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SPANISH-SPEAKING PARENTS' NEGOTIATION OF LANGUAGE AND
CULTURE WITH THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

by

Ronda L. Bickmore

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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2013

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ABSTRACT

Spanish-Speaking Parents' Negotiation of Language and Culture with
Their Children's Schools

by

Ronda L. Bickmore, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2013

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Department: Teacher Education and Leadership

Latinos are now the largest minority population in U.S. schools. Because of a shift in Latino settlement patterns, many schools that did not previously serve substantial numbers of Latinos are doing so now. Additionally, a significant number of the Latino parents in new settlement areas are first-generation immigrants and speak little or no English. In order to support their children educationally, these relatively new immigrant, predominantly Spanish-speaking parents find it necessary to negotiate language and culture with their children's schools. This qualitative study specifically examines how 12 Spanish-speaking parents negotiated language and culture with their children's school in a new settlement area in the state of Utah.

In order to examine the acts of negotiating language and culture, I interviewed five Latino couples and a Latino mother and a Latino father along with the school principal, three teachers, and three staff members. I also conducted 5 months of

observations at the school and collected other data such as forms and notices. From the data, I compiled and described the acts of negotiation. I then analyzed the data using a framework consisting of postcolonial theory, social and cultural capital theories, and the concept of social discourses.

Major themes that emerged from the data included the concern the parents had for their children's education, the parents' limited participation in the school discourse, children serving as language brokers, the maintenance and growth of their children's heritage language, the hegemony of the English language, and issues involving social and cultural capital, linking capital, and racism. Recommendations include assuring availability of interpreters, increasing bridging and linking capital, supporting children's heritage language, and being culturally sensitive and proactive to reduce racism.

(201 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Spanish-Speaking Parents' Negotiation of Language and Culture with
Their Children's Schools

by

Ronda L. Bickmore, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2013

Latinos are now the largest public school minority population in the U.S. Because of a shift in the states, cities, and counties where Latinos are choosing to live, many schools that did not previously serve substantial numbers of Latinos are doing so now. Additionally, many of the Latinos in these new settlement areas are recent immigrants who speak little or no English. This qualitative study examined how immigrant Latino parents who speak little or no English supported their children in the English-speaking school system of the U.S. It specifically examined how 12 Spanish-speaking parents negotiated language and culture with their children's school in a new settlement area in the state of Utah.

From the interviews I conducted with the Latino parents and school staff members, along with school observations and the collection of other data such as forms and notices, I examined how the parents negotiated language and culture with the school. I then analyzed the themes that emerged from this collection of data using a theoretical framework consisting of postcolonial theory, social and cultural capital, and the concept of social discourses. Major themes that emerged included the concern the parents had for their children's education, the parents' limited participation in the school discourse, children serving as language brokers, the maintenance and growth of their children's heritage language, the hegemony of the English language, and issues involving social and cultural capital, linking capital, and racism.

Recommendations include assuring availability of interpreters, increasing bridging and linking capital, supporting children's heritage language, and being culturally sensitive and proactive to reduce racism. Hopefully, this research will add to the literature that will help educators better serve the growing Latino school population.

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Ronda L. Bickmore

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For the last 10 years Latino students have been the largest minority public school population in the U.S. (Aud et al., 2012). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reports that in 2012 the Latino school population was 23% of the total, increasing from 18% in 2002 (Aud et al., 2012). Blacks had been the largest minority school population for many years but their growth has slowed and their percentage of the total school population is decreasing while the Latino school population percentage has continued to rise (Aud et al., 2012). The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2011) projects that the Latino school age population will continue to increase as other school-age populations decrease or hold relatively steady. The Latino population, of which 34% are under the age of 18, is the fastest growing population in the U.S. (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). A 2010 Census Brief reported that in the years “between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43%, which was four times the growth in the total population at 10%” (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, & Albert, 2011, p. 2).

In addition to this unprecedented growth in population, there has also been a shift in Latino settlement patterns. Historically, the Latino population in the U.S. was relatively low and confined to the Southwest, with the exception of Latinos from Spanish held Puerto Rico who began immigrating to New York in the mid-19th century. After the Mexican War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1846, the Southwest was claimed by the U.S. and the 80,000 Mexicans who remained became territorial citizens. Their numbers were soon overwhelmed by the largely White settlers of the western expansion

(Duignan & Gann, 1998; Ngai, 2004). At the first part of the 20th century the U.S. experienced massive immigration from Mexico, Europe, and the Far East. Most Mexicans settled in rural, southwest areas. With the economic collapse in the 1930s many Mexican immigrants returned to Mexico or were deported by the U.S. government. However, in 1942 the U.S. and Mexico established the Farm Labor Supply Program, more commonly known as the Bracero Program, in order to satisfy labor needs in the U.S. created by World War II. This spread Mexican immigrants across the U.S. They were joined by emigrant Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, both documented and undocumented, who were immigrating from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. In the 1960s the Bracero Program was terminated as agribusiness was changing and fewer laborers were needed. Latinos began moving out of rural areas and into larger cities. By 1990, 90% of Latinos, immigrants and those born in the United States, lived in urban areas throughout the country (Duignan & Gann, 1998; Ngai, 2004).

During the last 30 years, the Latino settlement patterns in the U.S. have taken on a new dimension. While there remain large concentrations of Latinos in major cities like Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, many Latinos are also choosing to live outside of urban centers (Gozdziak & Martin, 2005; Kandel & Cromartie, 2004; Suro & Tafoya, 2004). The combination of this new settlement pattern and the population growth has resulted in many smaller cities, towns, and rural areas seeing a marked increase in their Latino populations (de Haymes & Kilty, 2007; Kandel & Cromartie, 2004; Marx, 2008; Villalba, Brunelli, Lewis, & Orfanedes, 2007). As Latino parents raise their families in less populated areas such as Morristown, Tennessee; Stanwood, Washington; and Hyrum,

Utah, one of their concerns is their children's education. Unfortunately, there is an educational achievement gap between Latino students and their White counterparts.

