bada, 2003, Mexican hometown associations, p. 1). MHAs serve as yet another example of the breadth and depth of Mexican immigrant civic engagement in the U.S. (Zabin & Escala, 2001). A study exploring evidence of and the meaning of empowerment for the members of MHAs would be informative and would tie in with our present research.

In her qualitative research on patterns of settlement for undocumented Mexican immigrant women in California, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995) stresses the importance of women in building immigrant community life. "Women built community through their interaction with one another, and indirectly through the activities of their families, which spawned a multiplicity of ties to other families, friends, and institutions" (p. 35). She notes the Mexican women's involvement in formal community groups, volunteer organizations, and self-help groups (p. 35) and in "organizing social gatherings for kin and friends" (p. 36). Based on her research, she views these immigrant women as "community builders" (p. 37). Although Hondagneu-Sotelo does not frame these experiences as civic engagement or empowerment, these findings are consistent with the research on Latino immigrants reviewed above and with my personal experience with the Mexican immigrant community in Utah that is the subject of this study.

Lay Health Outreach as Civic Engagement

Made clear from the discussion above, the term "civic engagement" is used broadly in the immigrant literature to include many different types of activities in the community. Based on these research precedents, this study is delineating participation as a "lay health advisor" (LHA) as another relevant type of civic engagement for immigrants. LHAs are described in the literature as community health advisors, community outreach workers, natural helpers, peer educators, promotoras (Eng, Parker, & Harlan, 1997; Ramos, May, & Ramos, 2001), indigenous leadership (Graber, Haywood, & Vosler, 1996), and as community health representatives and cultural brokers (Love, Gardner, & Legion, 1997). Generally, LHAs are community members who are provided training on outreach to the community and on health promotion strategies related to a particular health issue and then make contact with other community members to teach them what they know. They do not replace other health professionals, but act as bridges between traditional service providers and the community (Baker, Bouldin, Durham, Lowell, Gonzalez, Jodaitis, Cruz, Torres, Torres, & Adams; 1997). "They are specific individuals who have a reputation in their community for good judgment, sound advice, a caring ear, and being discreet" (Eng, Parker, & Harlan, 1997). "In the Mexican American community the 'promotoras' have respect and visibility that legitimizes their efforts and allows for easy access to the community" (Hatchett & Duran, 2002, p. 47). LHAs access and connect people to resources, organize communities, and advocate for change. "They are effective educators, because they relate better to their peers than do outsiders and provide culturally sensitive instruction that facilitates community self-development" (Ramos, May, & Ramos, 2001, p. 568). LHAs have been utilized in a variety of community-

settings to address the health issues of marginalized populations (Earp, Viadro, Vincus, Altpeter, Flax, Mayne, & Eng, 1997; McQuiston, Choi-Hevel, & Clawson, 2001). After a review of fourteen research articles on LHAs, I conclude that the conceptualization of lay health advising as civic engagement is a contribution of our research new to the literature and represents a significant opportunity to deepen the understanding of the potential interconnections between these two modalities and fields of study.

Lay Health Outreach and Empowerment

The social work, health, and mental health literature supports the use of lay health advisors as an empowerment strategy (Baker, Bouldin, Durham, Lowell, Gonzalez, Jodaitis, Cruz, Torres, Torres, & Adams, 1997; Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell, & Klevens; 2006; McQuiston, Choi-Hevel, & Clawson, 2001; Ramos, May, & Ramos, 2001). "Underlying this empowerment approach to building neighborhood community is a democratic and egalitarian philosophy of the worth and dignity of every person, integrated with a 'neighbors helping neighbors' view of healthy social relationships"(Graber, Haywood, & Vosler, 1996, p. 73). Briar-Lawson (1998, p. 545) locates the concept of "indigenous helpers" within the "social work heritage of neighbor to neighbor and community capacity building" strategies that "positions social workers to value and promote nonmonetary work and services that are delivered daily in families and communities." She advocates for "paradigmatic expansion of professional theories and practices to promote and facilitate mutual aid as part of family capacity-building strategies" (p. 546). These "democratic paradigms" would be "consistent with the strengths-based and empowerment focus" of social work (p. 548). In their qualitative

study of 35 "community guides," Ungar, Manuel, Mealey, Thomas, and Campbell (2004, p. 551) also emphasize the important role that the "indigenous nonprofessional" can play in shaping social work practice principles. From their research lens, they "reasoned that the skills and interventions these helpers used as community 'insiders' would be a valuable source of expertise to inform a postmodern social work practice" (p. 551). Hatchett and Duran (2002) discuss the relationship between empowerment and health promotion in their advocacy for the development and use of lay health advisor programs. "One means of empowering people is to involve them in the process of change. One such means of informational exchange that also involves participation by persons in the community is health promotion" (p. 46).

A number of studies show the impact of lay health advisor programs on community outcomes (Earp, Viadro, Vincus, Altpeter, Flax, Mayne, & Eng, 1997; Nacion, Norr, Burnett, & Boyd, 2000) or discuss the process of developing and running such a program (Baker, Bouldin, Durham, Lowell, Gonzalez, Jodaitis, Cruz, Torres, Torres, & Adams; 1997; Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell, & Klevens; 2006; Mahon, McFarlane, & Golden, 1991; Parker, Schulz, Israel, & Hollis, 1998; Ramos, May, & Ramos, 2001), but few look at the impact on the outreach workers themselves (Booker, Robinson, Kay, Najera, & Stewart, 1997; Schulz, Israel, Becker, & Hollis, 1997;), as our study intends.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that serving as a lay health advisor is empowering (Khamphakdy-Brown, Jones, Nilsson, Russell, & Klevens, 2006; McFarlane, 1994). Of the 27 "lay health promoters" studied qualitatively through in-depth interviews by Booker, Robinson, Kay, Najera, and Stewart (1997, p. 452), "24 exhibited some increase

in personal empowerment during the study period." The lay health advisors in this study were Latino immigrant farmworkers in three states, Arizona, New Jersey, and Florida. Many of these research participants lived in "labor camps or in enclaves of farmworkers in nearby urban areas" (p. 462). For this reason, it is likely that the results of this study would vary from the results of our study on urban Mexican immigrants. Schulz, Israel, Becker, and Hollis' 4-year long qualitative study of over 20 African-American lay health advisors (1997) shares relevance with our research. Their narrative results include an examination of the lay health advisors "understanding and experience of their work, the relationships between their activities and a sense of self and community, and personal and programmatic rewards and challenges" (p. 465).

Both of these studies, published 10 years ago, noted the lack of empirical research "which focuses on changes within lay health promoters as part of participation in a program" (Booker et al., 1997, p. 453). This gap in the research has not yet been filled – further evidence of the need for the current, exploratory study. Our study seeks to build upon the scant research in this area using a more participatory and democratic research process.

Other Related Concepts

The research literature offers a few other relevant concepts, in addition to those described above. For example, Zentgraf (2002), in her qualitative study using interviews with 25 Salvadoran immigrant women, offers the interpretation that empowerment is a result of the immigration experience itself.

> What emerges most notably in their responses is an overall change in self-image and sense of personal power, which the women attribute primarily not to paid

> employment outside of the home but to having survived the challenges associated with the migrant experience and an increase in unsupervised activities as they move through urban spaces". (p. 632)

Zentgraf's findings are not necessarily relevant to our study as she focused on paid employment with Salvadoran women who were not recent immigrants and not volunteering in the community. However, her observation of the possible impact of "an increase in unsupervised activities" in an urban environment for the immigrant women may correspond, to some extent, with the experience of the lay health advisors of CU.

Gutierrez and Ortega (1991) offer another alternative theory, or at least additional concepts to consider; however, the comparison must be considered cautiously as their sample characteristics are very different from ours. Gutierrez and Ortega (p. 39) tested "empowerment theory by analyzing the influence of group interaction and the content of the discussion on a group of Latino" college students. Their data showed that "both intra-group interaction and a critical discussion of Latino problems and solutions were necessary" to "make the linkages between their individual situations and action" (p. 39).

Zachary's study (2000, p. 90) on "grassroots leadership training" for "indigenous leaders" offers yet another factor relevant to our study – the experience of receiving training. Zachary found evidence of empowerment from the training experience alone, with no "organizing component" (p. 90) in their sample of 40 African-Americans and Latinos. This suggests the significant influence that the training components of lay health advisor programs have on outcomes, including empowerment, for lay health advisors.

In summary, considerable research from several disciplines indicates the complex relationship between empowerment and civic action. The exploratory and qualitative nature of the present research allows for a rich and contextual understanding of this

relationship. In order to stay open in our research to a broad range of constructs, I have remained attuned to these various explanations of empowerment during the data collection and analysis process. As I explored the data generated by our study, I tried to remain cognizant of the concepts described above and examined their relevance to our particular research context. However, as can be seen in the next chapter, our research methodology is significantly different than most of the studies described above in that we have used research strategies that privilege the perspectives of the research participants. Our focus is on the contributing factors that the women of La Casa del Pueblo themselves associate with the experience of empowerment, and how they make meaning out of those associations. Of interest is how their meanings can contribute to a theoretical understanding of civic engagement and empowerment. It is useful at this point to review the theory of empowerment that has guided this project as it is outlined by Sadan (2004, p. 20). "Empowerment deals with the citizen's rights to self-definition, with people's critical awareness of their social situation, with people organizing in order to achieve important goals, with the creation of a community." "The goal of empowerment is to create a civic culture which recognizes the rights of people to influence that which influences their lives" (p. 21). In conclusion, it is with both my past experience and the relevant theory and research described above in mind that I have asked my primary research question: What is the experience of volunteering in the community as lay health advisors with La Casa del Pueblo/Comunidades Unidas for a group of Mexican women who live in the United States without government authorization?

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Preface

The study conducted is a community-based research project. In accordance with the three central principles of community-based research outlined by Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, and Donohue (2003, p. 8) this means that this project "is a collaborative enterprise between academic researchers and community members," "validates multiple sources of knowledge and promotes the use of multiple methods of discovery and dissemination of the knowledge produced," and "has as its goal social action and social change for the purpose of achieving social justice". In fact, the 13 years of community development work leading up to and during this study, including the goals, activities, processes, and outcomes that constitute the background to and context of this study, also embody these three principles. To be more specific, the study is identified as a community-based participatory research project as defined by Minkler and Wallerstein (2003). The "fundamental characteristics of such research are": the research "is participatory," "is cooperative, engaging community members and researchers in a joint process in which both contribute equally," "is a co-learning process," "involves systems development and local community capacity building," "is an empowering process through which participants can increase control over their lives," and "achieves a balance between research and action" (p.5).

Research Question

The primary question explored through this research is:

What is the impact of volunteering in the community as a lay health advisor on the lives of Mexican women who live in the United States without government authorization?

Objectives of the Study

There have been multiple objectives for the proposed study. These objectives reflect and shape my thinking about and expectations for the project. For clarity, I list them below:

1. To better understand Mexican immigrant women's experience of civic engagement and the impact civic engagement may have on their lives and outlook on life.
2. To explore the relevance of the concepts of empowerment and empowerment theory for a particular group of Mexican immigrant women.
3. To involve a group of Mexican immigrant women in a continued process of community-based participatory research that began in 1998.
4. To utilize an opportunity to train women from a grassroots, community-based organization to conduct qualitative research in their own community.
5. To better understand a particular social change program and the potential for its replication.
6. To provide to a local community-based organization useful information and feedback on their program model and its possible outcomes.
7. To conduct praxis that advocates for and produces positive social change.

Paradigms Guiding the Research

"The net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a *paradigm,* or an interpretive framework" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). The paradigm of premises that I hold draws from across the table "Basic Beliefs of Alternative Inquiry Paradigms – Updated" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.168) for qualitative research and serve to shape my ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology is the way one views the nature of reality. As social work researchers, our ontology represents the way we think about social issues. It is our beliefs about why social issues exist, how they came to be, how they are maintained, and how they can be changed. In this regard, my ontology blends critical theory, constructivism, and participatory paradigms. For example, to me, the nature of the reality of the existence of social issues is largely a matter of historical realism, but that realism is shaped by both historical and present-day/contextual values. I believe that social issues are due to and maintained by both the past, and the present, the "crystallized" (p.168) and the momentary. My belief in the ability to "re-know" and change social issues through the use of locally constructed, participatory means again draws from critical theory, constructivism and participatory ways of knowing. In emphasizing the notion of empowerment and empowerment theory, I offer both concurrence with and a counter to Lincoln and Guba's notion (2000, p.167) that "the meaning-making activities themselves can be changed when they are found to be incomplete, faulty (e.g., discriminatory, oppressive, or nonliberatory), or malformed (created from data that can be shown to be false)". From my view, steeped in the "strengths perspective" (Saleeby, 2002), other, more just, meaning-making activities

themselves can be *enhanced, promoted, and strengthened* when they are found to be *empowering, effective, and welcomed*.

Informed by our ontology is our epistemology – the way one views the nature of knowledge. In research, our epistemology determines the way we perceive the relationship between the researcher and the researched. It guides what kinds of questions we ask, about whom or what, and how those questions are structured. In the case of this study, the relationship between the researcher and the researched extends back for thirteen years. As an organizer, executive director, teacher, student, and friend to the community and people that are participants of this study, my perception of our relationship is that it is reciprocal, trusting, co-created, purposeful, and beneficial and this perception gives rise to my interest in searching for benefit, possibility, and meaning through "practical knowing" in "communities of inquiry embedded in communities of practice" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Table 6.4, p. 170). I want to know and understand their lives, stories, and experiences because I believe as Lincoln and Guba that "it is the meaning-making/sense-making/attributional activities that shape action (or inaction)" (2000, p. 167). This view is epistemologically constructivist and participatory, again with a leaning toward empowerment.

Finally, the methodology of this study follows from both my ontology and my epistemology. My research methods are qualitative, shared, participatory, action-oriented, and political (p. 172) – again decidedly feminist research qualities. The research was designed to promote empowerment, co-learning, and the co-construction of knowledge. I have relied on previously tested models of community-based participatory

research, grounded theory, and empowerment theory to guide me through the stages of the research process from design to data collection to data analysis.

Taken together, our ontology, epistemology, and methodology guide every aspect of the research we engage in, and "behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.18). Throughout this research process, I have sought to clearly identify the presence of my personal biography in the research.

Researcher Bias

The effect of researcher bias in this study is largely tempered by the participatory design of the project, but it is not eliminated. This research project cannot be separated from who I am in the project - a White, privileged, U.S. citizen doctoral student and former founder and developer of the organization that constitutes the case that I have set out to study. This piece of the story reflects my views, my experience, my education, my inspiration, and my goals that have been shaped by all of the events leading up to the moments in which I have come to facilitate this research project. Rather than attempting to distance myself from my participants and their views, I acknowledge here that I have had some impact on every aspect of the functioning of La Casa del Pueblo as a whole, and on the volunteer outreach worker programs in particular. Rather than try to separate myself from the data that emerged, I have sought to acknowledge and state in print my assertions, beliefs, hopes, and assumptions that I believe are relevant to this project. I

have recorded these perceptions in a "self-reflective journal" and in Atlas ti memos, and where relevant, they have influenced my thinking about the results of this project.

Research Design

This research has several salient design features that collectively depict its uniqueness. These features include being: 1) qualitative, 2) a case study, 3) a community-based participatory research project, 4) analytically based in constructivist grounded theory, and 5) viewed through empowerment theory. The relevance of each of these design choices is described below. In a nutshell, this research is a case study involving in-depth interviews, observations, and focus groups of a purposeful sample of 19 Mexican women who have participated as volunteers with the Utah organization La Casa del Pueblo, formerly Comunidades Unidas, for at least 6 months. Data were collected and analyzed by myself, as the primary investigator, and by "the research participants themselves" who are also community members and volunteers with La Casa del Pueblo/Comunidades Unidas. Focus groups of participants were used to solicit involvement and critical feedback throughout the research process. Constructivist grounded theory served as the framework for conducting the data analysis process. Research decisions throughout the project were informed by empowerment theory and the principles of participatory action research. The unique combination of case study, participatory action research, constructivist grounded theory, and empowerment theory as research choices for this project served its multiple objectives. In all of these choices, I sought consistency and continuity of paradigm, method, axiology, and purpose. I believe the methodology described here met this goal.

Why Qualitative?

Padgett (1998) describes several reasons for conducting qualitative research that appear relevant to my research. The first of these is an interest in exploring "a topic about which little is known" (p.7). My review of the literature indicated that relatively little is known about Mexican immigrants who live in the U.S. without government authorization and who volunteer in their communities. Qualitative research is useful for the collection of data pertaining to the subjective experience. My interest in building theory around a mental concept, specifically the notion of empowerment, leads to the need for a subjective understanding of the concept. For this project, doing qualitative interviews was appropriate in that I went to the source, to those directly affected in the experience, asking them to share verbally their own meanings of empowerment, and then to join me in interpreting from a number of gathered meanings the variables most relevant to our collective understanding. This is the "emic" approach to research that aims to "capture the 'lived experience' from the perspectives of those who live it and create meaning from it" (Padgett, 1998, p.8). This approach allowed me to pursue "a topic of sensitivity and emotional depth" (p.8) while control of the data collected remained squarely in the hands of the research participants. Finally, Padgett points out the appropriateness of qualitative research when "you are seeking to merge activism with research" (p.11) which has been the case in this project.

Why A Case Study?

The experience of interest in this study fits the definition of a "case". It is an example of being "a specific One" (Stake, 2000, p. 436). In this case, it is a group of

women brought together by, among other things, an opportunity to serve their families and community members as educators. Stake has offered that "if we are moved to study it, the case is almost certainly going to be a functioning specific." "It is an integrated system" (Stake, 2000, p. 436). The women involved in Comunidades Unidas, Parents Anonymous, and/or La Casa del Pueblo and their experience of that involvement depict well a specific, unique, integrated system. The case study approach allows for and acknowledges the contextual significance that surrounds the experience of participation in these programs.

The notion of the instrumental case study as described by Stake is particularly relevant to the research design of this project. My interest in this case is both in the case itself, and in pursuit of an understanding beyond the case. In this study, I am exploring a widely used concept, empowerment, for its particular relevance and meaning to a very specific group of people – the women involved in Comunidades Unidas, Parents Anonymous, and La Casa del Pueblo. Conversely, I am utilizing a particular set of occurrences experienced to look for, and then deepen our understanding and use of this commonly used social concept.

Why a Community-Based Participatory Research Project?

In answering this question, I resonate with the suggestion of Kemmis and McTaggart that the central consideration in choosing to conduct participatory research is not methodological, "but an abiding concern with the relationships between social and educational theory and practice" (2000, p.600). Methodologically, I see that my research question could have been answered in ways that don't require the level of involvement

from participants asked for by community-based participatory research, albeit resulting in entirely different results. I concede here that answering my research question has not been the sole purpose of this study. In addition to building knowledge around my topic of interest, I also hoped to create an opportunity for community engagement, for empowerment, for learning a useful skill, for examining and changing social norms, and to improve social change practices, if such things are desired by the participants. In this way, my research endeavors to embody the seven key features that Kemmis and McTaggart discuss for participatory action research: research that is a social process, is participatory, practical and collaborative, emancipatory, critical, recursive, and aims to transform both theory and practice (pp. 597-598).

Why Grounded Theory?

In short, grounded theory methodology (GTM), selected as an analytical tool, best fits the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of my project, which could be described equally as feminist, participatory, constructivist, and empowerment-focused. In fact, GTM appears to bridge the feminist/participatory and the constructivist/ empowering in that "data collection becomes less formal, more immediate, and subjects' concerns take precedence over researchers' questions" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 523), even while recognizing "that the categories, concepts, and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher's interactions within the field and questions about the data" (p. 523) reflecting "what and how the researcher thinks and does about shaping and collecting the data" (p. 522). This merging of participatory action research (PAR) and constructivist notions into a tool for data analysis makes GTM the appropriate method for

maximizing the extent to which the participants of the research feel a sense of ownership of the project or, better yet, feel that participation in the project is personally useful to them in some way. In the case of this PAR project, I have used GTM to extend the possibility for participation in the study to include the drawing of conclusions. Asking participants for this level of involvement and direction achieves the assumed goals of GTM "to get at meaning, not at truth" (p. 526).

Why Empowerment Theory?

"Empowerment is first and foremost an ideology and a world-view" (Sadan, 2004, p.13). Empowerment theory best represents my world view or implicit theories of change. It is a depiction, in its promotion of social justice and emancipation, of how I have always viewed the social work that I do. As discussed earlier, empowerment theory supports a participatory and constructivist approach to data collection and analysis.

Participants

Seventeen of the participants for this study were selected using a random sampling technique in which 39 names from the list of 39 eligible participants were drawn from a bag, with the names numbered and ordered as they were selected. The list of 39 eligible participants was generated by Claudia and Tere as representative of all of the women that they knew that fit the criteria of the study – Mexican women who live in the U.S. without government authorization and who have participated as volunteer lay health advisors with Comunidades Unidas or La Casa del Pueblo for at least 6 months. The potential research participants were contacted for enrollment in the study in order,

starting with the first name drawn, until 17 participants were enrolled. In addition, Claudia, Tere, and Carmen, former volunteers and program directors of Comunidades Unidas and La Casa del Pueblo, were enrolled in the study as participants.

Access Issues

Due to the long-term relationship that Claudia, Tere, and I have had with the women who served as volunteer outreach workers, accessing the participants for this study was not difficult. However, in part due to the long span of time over which this study took place, some attrition occurred requiring that we replace those participants with the next names on our ordered list of 39 eligible participants. Seven of the original 17 women were replaced by the completion of the study.

Research Settings

The interviews for this study were conducted in the homes of the participants. The first focus group was held in the Rose Park Elementary School community room. The second focus group was held in the Midvale Elementary School library. Observations occurred during the interviews and focus groups, and during various organizational and community gatherings. Data analysis occurred in my home and in a meeting room of the Utah Department of Health.

Sources of Data

Four sources of data were used as a method of triangulation in the study. In case study research, "triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple

perceptions to clarify meaning" (Stake, 2000, p. 443) and strengthen validity. This was accomplished in this study through the analysis of 19 individual interviews, 2 focus groups, 1 participant analysis discussion, and several in-field observations. Additionally, data collection and analysis process notes and entries in a self-reflective journal and in Atlas ti memos contributed to the overall understanding and analysis of the project.

In-Depth Interviews

Twenty-one women were interviewed for this project. However, two of the women stated in their interview that they did not have 6 months time as a volunteer outreach worker, therefore their interviews were discontinued and not included in the analysis. The first 11 interviews were conducted by Alicia and I in Spanish and English. I also conducted three interviews alone with three English-speaking participants. The remaining seven interviews were conducted by Jeannette and I in Spanish and English. The interviews ranged between 30 minutes and 2 hours long. Each interview was digitally recorded and then uploaded to my computer. During each interview, I made a few key notes in my research journal regarding the questions asked and any interesting points that I wanted to consider later.

In-Field Observations

In-field observations occurred over the course of the study, during each interview and during a variety of community and organization events, including volunteer planning meetings, organizational development meetings, rallies and marches for immigration reform, and the Parents Anonymous parent support group. The observations facilitated

for me an additional format for thinking about the questions and responses in the individual interviews.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted in this study by Claudia, Tere, and I. The discussions were recorded in both Spanish and English. The first focus group was used to facilitate a discussion around the key questions being asked of the participants, thereby generating initial data from the majority of the participants at one time. In the second focus group, the participants were presented with the key ideas and the central theory from the data and were asked to validate or invalidate these preliminary results, thus serving as a "member check" (Janesick, 2000) for the analysis. Participants of the second focus group were also asked what recommendations they have for using the ideas generated.