The NCES reports that the achievement gaps in reading and math between White and Latino students have not statistically changed since they began following them in the early 1990s (Aud et al., 2011). The NCES tracks reading and math data on 9, 13, and 17 year olds. In 2008, 19%, 28%, and 17% of Latino students of these respective age groups were less proficient in reading than Whites. In math, 9%, 17%, and 29% of Latino students were less proficient than Whites (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Latinos also continue to have the highest noncompletion rates in the country. Of Latinos 25 years and older only 63% completed high school; those between the ages of 25 and 29 have a slightly better completion rate of 69% (Snyder & Dillow, 2011).

Ensuring that their children do as well educationally as their White counterparts can be a great challenge for Latino parents. That challenge is even more complicated for Latino parents who speak little or no English (hereafter referred to as Spanish-speaking). Using the data from the 2006 American Community Survey, Frey and Gonzalez (2008) reported that 65% of Latino students are immigrants or the children of immigrants, thus making it more likely that their parents are primarily Spanish speakers who may be learning English. Additionally, Kandel and Cromartie (2004) found that new settlement areas attract many recent immigrants whose English language skills are subsequently very low due to their lack of time in the U.S. They reported that "low English language proficiency in high-growth Hispanic counties is particularly pronounced among working-age residents" (p. 20), an age group who would also most likely have school-aged

children. In fact, on the 2000 Census long form, only 50% of Latinos ages 18 – 64 in these areas report speaking English *well* or *very well* (p. 20). These findings show that in many smaller cities and towns across America a substantial number of Latino parents may find it difficult to communicate with the English-speaking educators at their children's schools.

Spanish-speaking Latino parents in new settlement areas outside the traditional urban gateways are also enrolling their children in schools that historically are not used to serving the growing Latino student populations (Marschall, 2006). Previously, for many of these schools, the number of Latino students did not reach a large enough percentage of the whole student population to be considered statistically valid when computing data on student achievement. Consequently, these schools did not have to disaggregate data on or be accountable for Latino student achievement. That scenario is now changing. Data from two Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys show how the percentage of Latinos in public schools in locations with populations between 2,500 and 50,000 almost doubled from 8.3% in 1993-94 to 15.4% in 2007-08. Locales with less than 2,500 residents show an even greater increase from 4.4% to 10.5% (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007). As the percentages increase, more and more schools are required to report and be accountable for Latino student achievement.

Study Purpose

The situation of immigrant parents facing schools that do not speak their language

and are unfamiliar with their native culture(s) happens every school day in the U.S. What makes the circumstances that have been discussed here unique is their convergence. First, the number of Latinos in American schools will only increase for the foreseeable future. Second, their numbers will increase in areas where many schools are new to serving a growing Latino population. Third, a substantial number of Latino parents in these new settlement areas speak little or no English. Fourth, the achievement gap between Latino students and their White counterparts has remained relatively constant for the last twenty years. Within this convergence of circumstances, this study examines how Spanish-speaking Latino parents negotiate language and culture with U.S. schools in order to support their children educationally.

Defining Negotiation

Although it is used frequently, the term “negotiate” is not well defined in the literature. The Merriam-Webster definition of the term includes “to deal with (some matter or affair that requires ability for its successful handling)” and “to arrange for or bring about through conference, discussion, and compromise” (negotiate). In this research, I define the term “negotiate” as interactions between two or more parties as they come to an agreement or manage a situation, such as when businesses negotiate contracts and nations negotiate treaties. Each party has interests to protect and desires a fair if not advantageous outcome.

For example, most schools have limited time, monetary, and staff resources with which to operate a multitude of educational exigencies and so they have those interests to

protect when negotiating language and culture with Latino parents. Latino parents' interests are different. Their interests include the respect, acknowledgment, and equal ranking of their lived language (be it Spanish or a combination of Spanish and English) with the English language of the school. That is not to imply that English should not be the operational language of U.S. schools, but rather that speakers of languages other than English do not want their language to be viewed as somehow deficient or second-best because it is not English. Latino parents' interests also include the respect, acknowledgment, and equal ranking of their lived culture with the U.S. school culture. Again, that is not to imply that the U.S. school culture should be aligned to a particular cultural group. In fact, that would be impossible considering the cultural variance among the U.S. student population. It does imply that the home cultures of all students should be valued and not viewed as deficient if the home culture does not align with the U.S. school culture.

Latino parents are not just overcoming language and cultural differences or barriers. They are negotiating language and culture with schools in the hope of producing an equitable and successful outcome for their children. While protecting their interests, they negotiate language by finding successful ways to communicate orally and in writing as Spanish-speaking parents with the English language school system and by being able to preserve their children's heritage language. They negotiate culture by finding efficacious points of contact within the U.S. school culture from which to observe, participate, and effect change. Through these negotiations, parents are finding ways to support their children's education.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Situating the Study

Several topics are important in situating this study and are addressed in the first part of the literature review. The first two topics review the literature on the importance of language and culture in educational settings in reference to Latino parents. The other topics are the involvement of Latino parents in their children's schooling and the literature on new Latino settlement areas.

Language

For all parents, communicating with their children's school is imperative in order to support their children's education. The easiest way for Spanish-speaking parents to communicate with schools is to communicate in Spanish. Even though all Latino educators do not speak Spanish, there are very few Latino teachers, principals, and bilingual educators with whom Spanish-speaking parents can communicate. The Latino school population is approaching one quarter of the total, yet in 2008 Latino teachers made up only 7.2% of the teaching population and only 5.9% of the principalship (Aud et al., 2012). The number of bilingual teachers has also decreased with the passage of federal and state legislation. In 2002, the U.S. Congress replaced the Bilingual Education Act (BEA), which promoted bilingual programs for English Language Learners (ELLs), with the English Language Acquisition (ELA) Act. In contrast to the BEA, the ELA promotes programs that emphasize English, but allows individual states to decide how

that is to be accomplished. In response to the ELA, California, Arizona, and Massachusetts severely limited or eliminated their bilingual education programs and many bilingual teachers (Mitchell, 2005).

Besides the lack of educators who speak Spanish, an additional language challenge that Spanish-speaking Latino parents face is enlisting the support of their children's school in helping their children learn English without losing the ability to maintain and progress in their heritage language. Studies have shown that the maintenance of primary language can support acquisition of English and enhance academic achievement (Hudson & Smith, 2001; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991). This is a compelling reason for Latino children to maintain their heritage language considering the achievement gap.

For Spanish-speaking Latino parents, their children's ability to maintain and progress in Spanish may also have some personal importance. If their children do not speak Spanish, Spanish-speaking Latino parents lose the ability to communicate directly with them. Fillmore (2000) reported that as children learn English at school, many lose their primary language. Historically, primary language loss took two generations, with the second generation being bilingual. As bilinguals, the children of immigrants could communicate with their parents in their primary language and with their own children in English, maintaining familial communication. That is not true today "with English quickly displacing and replacing the primary language in young first generation immigrants" (Fillmore, 2000, p. 203). Worthy (2006) noted that immigrant parents who do not speak English feel "increasingly shut out of vital areas of their children's lives,

including language, social and emotional development, and education” (p. 151). They can no longer engage in many parental practices that require communication (including educational support) and find it difficult to pass on cultural heritage (Worthy, 2006).

Culture

While a person’s home culture is always somewhat different from school culture, the cultural heritage that many Latino parents seek to pass on to their children is often quite different and can sometimes conflict with the U.S. school culture. Culture is defined in many ways (De Gaetano, 2007; Reese, 2002). Merriam-Webster defines culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.” However, this dictionary definition does not capture the dynamic nature of culture. De Gaetano (2007), Menard-Warwick (2007), and Reese (2002) caution against defining culture as a static set of beliefs, patterns, and characteristics. Menard-Warwick believed “Most authors continue to overlook the dynamic, changing, and heterogeneous nature of culture as it is lived by particular families in particular communities” (p. 123). Reese adopted “the perspective that emphasizes the dynamic nature of culture, viewing it as a continually produced system that guides individuals’ choices and activities while at the same time being transformed by them” (p. 32). De Gaetano added that although there are “many definitions, anthropologists generally accept the idea that culture is learned and transmitted” (p. 148).

Researchers have reported on a disconnect or mismatch between Latino cultures and the typical U.S. school culture (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Hill & Torres, 2010; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Quioco & Daoud, 2006). Some scholars described U.S. school culture

as a mirror of mainstream White U.S. culture (Dean, 2002; Scheurich, 1993). Whitty (as cited in H. T. Trueba, 1988) pointed out that some sociologists believed that the dominant social group translates their interests “into social values which inform schools, which in turn replicate the social structure” (p. 271). Harry, Arnaiz, Klingner, and Sturges (2008) explained how this is operationalized in schools.

[Educational] benchmarks do not represent universal developmental norms. Rather, they represent the knowledge and skills gained by children whose homes and neighborhoods have prepared them in the language, discourse patterns, cognitive approaches, and social behaviors of the mainstream of the society. In other words, schooling is not culturally neutral. Rather, it is culturally responsive to the children of mainstream families. (p. 24)

One example of this mismatch is the way that White cultures and U.S. schools can emphasize individuality and competitiveness, while Latino cultures usually emphasize community and interdependency (Valdés, 1996). Other examples include the White cultural emphasis on reading to children in the home, and the Latino cultural respect for labor intensive careers (Hill & Torres, 2010; Reese, 2002; Valdés, 1996; Wortham & Contreras, 2002).

Latino parents’ own educational experiences in Mexico and Central and South America can also add to the mismatch by affecting how they view educational practices and their role in their children’s education (Hill & Torres, 2010; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). Without being explicitly told what the expectations are in U.S. schools, immigrant parents can rely on their own experiences from another country or generation (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Additionally, racial and class inequities leave many Latino parents without the cultural and social capital or the empowerment to fully contribute to their children’s schooling in ways that match their desires (Barton, Drake, Perez, St Louise, &

George, 2004; Olivos, 2004). These factors impact how Latino parents negotiate U.S. school culture—or to be more specific, how they find efficacious points of contact within the U.S. school culture from which to observe, participate, and effect change.

Latino Parental Involvement

Spanish-speaking Latino parents negotiate language and culture in order to be involved in their children's schooling. Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's schooling, their children do better academically (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan-Holbein, 2005; Hill et al., 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). The specifics of parental involvement vary from study to study. Hill and colleagues (2004) gave a broad definition of parental involvement as “parents work with schools and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future successes” (p. 1491). Specifics include attendance at school events, such as plays and parent-teacher conferences; parent-teacher communications and relationships; discussions with older children about education and their future; school related activities at home such as homework monitoring (Hill et al., 2004); and parental expectations and style (Jeynes, 2005).

Jeynes's (2005) meta-analysis of 41 studies on the correlation of parental involvement and student achievement includes an analysis of whether the correlation holds true when disaggregated by race. He concluded:

One of the most remarkable patterns that emerged from this meta-analysis is the broad association between parental involvement and school achievement. That the relationship between parental support and educational outcomes held across race is particularly important for educators and parents in an increasingly diverse country. In fact, this meta-analysis included so many different types of samples

one can conclude this relationship holds across different cultures, backgrounds, and situations. (p. 263)

Latino parental involvement can be an effective element in the educational achievement of Latino children, as this meta-analysis illustrates.