Participant Analysis

Five research participants were invited to participate in the analysis of two individual interviews in a collaborative group process. Two of the five participants, Claudia and Maricruz, were available to attend. I facilitated and recorded our coding and analysis discussion session, and then later listened to the discussion and created memos regarding the points discussed.

A Participatory Action Research Process

The following events were documented by me in a research journal and in Atlas ti memos kept during the course of the study: After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval for the study in September 2008, Claudia, Teresa, and I met to discuss several issues including: the participant selection procedure, setting the date and place for the first focus group meeting, obtaining consent, and the study procedures. We met again shortly after that for participant selection during which time Claudia and Tere took turns randomly drawing from their list of 39 eligible participants. The first 17 names drawn were to be contacted first for inclusion in the study. The remaining 22 names were recorded in the order drawn to serve as replacements if needed. Claudia and Tere split the list into two groups roughly divided into women from the Midvale and Rose Park areas. We agreed that they would try to contact each woman three times before contacting me for the next name on the list. We set two dates for meeting with the women from each area to explain the study and obtain consent, and we discussed the importance of explaining to the participants the confidentiality required by this study. We also discussed how to provide child care for the first focus group, the refreshments and supplies needed, and the agenda for the meeting. The two participant meetings to obtain consent were held within the following 3 weeks. Seven women (including Claudia) attended the meeting in Midvale and all seven signed consent forms with me. Eight women (including Tere) attended the meeting in Rose Park and all eight signed consent forms with me. Over the next 2 weeks, Claudia and Tere contacted five additional eligible participants to enroll them in the study. One week before the first

focus group, Claudia and I met again to review the agenda for the meeting and to discuss the plans for facilitating, recording and translating the discussion.

First Focus Group

The first focus group was held on November 18, 2008 in the community room of Rose Park Elementary School. Childcare was provided in the gym of the school by two teenage children of the participants who I gave $20 each for their assistance. Prior to the start of the meeting, Claudia, Tere, and I met briefly to review the agenda and the main question to be asked – "Can you please talk about your experience in the community and how that experience has impacted your life?" We also reviewed and signed consent forms with the five new participants. I set up a recorder in the middle of the table that the women were seated around. I welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation in the project. I explained the purpose and steps of the project and told them that my intention was that the project would be of some benefit to them and to their work in the community. I spoke in English to the group and Tere translated what I said into Spanish. I then turned over the time to Tere and she began facilitating the discussion by asking: "What was it that motivated you or moved you to become a volunteer in the community? Over the course of the discussion, Tere continued to facilitate the conversation by asking her own questions, such as "How do you see yourself now after all of your time as a volunteer?", "How have these changes effected your family?", and "What changes have you seen in the community, in your neighborhoods?" Tere called on specific women to respond when she felt it was needed to keep the discussion moving. While Tere was facilitating the discussion in Spanish, Claudia was sitting next to me,

whispering to me the English translation of what each person said during the discussion. Claudia wore a microphone headset connected to another recorder so that I would have a recorded copy of the English translation of the meeting. The discussion lasted for about three hours, with a break at the halfway point to have pizza.

The First Thirteen Individual Interviews and In-field Observations

Due to family issues, I was unable to begin any of the individual interviews until November 2009. The first interview that I conducted was with Claudia, in English, which allowed me to get her feedback regarding the questions I intended to ask the research participants. At this point, Claudia and Tere were unavailable to conduct the interviews with me, so Alicia Garcia, a long-time volunteer and a founder of La Casa del Pueblo, agreed to serve as a co-interviewer and translator for me. We met to review the objectives of the study and to sign her consent form to participate in the study. We discussed the interview schedule and the types of questions to be asked during the interviews. Alicia agreed to call the participants to schedule a time for us to meet with them to conduct their interview, either at her home or at their home, depending on what they preferred.

Over the next four months, Alicia and I communicated by phone, email, and in person to schedule and conduct 11 interviews. In addition, I completed two interviews on my own in English. At the start of each interview, Alicia explained to the interviewee that everything they said would be kept completely confidential. Alicia then asked each interviewee if they would like to use a pseudonym or just their first name during the interview. The following questions were asked of each participant: "Can you please tell

me about your experience as a volunteer in the community and how that experience has affected your life?", "Do you see yourself as a role-model or as a leader in the community?", "How has your experience as a volunteer in the community affected your relationship with your husband or your children?", "If you could have anything in the world that you want for yourself, what would that be?", and "If you could have anything in the world that you want for your children, what would that be?" Other questions were asked as needed to stimulate responses. Alicia took the initiative during several of the interviews to ask her own questions of the participants, such as: **"**Do you think that being a volunteer has helped you go through the difficult experiences that you are going through?"

During this first interview phase, Alicia and I had several discussions regarding the responses to the questions, and she made suggestions that we used to alter questions and to theoretically sample for certain lines of inquiry. For example, in our second interview, when asked the first question, the interviewee replied that the experience "has not affected me, on the contrary, it has been a benefit." Alicia later explained to me that the word affected, in Spanish, commonly inferred a negative effect. To avoid this understanding of the first question, in subsequent interviews, Alicia and I explained to each interviewee that we were asking them to talk about the impact that volunteering has had on their life, both the good and bad effects or changes.

In another example of Alicia's contribution to the research process, during our meeting prior to our fourth interview, Alicia brought up to me that she felt that the participants were reluctant or uncomfortable talking about their accomplishments as volunteers in the community due to the cultural norm of modesty or humility that

influenced Mexican women's views of themselves. In particular, she and I had both been struck by the fact that when asked if they saw themselves as leaders in the community, the participants generally minimized or denied this role for themselves. Based on this discussion, we agreed that in subsequent interviews we would encourage the women to feel comfortable talking to us about what they had done and experienced as volunteers – to not be modest. Later, this issue raised by Alicia was further explored through the participants' analysis, through theoretical sampling of the last six interviews, and in the second focus group.

Preparation for Analysis

Four of the recorded interviews were transcribed into a document and then translated into English by three volunteers, Alicia, Jeannette, and Yolanda. These transcribed and translated interviews allowed me to "check" the verbal translation recorded during the interview against the translation of the transcript. The compared translations were largely, but not entirely, the same. In a few cases where Alicia related the meaning to me of certain phrases or disjointed thoughts, the verbal translation was not exact, but was clearly more accurate in meaning than the translation of the transcript. I prepared the remaining nine interviews to be coded in Atlas ti as audio wave files. This entire process took several months to complete, during which time I re-read Strauss and Corbin's Basics of Qualitative Research (1998), and also read the Atlas ti User Manual, to begin the process of learning how to use a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software to conduct grounded theory analysis.

Grounded Theory Analysis Using Atlas ti

Analysis of the first focus group and the thirteen completed interviews began in earnest in September 2010. With both Strauss and Corbin's book (1998) and the Atlas ti User Manual as my constant guides in the process of implementing grounded theory analysis in an electronic format, I identified quotes, and developed codes, comments, and memos, based on the essential concepts that struck me while reading and listening to the interviews. I listened to each interview at least twice, first while taking notes on paper, and then again while coding each interview in Atlas ti. By the time I had analyzed the first focus group and three interviews, I had more than 325 quotes and over 200 codes, the majority being in-vivo codes that come directly from the words of the participants. Using "constant comparison", the coding and analysis process of comparing data sets to previously coded data and to the emerging theory to develop categories, I began to focus in on the most commonly used codes to more fully define their properties and dimensions. In this way, I was allowing the analysis to be guided by the most grounded ideas coming from the interviews, while still remaining open to new ideas and concepts of relevance in each interview. Using axial coding, I followed the guidelines of Strauss and Corbin (1998) for identifying, comparing, and expanding properties of code categories, thereby grouping related codes. Looking at relevant micro and macro social conditions and the participants' actions and interactions, I also coded for process – identifying the interactive context in which the participants operated. In Atlas ti, the above steps occurred as grouping codes and memos into families and related networks. During this time, I moved back and forth from diagrams sketched on paper to network

views, families, and memos in Atlas ti as the axial, process, and selective coding (theory development) ensued.

From the start of my coding and analysis of the data, I was struck by a key point which significantly shaped the remainder of the research process. In particular, it became clear that as the women responded to the question: "Can you please tell me about your experience as a volunteer in the community, and how that experience has impacted your life?", the women included in their response their thoughts on the impact of their experience as a participant in the parent support groups of Parents Anonymous, as well as their experience as a volunteer outreach worker. It became apparent that the women viewed the parent support groups and volunteer outreach work as two parts of one coherent program. I realized the need to include the Parents Anonymous parent support groups as a part of the "volunteer experience" being studied in this project. In recognition of this, I observed a Parents Anonymous parent support group led by Tere. This impromptu in-field observation deepened my understanding of the importance of the support groups to the volunteers and led to theoretical sampling of this topic in the remaining interviews conducted. Through the targeted exploration of this category, I came to re-view and broaden the conditions under study in this research, and ultimately drew unexpected theoretical and practical conclusions.

Participant Analysis

The purpose of the participant analysis session was to involve the research participants in the analysis process. Two of the research participants, Claudia and Maricruz, were available to do this with me. We met in a room in the Canon Building of

the Utah Department of Health where Claudia works as an Outreach Coordinator. I recorded our discussions for later use as a primary document in Atlas ti.

I asked Claudia and Maricruz to listen to and code two interviews that I had selected as being particularly rich in concepts. I explained to them that they should listen for the most important ideas and make notes on those ideas. After listening to the first interview, we discussed the points that they noted and why they selected them. We then listened to and coded a second interview, and again discussed those codes and ideas. Comparing their codes to mine, I found a great deal of symmetry. I then asked Claudia and Maricruz to comment to me on their views regarding the notion of Latina modesty as was brought up by Alicia during our interviewing. In this discussion, Maricruz suggested that rather than feeling modesty about their accomplishments and abilities that Latina women "don't stop to think about them." She described an example from her experience teaching parenting classes to Latinos, stating that in her classes the men have no problem thinking of their strengths, but the women struggle to identify anything that they do well. Claudia also responded to the issue of Latina modesty, relating that despite acknowledging that she is a leader in the community, she still does not feel comfortable talking about herself as a leader. When asked if she related to the interviews, Maricruz affirmed that she did, quoting from one interview: "when you feel good about yourself, then everything else will be OK." With further discussion, Maricruz brought up the issue of domestic violence mentioned in one interview and related it to her own experience with domestic violence. Maricruz summarized the main idea of the interviews by saying: "they have changed, they can see themselves in the past and feel a little shame of what they were and now they feel proud of what they've become." Claudia noted the

challenge of being a single mom, in contrast to her own experience of being married to a supportive husband. Claudia summarized the interviews saying "because of all the knowledge that" has "helped them to express more, to have more communication with their kids." I returned home after this rich participant analysis session with new theory memos to be written and new questions to ask.

The Last Six Interviews and Further Analysis

The first "phase" of the analysis described above yielded several dense categories and a solid idea of their relationships to each other. Based on the data, a process of empowerment was taking shape, with its factors identified and preliminarily understood. In order to more fully develop these categories, I employed theoretical sampling with the remaining six interviews. With Jeannette as my translator and cointerviewer, I asked these interviewees specifically about their feelings about themselves prior to volunteering and/or attending the Parents Anonymous parent support groups and how those feelings had changed; I asked about their feelings surrounding seeing themselves as a leader or role-model in the community and their feelings regarding identifying and talking about their strengths and accomplishments; and I asked them how they came to be involved as a volunteer and as a participant in Parents Anonymous. Shortly after each interview was conducted, I coded and analyzed the interview, now working primarily with selective coding while enriching the properties and dimensions of grounded categories. As this intensive interviewing and analysis process was taking place, a central category emerged, allowing me to further tailor my interview questions to theoretically sample specifically around the concept of power, increases in power, and how that looked in the women's

relationship with their spouse. Jeannette's participation as a co-interviewer and translator was vital at this point: Jeannette brought up to me that my asking the question: "Do you feel that you have more power in your life?" was problematic for translating – that the Spanish word "poder" (power) was not used to talk about one's personal power or abilities, as it had the connotation of meaning power over someone else. In our last two interviews, Jeannette translated the question directly, using the word "poder", and then immediately clarified that to mean having more control over your life. This line of questioning led to very rich interviews that deeply explored increases in power related to the women's experience of participating in the parent support groups and volunteering in the community. Both of these interviews provided validation of the emerging theory and also raised important questions for future research. At this point in the analysis process, I utilized the integration techniques of writing the storyline, diagramming, and reviewing memos (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to focus in on the central category of the research.

Second Focus Group/Member Check

The second focus group was held at the Midvale Elementary School library. Thirteen research participants, including Tere and Claudia, attended. Claudia, Tere and I reviewed the agenda prior to the meeting and discussed the importance of explaining the use of the word "power" to mean increases in their capacity. Tere and I facilitated the first half of the discussion and Claudia and I facilitated the second half, with Claudia translating for me. Two digital recordings were made of the second focus group session – one of the discussion in Spanish and one of Claudia's translation into English.

My goal for the second focus group was to present to the participants the major categories and the central theory from the research and to ask for their validation/invalidation and any feedback. I started the discussion, with Tere translating for me, by thanking the volunteers for their participation in the project. I presented the "main points" and then asked for feedback. On all of the points, there was much nonverbal affirmation of heading nodding, etc. Comments made by the participants regarding the main points added dimension to their categories. For example, after I described the point of contacts that referred the women into the parent support groups or the volunteering program, a participant of the second focus group mentioned that she had learned about the program from seeing Tere on television at a time when Tere was interviewed about the program.

I then presented the central theory regarding expanding our notions of power. A lengthy discussion ensued in which the women validated the ideas presented, added related examples, and suggested additional types of power, such as the power of communication. For example, a few women expressed appreciation that the research brought to light the challenging experiences of being in the U.S. without government authorization – they indicated that they want their experiences to be known. The importance of the parent support groups for receiving help and for learning about the outreach program was validated by several participants. Personal examples of changes in thinking and beliefs, even changes that were in contrast with their cultural norms, were described, such as one participant's new views on her teen daughter's pregnancy and how she responded differently to that situation due to her new perspective. Examples of positive changes and empowerment in work settings were offered, including putting to

use new communication skills to negotiate with employers. Several of the participants confirmed positive changes in their relationship with their children and also spoke about their children's growing interest in volunteering in the community. In discussing the idea of having more power or capacity in different areas, one participant, speaking to the other women in the group, suggested that because of what they have all learned, they now have the capacity to use their knowledge and skills to help people in Mexico, if they must return there.

When I asked the question of the group: "Do you feel like it is true for you that you have more capacity in your life?", the participants replied affirmatively, and began to offer examples, such as everything they had learned, improved interaction with their family, having a support system, having the ability to express themselves, and knowledge of other parent support group participants and volunteers getting better jobs.

At this point in the discussion, Claudia encouraged me to ask the group about the leadership/role-model issue that we had discussed in the participant analysis session as she was anxious to hear their comments about this topic. In response to the questions: "Do you see yourself as a leader in the community?" and "Do you see yourself as a role-model?", an interesting and rapid discussion transpired with comments from many of the women as they grappled with acknowledging that others see them as a leader or role-model and come to them for assistance and information, but they do not feel comfortable viewing themselves in that way due to their awareness of their own flaws, personal problems, and ability to make mistakes. Comments included seeing themselves as role-models for their children and the importance of being a good example for the community. Interestingly, a couple of the women addressed other participants in the group directly,

describing how those women have been and continue to be role-models for them, and the reason they became volunteers too. These exchanges point to the importance of the peer to peer nature of the parent support groups and outreach program for creating role-models for the women. By the end of the discussion, it felt as though a consensus had been reached in which the participants accepted that they are leaders and role-models in the community and are also fallible, demonstrating their ability to revise their thinking to simultaneously hold two previously incompatible notions.

When asked to talk about any changes seen in their relationship with their spouse, another lively discussion ensued, with responses such as: "Yes, I have more power now, more freedom," and "Before, I would ask my husband for everything, for permission to go to the store, now I just do what I want, go where I want, I just let him know I will be right back." (This last phrase was said tongue in cheek with emphasis, to which all of the women in the group laughed uproariously.) Another respondent explained the changes in her relationship with her husband, stating that her husband now knows that she has a lot of knowledge about the community and he asks for her opinion on everything. She also stated that she has more space and time to herself, no longer asks his permission to go out, and tends to spend more time away from home than he does.

Finally, when asked for additional comments and for their ideas regarding what could be done with this information, several ideas were proffered: "I would like information on how to open a small business", "It is very important to be able to listen to others", "I don't know if in your project you can mention that we need to work together, all united", "We need to have more groups and trainings", "We should share what we know with others, person to person, to help those people from Arizona coming here", and

"We need to get involved in our children's schools, the PTA, sharing everything that we know with them." One participant took the opportunity to inform the others of a training opportunity through the University Neighborhood Partners program that she highly recommends.

Rigor of the Research

Barusch, Gringeri, and George (2011) outline criterion for evaluating rigor in qualitative research. These are specific research strategies that if utilized and documented, can support the validity of the research undertaken. These strategies include specifying the theoretical framework, ontology, epistemology, and purpose of the research; identifying use of self in the research; articulating human subjects considerations; purposive sampling; prolonged engagement; persistent observation; member-checking; data triangulation; providing a clear description of the data analysis strategy; reaching theoretical saturation; analyst triangulation; theory triangulation; peer review; thick description; negative/deviant case analysis; external audits; audit trail; identification of problems and limitations; and fit between methods, data, and conclusions. I believe this study has addressed the majority of these criteria. In addition, Strauss and Corbin's "criteria for evaluation" (pp. 268-272) are appropriate standards by which to judge the empirical grounding of this research.

Trustworthiness, Data Storage and Audit Trail

To the best of our ability in this project, we ensured accuracy of the collected data through the use of high-quality recording devices and media. Transcriptions and

translations were checked for accuracy early in the data collection process. All of the coded and labeled audio and paper recordings of the collected data, including notes of my observations, were kept locked in a dedicated file cabinet in my home office. As one method to heighten the relative validity of the results of this project, an audit trail of the entire research process and its products was maintained in chronological order. The components of the audit trail include: my reflexive journal; raw data; coded transcripts; notes and memos; recorded input from participants; observation field notes; key decisions in the research process; and questions asked by my co-investigators, the research participants, and me.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations, and in particular issues of confidentiality, were given high priority in this study. All possible measures were taken to conceal and protect the participants' identities throughout the research process from initial contact, through data collection, and including the writing of the results. Each participant was offered the opportunity to either use their first name or to create a first-name pseudonym to be used in the transcription, discussions of, and write-up of the study. Throughout the research process, the issue of maintaining confidentiality was addressed with the participants. At any point during the research, the participants were free to discontinue their participation. Participants that completed the study were given a stipend of $50.

Generalizability and Transferability

"Delimitations describe the populations to which generalizations may be safely made" (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000, p. 17). Generalizing from the results of this proposed study to groups of people other than the particular group named as a case in this study should be made with caution. However, this study and its potential results do offer a high level of transferability – the "findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.201). The methodological discourse for this study described above sufficiently makes clear the "theoretical parameters of the research" (p. 202), allowing for other researchers, policy-makers, and program designers to make use of our data and findings in their own relevant settings. The use of triangulation of methods, methodologies, and analyses further supports the local generalizability and broad transferability of our study.

Dissemination of the Results

The process and results of this study were presented on May 5, 2011 at a state convention of the Utah Chapter of the American Association of University Women. A presentation in defense of this dissertation was made on May 2, 2011 to the University of Utah College of Social Work. Further presentations will be made as requested by the community.

CHAPTER V

A PATH TOWARD EMPOWERMENT

In their guidance for conducting grounded theory analysis, Strauss and Corbin (1998) point to the importance of identifying conditions, both micro and macro, that operate in the phenomenon under study, and eliciting how these conditions interact with events. "This means locating a phenomenon contextually or within the full range of macro and micro conditions in which it is embedded and tracing out the relationships of subsequent actions/interactions through to their consequences" (1998). In fact, what emerged from the most grounded categories of the analysis described above was a process, a series of interactions over time involving multiple individuals, organizations, and their relationships, that resulted in positive changes and increases in power for the Mexican women involved. Using extensive quoting, I seek to highlight the voices of the women who participated with me in this study. For discretion, I have left out identifying names in some cases.

The Context: Moving to a New Community in the U.S.

The participants of this study clearly located themselves in the context of their experience of living in the U.S. without government authorization, and their experience was uniformly an experience of disempowerment. During data collection, the research

participants were never asked specifically about their immigration status or about their experience as immigrants to the U.S without government authorization, however, they all spoke about the challenging conditions they experienced due to their immigration status, their lack of financial and familial resources, and their unfamiliarity with U.S. culture and service systems. Using codes such as "being an undocumented immigrant", "challenge of being new to Utah" and "U.S. as context" to identify this experience in the data, I captured quotes from the participants such as: "Myself, being an immigrant, not only immigrant, but undocumented, it was not easy." "We can move and find the way to survive here." "We came from another culture and sometimes we do not understand the American culture." "It has been difficult to survive here but like I told you, here we are, here we are, with some stumbling but we are sticking with it." "Because unfortunately in this country you have to be legal, you have to be a U.S. citizen to get opportunities, and people like me, undocumented, we don't have those opportunities." With these comments, the participants established the context for their experience and went on to detail the disempowering nature of this experience.

Experiences of Mexican Immigrant Women

The women in this study experienced many of the challenges previously noted in the literature associated with being an "undocumented" immigrant, including their families' need for food, health care, and other basic necessities (Chavez, 1990; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri; 2002). They described their initial experience in Utah as feeling alone, isolated, depressed, and afraid to leave their home to go places due to their lack of understanding of U.S. laws and customs.

Their experiences of stress, fear, and depression are also consistent with the studies reviewed above (Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Padilla, 1997; Salgado de Snyder, 1987; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005; and Zambrana, Ell, Dorrington, Wachsman, & Hodge, 1994). In-vivo codes used to mark these experiences depict the range of properties, including: stayed at home, needed food, needed services, alone, no family here, no money, feeling worthless, feeling insecure, being a single mom, depression, and domestic violence. "We're here in another country, and we left our families, we left our friends, a lot of people where we grow up, and we come to this country, like we start a new life… I felt I was empty." "Because when I came to this state, I came to this state real bad emotionally because of a separation. Emotionally I was real bad." "I felt that I wasn't able to have a conversation with another person, I was very antisocial. I didn't feel good with myself." "I was by myself here in Utah." "We come from a different culture, this is a different country, we don't get involved in our children's school, the school system is different, the lifestyle is different." "I thought it was a country with a lot of opportunities, but in my personal experience I found out it wasn't like that."

Sadan notes the compounding effects of these experiences of disempowerment: "The combination of economic/organizational weakness and cultural difference creates an especially high risk of powerlessness" (1997, p.154). Many of the women described not knowing where to go to get help for their families and their fear of applying for services due to the potential implications for their ability to gain U.S. residency status in the future. "If we can get help, get info about services, without feeling fear…" "The people used to say they are going to deny you for citizenship because you are applying

for programs that you are not allowed to, but I just needed it so I just applied for it, but I remember a lot of people who needed it but didn't do it."

These comments regarding the lack of awareness of services and the fear of applying for services offer a striking counterpoint to the women's subsequent experience in the Parents Anonymous parent support groups and the volunteer outreach worker program. "When I came to the program I didn't know anything." "I start to cry and they ask me why do I get this way and I tell them, when I arrived to this country, I tell them, I didn't know anything, that is why I like to get involved and know how the law is here, I like to know everything because I am in a country that is not mine, when I arrive here, I tell them, I got depression, I tell them, and because of that I fell into Parents Anonymous, I tell you and that is why I started getting information."