However, in the U.S., Latino parents do not participate in their children's schooling at the same rate as White parents (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990; Olivos, 2004). De Gaetano (2007) listed the reasons researchers have given for low Latino parent school participation, which include:

a mistrust of large bureaucracies, dramatic differences between what is expected of parents in the U.S. and in the parents' countries of origin, negative attitudes of school administration and school personnel toward Latino parents, and lack of personnel who speak the parents' language. (p. 146)

De Gaetano's list was not exhaustive, but it gives an idea of the varying and often complex reasons proposed for low Latino parental involvement.

Many educators believe that the low profile of Latino parents in the educational arena is evidence that they do not care about their children's schooling (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Olivos, 2004; Quioco & Daoud, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002) and that this lack of interest in their children's education contributes to the lower achievement of Latino students (Olivos, 2004; Valencia & Black, 2002). Teacher interviews from Quioco and Daoud's (2006) study illustrated these beliefs.

The first theme was the belief that Latino parents not only were unreliable, but they refused to volunteer in the classroom. The second theme was that Latino parents did not support the school's homework policy because they would not help their children with homework. Speaking Spanish was perceived as a barrier for parents to help their children academically. The third theme centered on the perception that Latino parents did not care about schooling. For example, Latino

parents took their children out of school for family trips. This practice translated into the perception that Latino parents did not value education as much as other parents. The fourth theme that emerged was that Latino parents were unskilled and unprofessional. Parents were referred to as the Mexicans whose children were different and came to school with deficient literacy skills. (pp. 260-261)

Many of the educators involved in this study reversed their negative views of Latino parents through the presentation of accurate data and by working with Latino parents in a school-wide planning group.

Several studies confirm that Latino parents do care about the schooling of their children, but that they have numerous difficulties operationalizing that caring within the U.S. school systems (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Quiocho & Daoud 2006; Valdés, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Besides being unable to communicate with school personnel, Latino parents expressed difficulties included “their feelings of fear, confusion, despair, frustration, and isolation in not knowing what was expected of them, and whether they were doing it right” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). Studies also report Latino parents’ resiliency in overcoming barriers in order to be active participants in the education of their children. Latino parents formed groups; became politically active in district matters; learned about the U.S. school system by attending an eight week parent institute; volunteered at schools; encouraged, supported, and set high educational aspirations for their children; helped with homework; and took English classes (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2005). These examples show the variety of ways in which Latino parents support their children’s education.

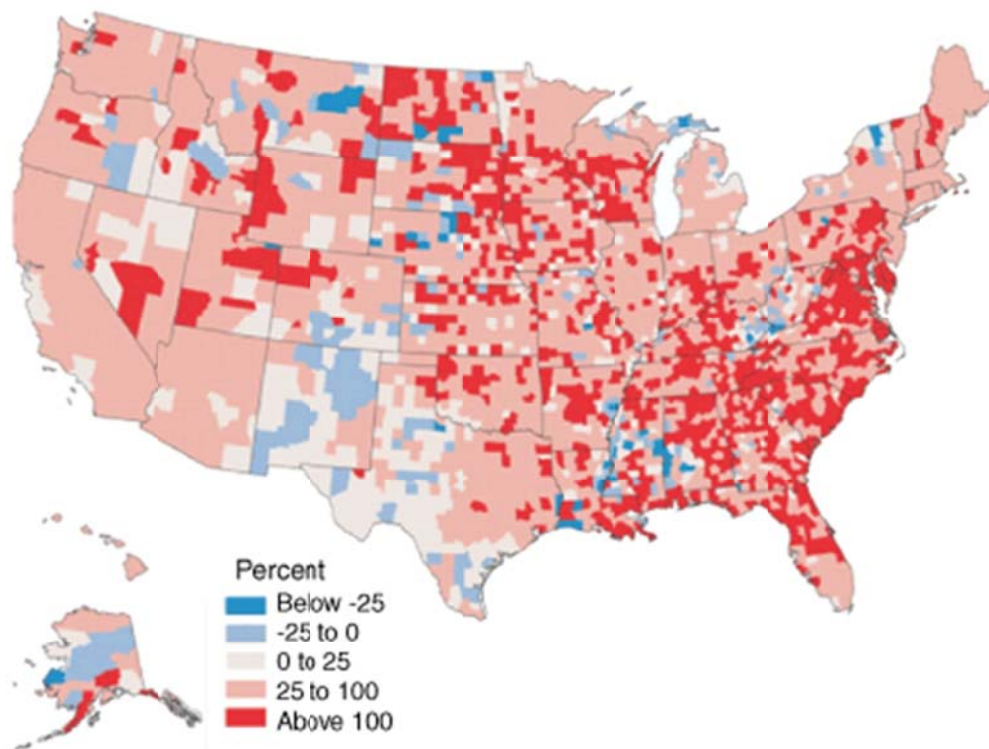
New Latino Settlement Areas

On a state level, from 1980 to 2000, the Latino population increased an average of 350% in nontraditional settlement states, with Georgia and Nevada seeing increases of over 600% (Suro & Tafoya, 2004). Other new settlement states included Arizona, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and Massachusetts. In this research Suro and Tafoya defined “new settlement states as those in which the Hispanic population grew by at least 200,000 between 1980 and 2000, and roughly tripled in size” (p. 4). A telling characteristic is that between 1990 and 2000, 74% of the increase in new settlement states was to Latino-minority neighborhoods (Suro & Tafoya, 2004). Latinos were not only dispersing to new states, but also dispersing to various neighborhoods within those states. This is different from many urban areas where Latinos are concentrated in Latino-majority neighborhoods (Suro & Tafoya, 2004).

From 2000 to 2010 the rate of Latino population growth in new areas slowed but the dispersal broadened. The states with the highest increases, from 100 to 150%, included Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). Once again, the Latino population dispersal on a state level is only part of the picture. In the Economic Research Service, Cromartie (2011) reported that the overall nonmetropolitan population increased only 4.5% between 2000 and 2010, while the nonmetropolitan Latino population increased 45%. He stated that Latino population increases are not confined to the Southwest, but are evident in the Southeast, Midwest, and Northwest. He concludes, “These new settlement patterns increase the visibility of Hispanics in many new regions

of rural America whose population has long been dominated by non-Hispanic Whites” (p. 10). The map in Figure 1 illustrates that between 2000 and 2010 almost every region of the U.S. saw an increase in the nonmetropolitan Latino population of at least 25%.

Despite the increasing Latino student populations in small cities and rural areas across America over the last 30 years, much of the recent literature concerning Latino parents and the education of their children comes from urban areas (e.g., Auerbach, 2002; Barton et al., 2004; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007; Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2004; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Olivos, 2004; Quiococho & Daoud, 2006; Ramirez, 2003, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Worthy, 2006), with a few notable exceptions (Corona et al., 2012; Delgado-Gaetan, 1994; Marx, 2008; Marx & Larson, 2012; Smith, Stern, &



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from the 2010 Census of Population.

Figure 1. Growth among Latinos in nonmetropolitan counties between 2000 and 2010.

Shatrova, 2008; Villalba et al., 2007; Wortham & Contreras, 2002). Research on Latino parental interface with schools in less densely populated areas has not caught up with the growth of the Latino population to these areas or has historically been ignored in states that do have a long history with rural Latino populations.

Negotiation of Language and Culture

In order to examine how Latino parents negotiate language and culture with their children's schools, whether in large metropolitan areas or in small towns, I reviewed the Latino parental involvement literature. The literature covers many parts of the U.S. and varies greatly in scope and emphasis. It can be roughly divided into four categories: individual Latino/a experiences (Barton et al., 2004; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Ramirez, 2003; Villalba et al., 2007; Worthy, 2006), Latino group experiences (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994, 2005; Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2005), community-based programs for Latino parents (Auerbach, 2002; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007; Lieshoff, 2007), and school and district outreach efforts including teacher education (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992; Ramirez, 2003). The negotiation of language and culture has both similarities and variations in each of these four categories.

Individual Experiences

This category consists of experiences of negotiating language and culture that individual Latino parents had independent of other parents. All four categories of the reviewed literature provided examples of individual experiences, with individual

experiences being the exclusive focus in several of the studies. In comparing the individual experiences of two Nicaraguan sisters-in-law, for example, Menard-Warwick (2007) described the different but effective ways in which these women negotiated language. She described such acts as taking English as a Second Language classes, utilizing interpreters and Spanish-speaking school staff members, having older children read to younger children, and asking relatives with better English skills to translate or help children with homework questions. Ramirez (2003) noted how one parent brought his own interpreter to a board meeting when the district would not provide one. Worthy (2006) reported on the common practice of children serving as translators. She also documented how one mother negotiated language by asking her children to explain their homework in Spanish so that she would know what they were studying.

In negotiating culture, Menard-Warwick (2007) documented practices of attending parent meetings and conferences, volunteering in classrooms, cleaning the school, and meeting with an accessible principal. Other practices included helping children maintain their Spanish language through Spanish language books and Bible study in Spanish, using the public library, asking cultural insiders what would be expected of their children at school, and seeking insider's advice about offered programs (Menard-Warwick, 2007). Testing is also part of the U.S. school culture that needs to be negotiated. One parent told a researcher how he hired a tutor to help his daughter with test taking skills (Ramirez, 2003). As the above research illustrates, individual Latino parents have found many ways in which to negotiate language and culture.

Group Experiences

This category consists of group experiences of negotiating language and culture that were created and led by Latino parents. There is not as much data about the negotiation of language in the literature about these group experiences. The few reported methods of negotiating language included communicating through interpreters, bilingual personnel, and bilingual parents.

The major theme in the literature about group experiences of negotiating culture is political and empowerment processes that addressed oppression, racism, and inequality (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994, 2005; Jasis & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2005). Olivos related how a lack of social capital and empowerment shaped Latino parents' involvement in the San Diego school where he worked as a bilingual educator. Most of the Latino parents whose children attended the school followed a pattern of resistance by not becoming involved in a system where they felt discriminated, then feeling oppressed and eventually humiliated by the school administration. However, when attempts at communicating with the administration and inclusion in decision-making processes were blocked, a small group of parents formed plans and took action to rectify their concerns, eventually leading to the dismissal of the principal and the publishing of a monthly newsletter. They turned their initial resistance into empowerment.

Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2004) detailed how another group of Latino parents formed La Familia Initiative at a middle school in the San Francisco Bay area. The parents were concerned about the low performance of their children. They were able to

suggest and help implement many items for school improvement, organize activities at the school, and participate in district policy meetings. The Initiative was so successful that it spread to five other schools in the area. Delgado-Gaitan's (1994) 5-year study concerning the establishment of COPLA (Comite de Padres Latinos) "describes how the parent involvement process in Carpinteria [California] has been one of shared power between families and schools that led to empowerment of the Latino community" (p. 9). Interestingly, all of the parent groups in these studies encouraged participants to tell their stories, those that involved their children and schooling, and those that told of their personal lives and struggles.

Community Based Programs

This category consists of experiences of negotiating culture that were provided to Latino parents by an outside entity. There were no examples of negotiating language found in this literature sample. Community based programs shared the similarity of encouraging Latino parents to share their experiences just as the parent groups did. While each program had a different emphasis and methodology, all of the programs sought to empower Latino parents by valuing their home cultures and educational strengths and explicitly teaching the parents about the U.S. school system, its culture, procedures, and expectations (Auerbach, 2002; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007; Lieshoff, 2007).