Referral Into Programs

At this point in the path, the participants involved in this research came into contact with a referral to either the Parents Anonymous parent support groups (most common) or directly to the volunteer training and outreach programs. This referral process occurred for the women in a variety of ways. Some participants were approached directly by current volunteers and participants in the parent support groups, in schools and other community settings. Others were contacted by the volunteer outreach workers providing door-to-door information about other programs, such as Comunidades Unidas' tobacco cessation program, and after participation in those programs, went on to become a volunteer as well. One participant in the study saw a television segment about the programs and contacted Tere directly to join the support groups. Another participant

learned of the programs through her "comadre", who had been court-ordered to attend the Parents Anonymous groups. One participant received a flyer with Tere's number from a Child Protective Services worker. From the standpoint of a program director, this information is vital for capitalizing on these mechanisms of contact and referrals to expand participation in the program. "We have to have good friends that will guide you and orientate you into the programs of a volunteer and the programs of parents, that I truly feel very much" (Betty). The invitation to participate in these programs represents a door that opens for the women on this path. "To be a volunteer… in my experience, to be a volunteer is like an open path, a better future… because it opens opportunities." (Lourdes)

Opportunities for Empowerment

Three distinct opportunities for participation were identified by the research participants: the parent support groups, the "trainings," and the neighbor to neighbor outreach work. In this study, these represent the "professional practice" that seeks to be empowering (Sadan, 1998).

The Parent Support Groups

Offered weekly in the evenings for 2-3 hours, the Spanish-language parent support groups utilize the Parents Anonymous model for co-facilitation of groups using a "professional group facilitator" paired with a "parent leader." Both men and women, couples and single persons are welcome. Participants are free to remain quiet, talk about

themselves, and ask questions as they feel comfortable. Teresa Mora has served as the professional group facilitator for the support groups since 2001.

The Trainings

The trainings offered by the Midvale Neighbor to Neighbor Program, Comunidades Unidas, or La Casa del Pueblo included: diabetes prevention and care, HIV/AIDS prevention and counseling and testing, tobacco cessation, domestic violence, prenatal care, alcohol and prescription drug abuse prevention, Certified Passenger Safety (child car seat installation), Community Emergency Response Team, among others. Depending on the type, the trainings lasted for half a day to several days. The majority of the trainings were offered in Spanish.

The Outreach Work

The outreach work typically consisted of going door to door within one's own neighborhood or apartment complex to offer information, in the form of brochures and verbal explanation covered in the trainings. In addition, the volunteer outreach workers often assisted families to apply for services, to obtain transportation to services, and to respond to problems and emergencies with information and referrals. Some of the volunteer outreach workers participated in staffing a table at a health fair or conducting HIV/AIDS or diabetes testing, among other activities.

Experiences of Participation

In discussing their "experience as a volunteer in the community", all of the participants of this study talked about the help that they received, for themselves, their children, and their families. This was closely connected to "having information about services" and "learning what is available." The women stated that they "learned a lot" and "gained information," "gained education," and "gained knowledge": "I learned a lot of topics that I didn't have any knowledge of before. Like HIV…and now I can help other people with facts about HIV" (Magdalena). "It has been lots of courses and trainings, every opportunity I have I take them. I get all this knowledge from all these classes" (Lulu). "I feel first of all happy that I took the trainings because now I have the knowledge" (Blanca).

The participants described their experience as "positive," "feels good," and "great satisfaction." They "feel lucky" and "grateful" for the opportunity to be part of the groups, trainings, and outreach. In particular, the women expressed that the experience of making new friends and belonging to a group were critical and that they had "become a family." Many of the women spoke directly to each other in the focus groups expressing how much they appreciate the help and support they received from other volunteers. They saw each other as role models and examples in the community, even while minimizing their own leadership role. The participants' experience as a community reminds us of the concept of "social cohesion" (Peterson et al., 2005, p. 235), discussed above, and its potential importance for empowerment. "Comunidades Unidas… for us it was like the foundation, what brought us all together…the family of all of us" (Claudia).

In the Parent Support Groups

For the women in this study, participating in the Parents Anonymous parent support groups is an experience of "feeling safe and secure" and of relating to other women. It is a place where the women feel comfortable talking about their problems and can learn from the experience of others in the group. The parent support groups are a place to learn how to adjust to life in the U.S. Many of the women expressed their on-going commitment to attend the groups.

> First I came to the Parent Anonymous group because I had personal problems. I went because I was invited. After a time, I realized it was a place that you can receive help, and it is a confidential place to talk and reflect on your problems, and realize that your problems are not so big. (Blanca)

> After a month or two months (of living in Utah), I saw this lady walking by the street, and she told me "you're not from here… I'll invite you to a group tonight, we have a group tonight and we want you to go." I show up to that group and it was the Parents Anonymous group…they were so nice… we end up having dinner, discussing all of the problems that they were going through. I just sat there and they never make me talk, that's why it makes me feel so comfortable… the people there started talking about their own problems … but I could relate like with three of them. I went through a divorce, then the child support, all that stuff that I was going through, that I needed counseling for my son because of the divorce… I kept hearing the stories from the other women… actually without talking I was able to get resources because I heard how she did it and how she went through, so that really helped me. After that I was going every week to the group. (Claudia)

"I have to change all the culture that we have from our country…I learned about the laws, it was different here, and I knew that I had to change. In order to change, I knew that I had to go to the groups." (Blanca) "I suffered from domestic violence in my former marriage… all these feelings of depression, loneliness… when I was active in those support groups, I was active for 5 years and I only missed 2 times" (Lulu).

Of relevance to future program development in this study is the importance of the parent support groups as preparation for (and referral into) work as a volunteer outreach worker. The women joined the groups and got the help they needed, while also learning from other, more experienced group members and other volunteers.

> They (the parent support group) got a lot of information, a lot of flyers from different kinds of associations. And then they ask if you would like to learn a lot more. And if you want, you can do it… and I started doing the breast cancer information…" (Gaby)

In the Trainings

Participation in the various health education trainings was an important experience for the women in this study. They talked about "having correct information", "receiving certifications", and gaining knowledge that they were not previously exposed to.

> Being in the trainings… that helped me a lot, first, to get out of the routine of being in the house all day. I think that all the trainings are important because we learn a lot, a lot of basic information. I think we need to continue the trainings to help other people, to learn how to talk to them, to share what we learn. (Blanca)

> The experience I've had is because of all of the trainings that we have been able to have. All the trainings help you to open your mind. You know that the information is from professional, educated people and then you know that the information is correct. (Gaby)

> When I went to the cancer prevention training, we learned how to take care of ourselves and do monthly self-exams. And now with car seat classes, people learned how to install the car seat correctly and how to protect their children and keep them secure". (Dennys)

> "I took the training for HIV. Never in my life before did I meet someone who is gay. I never had that experience before because I was always isolated. Now I know different people, diverse people. I love it." (Lety)

In viewing the training facilitators as role-models for themselves, some of the participants utilized the trainings to imagine their future.

> When you saw that leader [the training facilitator] you can see that she's just the same as you. She talks just the same as you. So if she can do it, why am I not? The way that they talk… seems to be easy. It's not that high or that hard to get there. When you start talking to them and involving with them, and start being around them, you get something really good from them and then you start trusting about yourself and thinking… you know I can do that too. (Gaby)

The participants also connected the importance of learning from the trainings and being able to help in the community.

> I learned a lot. I would just stay home if I had not gone to that training, and then, even if I had the intention to help them, I wouldn't be able to. Making the sacrifice to go, I am helping someone to change their lifestyle, for them to have better health. (Maricruz)

As a Volunteer Outreach Worker

In describing their work as volunteer outreach workers in the community the participants offered the rich and varied experiences that they have had. Centered around "helping others," these experiences reveal the intensity of the role they played as an outreach worker and the impact that they made in the lives of the people they are helping. Other codes used to identify these experiences include: sharing information, sharing what I learn, helping your own people, challenging situations encountered, responding to an immediate need, example of an impactful event, frustrations of volunteering, challenges of volunteering, and intense emotional reaction. Several of the women talked about sharing the information they gained with their mothers, sisters, and other relatives and the impact that this has had on their lives as well.

> To know the importance of this, I began talking with my mother, my sisters, telling them about the work that I am doing and the importance of self-exams (for breast cancer). It was very important that I started talking to them even before talking with others. (Blanca)

> One of the big changes that I could do is with my mom, when she came here. In Mexico we don't have the opportunity to go for physical exams or mammograms. When she came here, she said I don't want to go to the doctor's, I don't want to know anything, if I am going to die, I don't want to know. I took her with me when we had the training for breast cancer… we all talked to her and we convinced her and then she took all of the exams. Every year I remind her that she needs to go. (Dennys)

> Before I started being a volunteer, I didn't realize how much volunteering could impact someone else's life. There was some times I felt like volunteering was just a waste of my time because I wasn't getting paid to do the work. But after the first two weeks I understood the feeling of knowing you helped someone could be much better than receiving money. (Maricruz's notes)

"I like it because you are helping people in the community and that is how we can learn about the needs in the community. I love to work in the community and I wish that I had more time to give" (Dennys). "If they have a situation, an emergency… they give me a call and ask me for advice…and of course I share all of my knowledge with them but also I give them information about other people who can help them even more…" (Lulu).

> I always liked to talk to all of the people and be kind to everyone, when we went door to door, it wasn't hard for me, it was easy…. because I feel so grateful to be part of their feelings. We found people who were afraid to go to the doctor… I feel good because they show us their feelings and we talk to them about the opportunities that they have. Being a volunteer, that made me feel proud, because you are doing something for someone else. It is like love for others. I feel it is like that because you are showing love for another when you are helping someone to be OK. (Blanca)

> When I was teaching the tobacco cessation classes... that was a whole different experience for me. At that moment, I wasn't just doing volunteering work, but I was helping to change the life of someone… by teaching them how to quit smoking… and how to have a better lifestyle… I was helping them to survive better… that experience was like, after I helped them to quit tobacco, they would come to me and thank me, but in a different way, they would say because of you I can teach my family, I can set a better example for my family… They would say

> "I cannot ever forget what you have done." We are talking about health. We are talking about life… I feel good because I helped them to live longer. (Maricruz)

> This occurred about 4 years ago…it's about a lady that has her husband, she always works, he doesn't want to work, he hits her, and including one day he hit her so hard that he almost, almost killed her, we referred her to a shelter and one day we ran to the shelter and there we found her and she was so emotional seeing Ramona and me that she started to cry and gave us a hug (laugh) that … those are the experiences that stay with you. (Maria)

> An experience that changed me, that had a big impact on my life, is the case of two families in which the State took their children. I would like to see that DCFS get more educated with the Hispanic culture. Many have the stereotype that all Mexican men beat their family. It's hard when you see when they come from another country and it is normal for them to spank their children and then find out here it is a crime… It's something cultural, it's not that I'm in favor of parents hitting their children... it's just that it is something cultural. I would like to see that we educate the parents better so they have the skills to raise their children. That's why this impacted my life because they lost their children and it destroyed them emotionally and destroyed their families. (Tere)

These narratives indicate a very rich, full, emotional experience of engaging with others in need of help and resources. The participant's experiences in the groups, the trainings, and the outreach work led to personal and interpersonal outcomes in many areas of their life. These changes are described below.

Changes Experienced

The participants discussed the changes that they experienced in their lives, as a result of their involvement in the groups and as a volunteer, in four areas: within themselves, with their children and family, within their marriage, and within their role in the community. These changes in thinking, relationships, and roles correspond to outcomes associated with personal and interpersonal empowerment. Desired outcomes of empowerment at the personal level include self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-acceptance, being in self, self-esteem, feeling you have rights, and critical thinking.