For example, The Cross Culture Demonstration Project used culture as the focus of its objectives (De Gaetano, 2007). The project was run by a team of educators from a large private university who had received a three-year federal grant. The first year

emphasized the parents and their families, the community, and then the school with parents observing in the classrooms. In the second year the emphasis shifted to the parents as teachers and transmitters of culture and their involvement in the classrooms shifted from being observers to helping in instructional, academic, and nonacademic tasks. In the third year the parents continued their involvement at the school and evaluated their process through the project, revised the structure and presented “the culturally relevant approach to parent participation to parents at another school” (p. 157). Over the 3 years, the project helped parents negotiate culture through emphasizing the value of the home culture, observing and participating in school classrooms to gain knowledge of the school culture, and encouraging mutual parental support.

Another example, The Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), used parent education as a way of helping Latino parents negotiate culture (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). Developed and operated as a nonprofit organization by a concerned Baptist minister and a university professor, PIQE consisted of a prescribed curriculum taught over eight sessions. It was based on the observations that low income and immigrant parents “need information about (a) the educational system, (b) how to interact with the school and teachers, and (c) how to help their children at home” (125). Chrispeels and Rivero considered the PIQE instructors “cultural brokers” who were “selected because their life experiences were similar to the participants, they had succeeded in the U.S. educational system, and they were able to interpret this system for Latino parents” (124). PIQE has continued to grow and today operates in several states and provides classes in 16 different languages (PIQE). Community-based programs such as the Cross Cultural

Demonstration Project and PIQE helped Latino parents negotiate culture through the combination of valuing parents' culture and educating parents about the U.S. school culture.

School and District Outreach Efforts

Sprinkled throughout all of the literature involving Latino parents and U.S. school systems and focused on in a few studies are teacher, school, and district outreach efforts that facilitate the negotiation of language and culture. Schools' and districts' language efforts included hiring interpreters and bilingual staff members and having Spanish translations of written materials. Worthy (2006) documented how one teacher sent home the Spanish version of the novels the students read in class so that their parents could read them and they could discuss the novels together.

Pertaining to culture, Ramirez (2003) detailed the outreach efforts of a few schools that held neighborhood meetings, consulted parents on how best to handle grant money for the improvement of their children's education, had high expectations for all students, and emphasized staff commitment to helping students succeed. Lopez and colleagues (2001) documented extraordinary staff commitment to families in a study of 17 high-performing migrant-impacted schools from four different districts where 50 to 80% of the populations were migrant students. Staff members' roles in these schools were not "defined by a commitment to a specific set of tasks but rather, by a commitment to a group of people" (p. 281). Staff members got to know parents on a personal level and viewed them as central to the educational goals of the students. Home visits were used to take the school to the parents. Educators not only taught parents about school procedures

and community resources, but also provide self-improvement training to help parents move out of low-paying jobs that required them to move frequently. The schools studied also hired staff members who spoke Spanish and had similar background experiences as the migrants or who were perceived as being able to put forth the unique commitment needed to assist migrant families.

Another approach that helps Latino parents negotiate culture is “funds of knowledge” (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Moll et al., 1992). In this approach, teachers are taught ethnographic methods in order to research families of their students to find “specific funds of knowledge pertaining to the social, economic, and productive activities of people in a local region, not ‘culture’ in its broader, anthropological sense” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 139). They then use their research findings to better serve parents and students through relevant lessons, parent participation in classrooms that draw on the strengths they have found, and better home school connections. The authors believe that home visits by teachers as learners help “establish a fundamentally new, more symmetrical relationship with the parents of the students” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 139).

Limitations

The research on Latino parents and U.S. schools demonstrates how varied negotiating language and culture can be. It also documents the successes and failures of groups and individuals, Latino parents and educators, who negotiate language and culture in order to support the education of Latino children. This work is very insightful and helpful to those studying Latinos in U.S. schools. However, most of the above research

originates in urban settings. With Latinos now living all over the U.S., in every kind of setting, the established focus of the literature has its limitations. For example, the social capital of Latino parents changes when there are fewer Spanish-speaking networks to which to belong. Coleman (1988) posited that an important form of social capital is “information channels.” Many Spanish-speaking parents are settling in areas of the U.S. where there are not many parents who speak their language. In communities with large, established Latino populations such as the traditional urban gateway centers, there are many opportunities to take advantage of information channels. In the new settlement areas, Spanish-speakers are less densely situated and so there are fewer information channels.

Another example is the smaller the local school district, as is the case in many of the new settlement areas, the rarer the representation of Latinos on the local school board. Hess and Meeks (2011) reported that of 900 school board members who responded to their survey, representing 418 school districts, only 3.1% were Latinos. However, in the larger districts, 6% of respondents were Latino, while only 1.4% were Latino among respondents in small districts (p. 20). Neiman, Reyes, Fraga, and Krimm (2010) showed that Latino board members impact positively the number of Latino teachers hired and that higher levels of Latino presence among district teaching staffs are associated with more favorable educational experiences by Latino students as measured by outcomes such as graduation rates, dropout rates, enrollment in advanced placement classes, suspensions, expulsions, and, more recently, standardized test scores (p. 6). While the focus of the current literature presents limitations, it also presents opportunities to gain insights into

the experiences of Latino parents in varied settings all over the U.S. As Latino parents interact with schools in new settlement environments, research is needed to explore how they are negotiating language and culture in order to support their children's education.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the theoretical framework of this study is to offer a tool for understanding the acts of negotiation Latino parents use in English-dominant U.S. schools in new settlement areas. This framework is informed by three constructs: postcolonial theory, social and cultural capital theories, and the concept of social discourses (see Figure 2). While parts of this framework may seem incongruent, different aspects of each construct help in understanding the complexity involved in the negotiations of Latino parents with their children's schools.

On a broad level, postcolonial theory aids in examining the ongoing historical issues between the U.S. and Latino peoples. These issues affect the U.S. school cultures

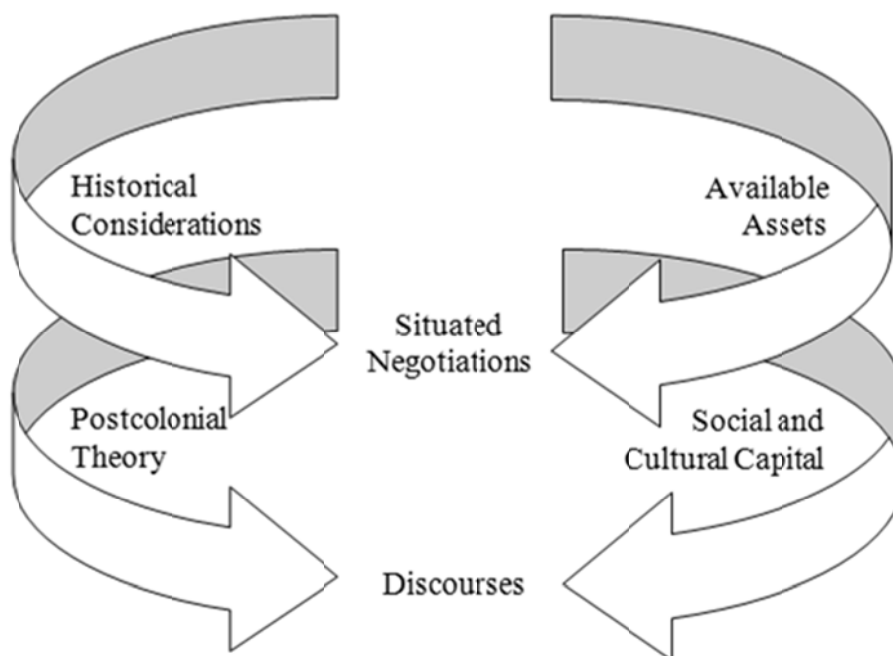


Figure 2. Representation of how the different constructs of the theoretical framework aid in understanding the complexity of negotiations.

and the social and cultural capital of Spanish-speaking parents. The theories of social and cultural capital provide a means of examining the intersection of multiple factors such as class, education, sex, immigration status, and English language ability available to Latinos for use in negotiations. The concept of social discourses provides a place to situate and consequently examine the many facets or “ways of being” (Gee, 1989) of culture that are negotiated when those unfamiliar with a discourse attempt to gain access to the discourse and its cultural products (Delpit, 1992). This includes Spanish-speaking parents’ attempts at gaining access to U.S. schools and all of the cultural products that would benefit their children.

Postcolonial Theory

As stated above, postcolonial theory aids in examining the ongoing historical issues present in this study. Postcolonial theory has its origins in the critique of literature from places in the world that had once been colonized by European countries (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988), hence the name postcolonial. Today it has evolved into a complex theory that also includes ethnographic studies of nondominant groups in countries who have a history of colonization (Young, 2003). As postcolonial theory evolved and expanded, a few authors began to apply postcolonial theory to Native American, Latino, and African American literatures and ethnographic studies that were situated in the U.S., feeling that the application was warranted based on the U.S.’s ongoing colonizing actions involving Native Americans throughout the U.S., Mexican nationals who inhabited the West when it was annexed from Mexico, and the segregation policies of the South after

the Civil War (Cheyfitz, 2002; Cook-Lynn, 1997; Darden, 2009; Gallegos, 1998; Martinez, 1993; Onwuachi-Willig, 2005). Many of the current monolingual Spanish-speaking parents in the U.S., however, are recent immigrants. Postcolonial theory also addresses the situation of third world immigrants interacting with first world states (Lunga, 2008; Mongia, 1996). In this study, I use postcolonial theory to explore the overt power and hegemony exercised by the dominant U.S. culture and to explore the power of generative relations and self-identification exercised by the subordinate Latino cultures.

Dominant Culture's Use of Overt Power

Post-colonial theory can be used to examine the many ways in which the dominant U.S. culture exercises its power over subordinate Latino cultures. Perhaps the most critical exercise of power that affects Spanish-speaking parents' negotiations with U.S. schools is federal and state immigration laws. Because Latinos from other countries did not immigrate to the U. S. in large numbers until the late 1900s, the earlier federal immigration laws affected mostly Latinos of Mexican origin. Before the Reed-Johnson Act of 1924 Mexicans could come and go across the border, live legally in the U.S. for as long as they wanted, and eventually pursue naturalized citizenship if they so chose. After this act, Mexicans who did not obtain a visa entered the U.S. as 'illegal' aliens with none of the aforementioned privileges. The new status of being 'illegal' institutionalized the power that the U.S. had over Latinos (K. R. Johnson, 1996/1997). The Immigration Act of 1965 and the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act unsuccessfully attempted to slow illegal immigration (Donato & Massey, 1993). Illegal immigration grew from an estimated 3.5 million in 1990 to an estimated 11.2 million in 2010 with Mexicans

representing 58% of the total and unauthorized Latino immigrants from other Latin American countries representing 23% (Passel & Cohn, 2011).

Spanish-speaking immigrant parents have also been affected by the power of state immigration laws. Recently, individual states have passed omnibus immigration bills which include multiple topics in one bill.