Outcomes of empowerment at the interpersonal level include knowledge and skills, assertiveness, setting limits on giving, asking for help, problem-solving, practicing new skills, and accessing resources (Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998).

Changes Within Self

The participants' changes in their feelings and thoughts about themselves indicate their personal empowerment. The codes used to represent these changes are: feeling worth something, improved self-esteem, gained self-confidence, believe in myself, more independent, importance of self-care, changed my thinking, greatly affected, and I felt happy with myself. The participants talked about their increased ability to do things, and noted acquiring skills and education for work. They felt more able to express themselves, and they felt proud of themselves and their accomplishments. The participants also expressed positive changes in their feelings and thoughts about others that indicate a broadening of perspectives and new ways of thinking. For example, participants talked about their experience changing their views on people who are gay and on how they should address teen pregnancy in their family.

"I started being a volunteer to build my self-esteem, to make myself feel better. I needed to feel needed, to feel that I had a place in this world. To truly feel like I was making a contribution to society" (Maricruz). "I feel comfortable now to help a lot of people. I know things now… where to go for information. I feel more positive" (Marce). "Being in the groups was a way for me to change my mind, to open my mind. I changed with my kids, with my husband, with all of the people around me" (Blanca). "The knowledge that I gained, of course, I am going to keep for the rest of my life" (Lulu).

"We learned how to take care of ourselves… before I was just in my house with my daughter, after my volunteer work, I met a lot of people… and I feel like I really help the community" (Dennys). "It has been a one hundred percent change. I have seen a huge change in myself" (Lety). "I can say I am a more confident woman. Now I can talk about something and know what I am talking about. I have goals now that I didn't have before. I want to go to college" (Maricruz). "Now I feel a lot more comfortable to talk with people, more confident about myself, a better person" (Gaby).

> The first thing that I noticed when I took the car seat class was that my daughter's car seat was installed incorrectly. A lot of people know me and they call me to ask me if their car seats are installed correctly. They call me about their concerns for safety. They call me, and that makes me feel good, that I am really helping. (Dennys)

> Before I was shy, I didn't like to talk. I was scared to express my ideas. Over time my experiences helped me to learn… I can do it, I can talk. I'm not afraid to make mistakes, it's part of the process of learning…being a volunteer, you meet people in education, in health and there are opportunities available for you… and in reality, you find yourself, you discover what you want to do… and these opportunities help you to lose your fear and you look for experiences … that's why I say it opens doors and paths because you have new experiences in whatever you want to get involved in. (Lourdes)

> Before I became a volunteer, and I didn't know what it was to be a volunteer, I was one of those persons that if someone would tell me something , I would return the aggression, or if someone would try to insult me well, I also would, before they insulted me, I would insult them and now I learned… with the transition of time, I have learned that a lot of people they insult you because they are frustrated and sometimes they try to let it go with whatever person, then I learned that those people that if someone wants to offend me the only thing I do is make half a turn and I get away from that place, and I learned to think that there are problems. (Maria)

"When we went to the HIV training… I used to think differently about people with AIDS… now I see things are not the way I used to think" (Lupe).

Changes with Children and Family

The participants spoke about changes in their parenting styles, and the subsequent impact on their children and their relationship with their children. They discussed having more control and being less aggressive in their parenting. They also noted the importance of family and the importance of being a good person for the family. Codes identifying these experiences include: less aggressive, improved communication with children, role-modeling for children, and improved relationship with my children. The women also discussed the effect their empowerment had on their teen parents' style of parenting and the influence they had on friends of their children.

> I had a lot of changes in my family… in Mexico I had domestic violence for many years, hitting, and my daughters lived with me with this violence. For me it was normal to yell and to be aggressive. I learned to love myself and I learned to love them. That with yelling and hitting you don't get anything. The only thing it teaches them is to follow the same thing and they are going to be aggressive like I was. It was hard, but I feel like I accomplished this, because for me I no longer have to hit or spank to earn the respect. (Josefina)

> I did not enjoy my children, on the contrary I always was disturbed with them. Yelling. Yes I was… I was the opposite of how I feel today. And I feel very happy to tell you that I changed myself. Inside me I feel very good. And now that I see myself and remember how I was, I don't like how I was before (laugh) no… I like how I am now, because I feel good. (Betty)

> What I learned from these groups and what I always tell people about these groups is that I was able to be more loving with my children… I have a pattern of not showing love… that is our culture…so that's where I learned to be patient with my children and to show love…I can say it is a big difference because I used to be very strict…I didn't have the knowledge that I do now, so I didn't let them go out and have any friends… I think that is one of the reasons they left home…now I have better knowledge and my younger two daughters are living a better quality of life now. This is how this has been a big impact on my life. (Lulu)

> To be a better person for your family is like to say, me when I came to the United States for the first time, see we had a culture that for everything we would yell… if we see a person that had a relationship with another person of the same sex, we would criticize… a good person for my family… I learned to not criticize other

> people and teach my children that they also should not criticize or racially criticize… well the change that I have also seen is in my children, like to say… my oldest daughter she is also learning not to criticize and also not to judge. And also, like she sees that the youngest daughter, we don't hit her and we don't yell at her, she is also learning how to take care of her daughter, like that… no yelling and no hitting. (Maria)

> My own experience with my son that is 16 years old, when I share what I have learned with HIV, within conversation he told me that he had learned a lot about this, because I have had classes. And my question was "do you think that you know everything or do we have to continue to learn?" and I asked him about the condom, if he knew how to use it. And he told me I think so. "You think that if we try to do it together some day if I ask for something to practice, could we do it together? Because it's good to learn, not that you should do it, but it's better to learn to fly a plane before flying it, and it's not so that you go and do it, simply so that you can feel sure that you know how to use it right so when the day comes that you have to do it". And he said "yes", that we can do it, and that gave me a lot of joy because I feel that it helps be more open with them. And that is my experience, and like his friends that come over to be with us, neighbors that are 13,14 years old, that I comment to them what I am doing and that if one day they have a question they can come to me. And I will always demonstrate respect for them, and they can count on me, and when the boys know that you are in something like this, they look for you, and all the classes and information that I gather, I always, with the boys, I tell them, I went here and I learned this, if you have any questions… and I like to talk to my son's friends and I always tell them what I am learning and am looking for, not that I know everything it's just that I am always looking to learn and I want to share with them. (Lety)

Changes Within Marriage

When asked the question: "What effect, either positive or negative, if any, has your experience as a volunteer had on your spouse?", many of the participants described significant changes in their relationship with their husbands that stemmed from their personal empowerment. These changes involved a re-negotiation of the balance of power within their marriage and meant a shift from their cultural norm. Much could be gained from further study with the participants, and other Mexican women, in the area of Mexican immigrant spousal relationships and dynamics of power and empowerment.

> Before I got in the groups, I was so shy. I felt like a stranger in a different world. I didn't feel integrated in the community here. I didn't know anything about the laws here, I felt the same as in my country – that the woman doesn't have any rights, that my husband can yell at me. After joining the groups, I learned that I have rights, I can integrate into the community, I can feel like a normal person. Before I was very shy, he was the only one that could decide things. Now he knows that I know where to go if I have any problem. I learned to communicate and to negotiate, and that helped me a lot". (Josefina)

> Before I didn't know how to talk to him. I didn't know how to tell him how I was feeling. I can understand how a person can be depressed. I just didn't know how to say things. I didn't have an opinion. I didn't have a voice… when he understood it was for the benefit of the whole family… he also understood that it wasn't a good example for our daughters, because when they grow up they will see that as a normal marriage, and I definitely didn't want my daughters to think that it was normal for us to be like that…now I can talk to my husband about everything that I feel… that doesn't sit well with me, I can go and talk to him… right now, I feel it's more healthy, my family, than it was before. (Maricruz)

> With my husband… we almost got divorced, we had a big problem and that depressed me a lot… before we used to fight a lot, we didn't have communication… then when I started in the groups… and I learned a lot and I started to change, and then he joined me in the groups and that was great because we were both getting the same education, and he expressed how he feels and I expressed how I feel and we found a way to handle things… it changed with Parents Anonymous, because before that he didn't let me do anything. He really changed with Parents Anonymous. He was like another person… he realized that he had machismo because his dad was like that. (Ceci)

> Before he complained about everything, the gas the time, but now he is supporting me, telling me I can do it. Sometimes, I go to my meetings and I come back and he has cooked already… sometimes I know I don't have to worry, he will take care of the kids and cook…what changed his mind is that he can see that I can bring money, I can do it by myself, and I can help other people in the community. (Lourdes)

Changes within Role in the Community

Coding related to changes within role in the community include categories such as: sense of responsibility to the job, will continue to help others, serving as a leader, being a role-model, willingness to follow-through, remaining responsive to the

community, on-going sharing of information and knowledge, self-sustaining nature, enthusiasm to help the community, sought out by community members, and connection to clients over time. As the participants gained experience as volunteers, they improved their communication skills and developed as a leader in the community. Their examples suggest that sharing information with family, friends, and neighbors is a natural response to learning what is available.

> Empowerment theory suggests that changes in beliefs and attitudes contribute to the participation of individuals in social change and assumes that individuals will work for the collective good if they develop a sense of critical consciousness. (Gutierrez, 1995, p. 229)

This sense of critical consciousness was evident in many of the narratives provided by the participants.

> The Hispanic community, they don't ask for help... they don't ask because they don't know… the self-examination, how important is the car seat… that they have the right to have a translator when they go to the doctor… those things you never ask because you don't think to ask…". (Gaby)

"Doing the volunteering helped me because I started to understand that people don't look for help… It is good because not just our Hispanic community, but all of the communities, we can help them" (Blanca).

> I think it is not easy to work with the Hispanic community, because a lot of times we think we know everything and don't need to learn anything else. We are not too open to talk about private things… we try to explain that the information is about health, nothing to be ashamed of…when I have the opportunity to share information, I always do. (Dennys)

"If I am in front of other people, and I can share my knowledge, that is something that I feel like I can do" (Lulu).

> In my personal life, I learned that I have to check myself every year, and I do my checks every year. And I remind my sister that she has to go… And I call my mom... and I call my other sister in Mexico, and remind her that she has to get

> checked every year. I still share all of the information, and when people don't know where to go, I find the information for them. (Blanca)

An important exploration in this study occurred around the participant's views of themselves as leaders – as noted above, this area of theoretical sampling was led by the participant/co-researchers, first with Alicia bringing the notion of the women's modesty in seeing themselves as leaders to my attention. Through deeper exploration of this area, many ideas were proffered by the participants, indicating an area for further study, especially in the development of leadership training for outreach workers. "Leader? I wish I could see myself like that. Tere mentioned that I was going to be a leader, something big in the group. And I loved that" (Lety). "Maybe it's not that they are modest or shy, but that they aren't sure that they can do it" (Lourdes). "We don't stop to think about our strengths" (Maricruz). "Not as a role-model, because you are always learning, and you make a lot of mistakes in life… but I can say that I understand them better, because I passed through that" (Gaby).

> Because… it's like thinking a lot of yourself, having an ego, a lot, and it's also… I also would say that you would see other people as less than you. Because well with all the people I treat… I treat them well… I, well, I have seen people in the community that when they have a position or a job that is higher… ah…like they try to put people aside. How I see the people… I don't feel like that, if she wants to talk to me I have to… I have to come. (Maria)

"I don't see myself as a leader, but I feel that… a lot of people… yes they follow me by the way that I work I try to help them in whatever moment that they need help… they call me" (Betty).

CHAPTER VI

EXPANDING OUR NOTIONS OF POWER

As I pondered the concepts and relationships that emerged from the data, I noticed the connection between the changes that occurred for the women - within themselves, within their families, and within their role in the community – and their sense of empowerment. I also noted the evidence of actual increases in power in their lives, in the form of new abilities and stronger roles within their personal relationships. I saw this connection between changes in self and changes in abilities for the participants as an example of Sadan's statement, requoted again here: "The internal process is the person's sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems. The external change finds expression in the ability to act and to implement the practical knowledge, the information, the skills, the capabilities and the other new resources acquired in the course of the process" (Sadan, 2004, p.76).

In reviewing my analysis process memos, I was reminded of some of the questions that had emerged for me during the research, such as: "Do these changes in self, in family, in marriage, in community, in role as a volunteer manifest as opportunities for power? As types of power? New roles for power? This results in having more power in specific roles in your life and ways of being?" Curiously, I also found in my memos a note written in response to analyzing the second interview I had conducted, during which

time I was still exploring which questions to ask the participants and had experimented with asking the question "Do you feel that you have more power in your life because of your experiences as a volunteer?" Magdalena's astute response was: "People trust me that I am part of the community and I can help out. That is a type of power." At the time of coding her interview, I was struck by the importance of her statement, and related it conceptually to the "power of being able to make decisions that affect a group, program, or community". It was not until the final stages of analysis, however, that I realized Magdalena's view on increases in power in her life represented the central category of this project. I returned again to the definition of the word "power": 1. The ability or capacity to perform or act effectively; 2. A specific capacity, faculty, or aptitude; 3. Strength or force exerted or capable of being exerted; 4. The ability or official capacity to exercise control; authority. Analytically, it appeared that the women did, in fact, have new capacities and abilities - new "powers" - that they were putting to use in their life.

> I didn't have, I couldn't have communication with, with my family, especially with my children. Ah… and little by little I started getting involved more and more in the program. I didn't have any friends when I came to this state, and little by little I started acquiring them. Good friends and positive, which have helped me a lot. And the meetings were far for me but even then I still went to the classes, even if it snowed. I went to the meetings because I felt I needed to go. And little by little my self esteem started to get stronger. And then… the communication with my children was gradually improving… ah more with him, with my oldest son… a very gradual change. And I, I had the strength little by little… I started acquiring strength for the problems I was having with my son… I was able to resolve them without… without losing control. And now whatever information that I have that I can give to someone else… I can share and I have found… and I have found that there is a lot of information but there are a lot, there are a lot of people that don't know that there is a lot of information and that there is a lot of help, that looking for it we can have help for our children… in this time that we are living that is very difficult. (Betty)

Looking again at the direct experience of the women who participated in the parent support groups, trainings, and outreach, their reports demonstrate that they

experienced having information and access to problem-solving resources as empowering, feeling more in control as a parent as empowering, helping others as empowering. Flipping these ideas around to make "power" the referent, the focus is put on the power that has been gained, rather than on the process of increasing power, for example, the "power of effective parenting" - as in, the ability to positively guide the behavior of your children, and the "power of helping" - as in, the ability to assist people by accessing resources and solving problems. These represent types of power, and seeing them as such puts the focus on the new abilities and capacities acquired and being put to use by the women involved in the project. In particular, they are types of power gained by the research participants in the process of participating in the support groups and volunteer activities. This typology of power helps us to answer the question: "Do the research participants have more power in their lives as a result of their participation in the programs?" Viewing the research from this lens, a variety of types of power acquired by the participants became apparent to me, and in the process, served to further my understanding of the nature of power. I have depicted these types of power in an Atlas ti network for accompaniment with the explanation that follows.

Power of Having Knowledge and Information

This is, of course, the same observation as "knowledge is power", the saying attributed to Francis Bacon and to the Book of Proverbs. For the participants, this is the power of having relevant and factual information, about such things as available resources and services, the mechanisms of the prevention of disease, U.S. culture and laws, etc. This type of power also includes the ability to see situations from a new

perspective and to address situations in new ways. According to the participants of the second focus group, this also represents the capacity to learn new things.

> I tell you that it has helped me a lot being a volunteer sincerely, I think that yes; because if I would have not been a volunteer I wouldn't have all the information, I would be maybe worse, right? I don't know, I see it that way, that I would be worse because I wouldn't have any information, I would not be able to do anything. (Elizabeth)

"I took a lot of classes like the Certified Passenger Safety, and now I know my kids are safe while I am driving" (Gaby).

> When you are a volunteer, you learn to live with and learn from different cultures…you learn how to understand people from that are from different races, different cultures, different countries. Being a volunteer, it helps you to better serve your people, your family, and each other. Like when I met people from Africa, I try to speak English with them. I try to learn about their culture, what they like… sometimes you think that they are so different, but the truth behind all of those things is that we are the same… as human beings, we are the same. (Lourdes)

Power as an Effective Parent

This type of power represents competency in parenting abilities, including effective communication with one's children and the ability to direct their behaviors. Power as an effective parent usually manifests as control - both of self, while parenting, and of the child. According to the research participants, this also includes the power to be a role-model for your children – the ability to demonstrate with your actions the values that you want your children to inherit. The research participants also see the close link between the power of having knowledge and information and power as an effective parent, pointing to having the ability to discuss important issues with one's children.

> I learned that before they are age 18, I have the control, over the privileges and consequences. And after 18, I have to learn to be more tolerant and patient. I learned a lot to work on myself, and I learned how to communicate with my two

> daughters. They started to volunteer when they were 10 and 11 years old. They didn't finish school, but I am happy because they learned, and now they want to go back to school because they have the knowledge. The most important thing that they learned was how to be a volunteer, how to serve. They never forgot about the groups and what they learned in the (children's) groups. (Josefina)
>
> I have a lot of knowledge now… I also feel like I have a responsibility, I'm a leader, I'm an examples for others… I realize now that I have a teenager, that he feels the same way… he knows that everybody sees me and that everybody sees my son… he is a role-model for other teens… sometimes he feels a lot of pressure because everybody knows him. (Claudia)
>
> I noticed that I was their example… and because of them, I wanted, and I still want, to be a better person. Being able to volunteer and everything we learn as a volunteer… for me it's like a promise… if I get trainings, if I do different classes… I am collaborating to make a better society… in our hands is the opportunity to have a better society… because the example that we give to our children is that they are the future. (Maricruz)

Power of Belief in Self

This type of power is also known as "self-efficacy", a construct included in Sadan's theory of empowerment. "Studies indicate that a person's belief in her ability to achieve outcomes is, among other things, connected to her thinking patterns – to what extent they help or hinder her to realize goals. This belief determines how a person will judge her situation, and influences the degree of motivation that people mobilize and sustain in given tasks, their degree of endurance in situations of stress and their vulnerability to depression" (1997, p. 78). The power of belief in self includes the ability to make choices and decisions in life based on one's own thoughts and desires. It involves the development of self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-respect. "It has helped me a lot because I have been able to do a lot of things and I know that I can do more. I can do things for my community and I can do things for myself" (Lupe). "Someone believed more in myself than me… that changed my thinking, you have to

trust people, they can do more than they think" (Claudia). “I feel like a woman… I feel like if someday something happened to my husband, I am prepared now… I have achievements… I feel self-confident” (Ceci). “When you start volunteering you get a lot of information and you learn that you can’t be just like… cleaning houses or being housekeeper, you can be a lot more if you really start talking and if you really want to” (Gaby).

> I feel proud that I can do things, that as a woman I can do things. I need to write a book… how I came here as an immigrant, and now I am working for the University Neighborhood Partnerships. I have my own little office. I feel like my dreams are coming true. (Lourdes)

> As a Mexican woman, we have the culture that you are just in the house cooking and taking care of the kids… just taking care of the family… really, it’s not like that… we as women can do a lot of things, we can have a career, we can be an engineer, detective, teacher, doctor… we have the opportunity to do what we want as a person… we are the example for the children, for them to have a good future. (Lourdes)

Power of Communication

This type of power was suggested by the participants of the second focus group as they considered the capacities that they had gained as a result of their experience. In their opinion, this is the power to express your self to others, to have opinions and suggest ideas. The power of communication is the ability to use one’s “voice” to contribute to decisions in a family or community. It is also the ability to listen to the ideas of others and then to collectively use those ideas to make things happen. The power of communication supports the ability to help others in the community. “I usually don’t wait for them to call me, I’m usually the one calling and offering information” (Gaby).

> Before I was afraid to plan, to organize, I didn't talk much. I didn't interest me much… Now, I can organize and plan groups and activities… I don't need the groups because I can have my own groups with parents. Now I am confident, I can have my own groups, maybe my own organization. If the school needs volunteers, I can help them with that. I have been a PTA chair for a year. I did a fundraiser for the schools. I have meetings for 20 or 30 parents. It is very important to talk to each parent and ask them for their ideas and what opportunities they have to get involved. (Lourdes)

"Now that I have been able to share with the community… I feel secure to talk, to speak up about the topics that I learned in the different trainings and classes" (Lulu).

Power to Help Others

The power to help others is an outcome of interpersonal empowerment involving "the ability to solve problems and to resolve issues" (Gutierrez, Parsons & Cox, 1998). As Magdalena articulated, this ability requires being trusted by those being helped: "People trust me, that I am part of the community and I can help out. That is a type of power." The capacity to help is related to being viewed as a leader or example to follow. The power to help others can also contain the power to make decisions that affect others, whether in a group, program, or community. It can include the sense that one's knowledge and abilities can be used to prevent unwanted outcomes in others.

> I feel strong now. I feel different because all of the trainings and classes that we received in the past that helped me to have more knowledge about myself and how to help others in the community. The feeling that I can help people that need it, that I can go and find resources for people and help them when they need it. (Josefina)

> But every friend that I have, I talk about it… "Do you know about self-examinations? No, what does that mean?" And I start talking… so all the information that you get from those meetings or those volunteering times, it stays with you for life. It doesn't change, obviously. You can help a lot of your friends without, you know, being a formal volunteer. (Gaby)

> There is something very important that I learned in Comunidades Unidas… you have to give others the opportunity to grow, to learn, and to express themselves…

> I think everyone is a leader, but not everyone has had the opportunity to learn how to express themselves…You can be a leader in your house and in your community, people listen to you, and you always help them. I don't use the word leader, I say I can help, I can listen…I can do it. I help families. I feel proud that I can do things… as a woman, it feels good, I can do things without a man… everyone has good ideas, everyone can work and bring information and do a lot of things, everyone can be a leader. (Lourdes)

Power of Professional Recognition

In general, the power of professional recognition is usually tightly controlled by universities and government agencies involved in professional licensing. Recognition of and/or certification of one's professional capacities translates into opportunities for work, career, and income. In this study, the power of professional recognition is represented by receiving certifications for completion of trainings in various areas of health and safety education. Many of the participants mentioned that they had received certifications in the trainings they attended. Although often inaccessible and limited for the participants of this project, the power of professional recognition was viewed by them as important and they felt pride for the gains they made in this area. "It gave me recognition/awards" (Maricruz's notes).

> I got training and knowledge about car seats, HIV, tobacco, diabetes, so many things that are available, prevention programs…but they have trainings and you get certified. I never thought in my life that all those things were going to help me really to get… the thing that I was never going to get… my resident card… I never thought that all those certificates and all those proofs of attending and certifying, I never thought all those things were going to help me to get through the process of being legally here… all this training and community service and helping other agencies… was really worth it, because I was learning for myself and I was helping my community to learn".

I have an office, a room [in my home]… and half of the wall is with all the certificates that I received over these six years… I was certified in car seats, HIV, CPR, and CERT (Lulu).

Disempowerment in this area, as in the lack of the power of professional recognition, was also identified in this study by Tere, in describing her attempt to utilize her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the Autonomous National University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico. "I got a degree in Mexico that I worked hard for. When I came here, my degree didn't count. I had a lot of experience. I worked for many years. When I came here, that was a barrier for me". The power of professional recognition is closely linked to the power of having marketable skills, and both are situated in contexts of power determined by many societal factors.

Power of Having Marketable Skills

The focus of the power of having marketable skills is on abilities and competencies. This type of power is the ability to do things that are needed in the job market, and is therefore dependent on both job opportunities and the education and skills of the job seeker. The participants acknowledged the value of gaining marketable skills and their desire for more education.

> Employers would hire a candidate with volunteering experience over someone who has never volunteered. There are many personal advantages to giving your time for nonprofit work. Whether you are a student, a working professional or a stay-at-home mom, volunteering is an excellent way to gain work experience and expand your social network. (Maricruz's notes)

"I wish for education, for the opportunity to have more education, because when you have more knowledge, and you have the opportunity to have a good job, a better job and better income… that will change my life" (Dennys).

Some of the participants spoke of utilizing their previous education and job skills gained in Mexico, such as nursing, while serving as a volunteer in the community. Others mentioned their use of English as a volunteer. In some of the participant's experience, increases in opportunities to earn money led to increases in their power in their marriage.

> Thanks to the volunteering work, I had the opportunity to work in a job with an organization in the community. I found support. I have a voice, I can vote to defend my rights. I have learned that all of the people in our community have the right, and voice and vote, to have what they need or to change something that is not good. (Lourdes)

> You're different than the other people because you are always helping, helping, helping, no matter what. And sometimes you let go some opportunities, because you can see that you're not going to do anything. You're going to be like a machine doing something… and you're not used to doing that…you're used to helping and learning and fitting yourself and helping people… Here they are going to pay you, but you are not going to use your brain at all, and this one, they are not going to pay you but you are going to learn a lot from life… I don't want to be at Ross, hanging clothes… I don't want to do that…if I'm going to do a job, I want to do the things that I like, the things that I enjoy… (Gaby)

> Now I have the power to be with the State, and being able to work with all of these people here so they can give more funding to programs in my community… I think they (the Utah Department of Health programs) all like the way that I am here… that I've been able to help them… they always come to me and ask me for my advice… (Claudia)

> I developed better communication skills in areas like public speaking, writing and public relations. I got to go to different social events. I was better able to understand other people, motivate others and help them in dealing with difficult situations. It gave me the opportunity to learn new skills. It increased my base of experience for future employment. (Maricruz's notes)

Power of Community

This is the power of belonging to a group and operating as part of a social network. It is the opposite of being alone with no connections to other humans and their resources. This type of power is represented by the phrase "power in numbers". Having the power of community means having the ability see your situation and your needs as common, even as universal. Closely linked to the power of communication, the power of community is supported by the acts of sharing information and exchanging services. This type of power allows one to broadcast information to and make requests of a large network of people in a small amount of time - for example, a request to gather as a unified group for a meeting, rally or march. The research participants use the power of community to network regarding opportunities for services, resources, and opportunities for work.

> A lot of the people that started with me many years ago, we are still together, we are still as a family, we are still working to get training… we became a family…we are still together…we are still working to find the resources for the community… and it's better because now it is that all the people became community leaders and I feel so proud of me and the people in my community" (Claudia)

"We are united…it's like a big family… we know each others' stories…there is a connection between us… we respect each other… we listen to each other" (Ceci).

Power in Marriage

This type of power deals with decision-making and control within the spousal relationship and is largely determined by cultural norms. Major changes in the balance of power within the spousal relationship are possible. Power in this area is greatly affected by, and may depend on, increases in power of the other types described above. For

example, as the women gained knowledge of resources and U.S. laws and culture, they became a resource for their husbands, who began to seek their advice and ask their input in decision-making.

> I feel like we are the same… I can go out without feeling afraid… now I feel free…I feel like we are equals… we respect each other… before it was like he was on the top, and I couldn't do anything without his approval… he never hit me, but he controlled me, I couldn't even take out the garbage… it was sad, for me very sad. But now I am happy, I am happy with my husband. He is a totally different person. (Ceci)
>
> For example, I make my own decisions… I don't have to explain everything to him…he doesn't ask me for an explanation…that makes me feel like I have more control over my life. Before he didn't take me seriously, he was the only one that made decisions. Now he listens to me and we have more communication. For example, when I bring my check from work, we talk together about how we are going to spend the money, what are the priorities. Before he was the one that was in charge of the money…and I never knew anything about it. (Lourdes)

I see my husband same as me. He cannot keep me down anymore because I feel that we are the same now, we can do the same things" (Maria).

CHAPTER VII

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK THEORY, PRACTICE, EDUCATION, POLICY, AND RESEARCH

Connecting to the Contextual Theory of Empowerment

It is useful to identify the common elements of the "types of power" identified in this study. They are contextual and relationship-based. They operate within everyday lives and within one's own community. They are based in direct experience and to some extent are accessible to everyone. They represent a win-win, in which an increase in power for one does not necessitate a loss of power by another. They interact and influence each other. These qualities of power, grounded in this study, correspond to Sadan's explication of theories of power, drawn from Foucault, to support her development of a theory of empowerment. "Power relations are dependent on culture, place, and time. Power not only operates in specific spheres of social life, but occurs in everyday life. Power occurs at sites of all kinds and sizes, including the most minute and most intimate" (p.57). Sadan states that "it is important to research the level of the micro-practices, from which one may learn how power operates in a social institution on the most routine everyday level" (p. 58). The practices of power operating within the lives of the participants of this research reveal the interactive nature of these types of power - the way that increases in power in one area can influence increases in power in

another area. The conceptualization of multiple types of power allows for a wide variation in experiences of empowerment, as was seen in the experience of the participants. These practices and interactions may also be representative of the experience of many other populations. For the women involved in this research, these interplays of power are complex and remain grounded in their status and experience as women from Mexico who come to live in the U.S. without government authorization to seek a better quality of life.

Implications for Practice

Returning to Sadan's theory, "empowerment emphasizes the ability to control that is innate in every person, the importance of context for an understanding of this ability, the special place of human solidarity and of community in this context, and the roles of the professional people in changing the disempowerment produced by social systems" (1997, p. 161). What has been seen in this project is that opportunities for increasing power of many different types can be generated through social work programs that offer opportunities to gain knowledge, information, and skills; access resources; learn from others; help others; improve self-expression and communication; and engage socially around common aims. These are analogous to Hardina's "empowerment activities" that "include engagement and dialogue with constituents, leadership development, and the creation of organization structures that encourage decision-making by program beneficiaries" (2003, p. 33). According to the participants of this study, experiences such as these lead to a sense of empowerment and actual changes in power in roles and relationships with one's children, spouse, and social network.

The results of this study represent a further operationalization of the contextual theory of empowerment, offering specificity around types of power achievable through empowering practices that may make the theory more easily applied in various social work contexts. The delineation of types of power, developed in our grounded theory analysis, allows for a greater level of transferability to other populations and contexts, in that it reveals opportunities for power for marginalized populations to be achievable, concrete, and tied directly to their everyday experience of life. By offering real-life examples of the contextual theory of empowerment, this study serves its purpose as a community-based, participatory action research project designed to gather new information that leads to constructive actions. As social workers and as researchers, we have the ability (the power) to create local conditions and opportunities for gaining power that can readily transform the lived experience of individuals and groups experiencing societal marginalization and disempowerment. Parents Anonymous and La Casa del Pueblo are examples of programs that create these opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Many other empowering programs can be developed that are tailored to different populations and that promote contextual opportunities for experiencing power.

Both human service organizations and universities can play a role in implementing effective programs for immigrant populations in their local communities by utilizing the notions of empowerment expounded in this study. For example, community-based organizations and colleges of social work can collaboratively develop and sponsor community health outreach worker programs that empower local volunteers to provide outreach, education and services of need in the community. These programs could be developed to lead to outreach worker certifications, thereby creating

opportunities for professional advancement. Outreach workers supported by these programs could serve as the front line for additional early prevention and intervention programs which can also be implemented as university-community partnerships. Early career ladder programs that bring university faculty into middle and high schools and that bring students at-risk of school drop out into universities to explore and promote careers in social services, health, and education can be integrated into these programs as well. Utilizing the results of this study, these new programs should consider and address disempowering contextual factors impacting immigrants and emphasize opportunities to build social capital, gain skills, and serve roles in the community.

Implications for Higher Education

Utilizing opportunities for academically-based community scholarship and research, colleges of social work can simultaneously impact higher education, social work practice, policy development, and research. University-community collaborations can lead to increased opportunities for course development based on the pedagogical aims of service-learning. My experience integrating practice within the Mexican immigrant community into a Masters in Social Work Practice with Communities and Organizations course resulted in students having a direct experience of research, organizing, and program development that served the goals of the community and provided students with hands-on social work skills. Class time included an exploration of the policy context influencing the development of these programs. Gaining a first-hand understanding of the needs, strengths, goals, and resources of the local Mexican

immigrant community serves to impact social work students' understanding of their potential role as influencers of social policy.

Implications for Policy

Ultimately, university-community collaborations can serve to support the development of a response from the social work community at-large to advocate for pro-immigrant policy reform initiatives. Currently, the political movement regarding immigration policy is in the direction of increased marginalization and identification of Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. without government authorization, resulting in a decrease in opportunities for empowerment through access to social services, jobs, and transportation options. The field is open for social workers to organize for grassroots advocacy to bring about immigration policy reform that results in increased access to basic resources and opportunities for security and advancement for immigrants. In addition, federal funding and support for grassroots, community-based initiatives, such as Parents Anonymous Inc., is needed to maintain local efforts. The results from this study indicate the important ways that immigrants can contribute civically in their communities. These contributions deserve public acknowledgement and can serve to re-frame public perception. Efforts toward more just immigration policies will be supported by continued research with Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. without government authorization.

Implications For Further Research

This study, grounded in the experience of a group of Mexican women who have served as volunteer outreach workers in the community, has made accessible a rich opportunity for a deep understanding of their experience of power and empowerment. Further theoretical sampling within this study could continue to answer questions and build theory, leading, for example, to a better understanding of the views and experience of leadership for Mexican immigrant women. In addition, the role of building social capital as a necessary component in the process of empowerment can be explored. Further sampling could explore the connection between experiences of individual empowerment and participation in political activities, such as attending meetings and marches for immigration reform. The impact on the children of the research participant's in this study is also an important area for further investigation – preliminarily we see positive influences on the children of the participants, including their orientation toward service and leadership. Finally, work should continue on eliciting the facilitating conditions for empowerment, such as: laws and policies; familial resources; community programs; access to information; previous education and training; the role of spousal support; the role of the social network; and volunteers serving as mentors for new volunteers.

This research has also shed light on a number of other areas of importance for Mexican immigrants that deserve further study and that could benefit from the utilization of a community-based participatory research approach. Domestic violence was a factor mentioned many times in this study, indicating the importance of work in this area to address this disempowering condition. Related to this is the need for expanding our

understanding of the Mexican cultural norms informing spousal relationships and roles in marriage, ie. machismo and marianismo (Stevens, 1973) and how these norms are disrupted by experiences of empowerment. Researchers interested in the empowerment of Latino men would benefit from the views of the Mexican men who have participated in the parent support groups or as volunteer outreach workers themselves. One of the most critical areas for further research identified by this study is the need to address cultural differences in parenting and discipline to prevent further parental loss of custody. Finally, other researchers can apply the parent support group and training and outreach program model with other populations.

In conclusion, this grounded theory analysis of a community-based participatory action research project addressed many of the concepts discussed in the literature on empowerment theory and civic engagement, and has contributed to an area of research that was previously lacking: the impact of volunteering on lay health advisors themselves. By utilizing research strategies that "not only derive hypotheses from individuals to be served but would empower indigenous experts to be research associates and coproducers of research findings" (Briar-Lawson, 1998, p. 548), we have privileged and documented the indigenous "voice" in this study as much as possible. The substantive grounded theory developed through this project furthers our consideration of notions of power, including: what is power, what does it look like, and how does it function in day-to-day lives? As suggested by Strauss and Corbin, "as concepts and relationships emerge from the data through qualitative analysis, the researcher can use that information to decide where and how to go about gathering additional data that will further evolution of the theory" (1998, p. 33). It is my hope that the ideas generated here

will serve to continue the conversation among other empowerment theorists, especially those interested in making empowerment relevant and possible for our most marginalized populations.

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