The laws typically include provisions that require law enforcement to attempt to determine the immigration status of a person involved in a lawful stop; allow state residents to sue state and local agencies for noncompliance with immigration enforcement; require E-Verify; and make it a state violation for failure to carry an alien registration document. (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2012, ¶5)

The state of Arizona led the way with SB1070 and HB 2162 in 2010. In the first half of 2011, Georgia passed HB87, Alabama HB56, Indiana SB590, South Carolina S20, and Utah HB497. Controversial provisions of these bills include such items as requiring police to check the immigrant status of anyone without proper identification and requiring public educators to find out the legal status of students in order to send those numbers to the state to determine the amount of state funds that are being spent on the education of illegal immigrants. All of these states' laws have been kept from being fully enacted through various legal challenges (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2012).

Hegemony

Postcolonial theory not only addresses the overt use of power by dominant states but also addresses the sometimes less recognized use of power in issues of hegemony (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988, 1990). The concept of hegemony that is best suited to this study is articulated by Gitlin (2003):

Gramsci's concept can be defined this way: hegemony is a ruling class's (or alliance's) domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their common sense and everyday practice; it is the systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order. (p. 253)

The ways that hegemony is expressed by a dominant culture are varied and numerous.

Two issues of note to this study are the making of a people as a less valued "other" and the "hegemonic instructional structures" (E. T. Trueba, 1999) in U.S. schools.

From the founding of the U.S., certain groups have been considered undesirable as citizens, as less valued "others." Native Americans were put on reservations; African were used as slaves and counted as property, even a free African American was not considered legally to be a person (Omi & Winant, 1994); and people from certain Asian countries were barred for many years from obtaining citizenship. Today that ideology also extends to Latinos and Mexican immigrants in particular. In the United States, not only are Latinos seen as "foreigners," but they are blamed for many of the country's problems. Many people see the undocumented immigrant Latino population as one of the causes of both the country's high unemployment rate and the largest ever government deficit, rationalizing that undocumented immigrants take jobs from legal residents and that they cost the government large amounts of money in government services (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011; E. T. Trueba, 1999). These views add up to a prevailing ideology in the U.S. that recent immigrants from Latin America are not as valued as past immigrants from Europe and that they are a threat to our national identity and economy.

Not only are people considered less valued but so are their languages. This is

shown in the hegemonic instructional practices of the U.S. schools regarding bilingual education. In *Brown Tide Rising*, Santa Ana (2002) stated that there is no debate about English being appropriate for most state and professional situations. However, to believe “that it is undemocratic for children to enhance their home language, or despotic to teach in languages other than English, is an ugly sign of the hegemony that privileges English as the one and only legitimate language of real Americans” (Santa Ana, 2002, p. 236). Garcia-Sanchez, Faulstich Orellana, and Hopkins (2011) chronicled these anti-bilingual attitudes as expressed in legislation.

Anti-bilingual education laws were passed in California in 1998, in Arizona in 2000, and in Massachusetts in 2002.... Every federal office with the word “bilingual” in its name has been renamed.... In 2001, the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) was repealed. In its place, Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107-110) was now entitled “Language Instruction for LEP and Immigrant Students.” (p. 140)

This attitude is also prevalent in the many calls for states to make English their official language by legislative action.

Generative Relations

Although dominant cultures often exhibit overt power and hegemonic practices, one of the important aspects of postcolonial theory is that it does not view subordinate groups as powerless. Young (2003) explained that postcolonial theory includes the “generative relations between different peoples and their cultures” (pp. 6-7). In other words, the interactions of different cultures, including the interactions between subordinate and dominant cultures, contribute to and are part of the ongoing cultural landscape of groups of people who occupy the same space, such as the same country.

For Latinos in the U.S. some believe that these “generative” relations are largely overlooked. The National Museum of the American Latino Commission (2011) affirmed “Latinos are an integral part of the history and culture of the U.S. The American Latino story has been evolving for more than 500 years. Nevertheless, some Americans, including American Latinos, know little of our country’s rich Latino heritage” (National Museum, p. vii). Lomeli (1993) believed “historical revisionism clearly attests to Hispanics’ central place in the making of the country they now consider theirs through their labor, creativity and ways of life” (p. 14). Spanish-speaking parents’ negotiation of language and culture with U.S. schools is part of the on-going generative relations between the two cultures.

Self-Identification

Another tenet of postcolonial theory is the concept of self-identification (Hall, 1990; Said, 1978). As different and varied groups of Latinos have become part of the United States, such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, they have been and continue to be defined by academia, politicians, the high courts, and popular media. Resisting the definitions propagated by others, Latinos in the U.S. forge their own multiple identities. One of those identities can be that of being Latino. E.T. Trueba (1999) notes that while Latinos in the U.S. come from varying countries of origin, social and economic backgrounds, and experiences, many are misled “into believing that there is no cultural cohesiveness within any given ethnic subgroup (Mexican, Cuban, or Puerto Rican) much less across groups. The fact is, there is a strong cultural affinity among Latinos within and across ethnic subgroups” (p. xxxix). While they may have identities as

Latinos, they might also have identities as Chileans, Latinas, and /or Americans. H. T.

Trueba (2002) explained:

When I speak of multiple identities I do not imply maladjustment, abnormality, lack of loyalty to a given ethnic group, or any other negative characteristic of a person's personality (that was the case in previous decades). I am hypothesizing that simultaneous multiple identities (not serial or sequential identities) require a unique skill and flexibility on the part of immigrant youth from all ethnic groups. (p. 8)

Trueba believed that the ability to move within diverse groups is an asset that will continue to grow as the diversity of the U.S. grows (2002). Suarez-Orozco (2000) concurred, stating,

In the global era, the tenets of unilateral assimilation are no longer relevant. Today there are clear and unequivocal advantages to being able to operate in multiple cultural codes—as anyone working in a major (and now not-so major) corporation knows. There are social, economic, cognitive, and aesthetic advantages to being able to move across cultural spaces.... While many view their cultural—including linguistic skills—as a threat, I see them as precious assets to be cultivated. (pp. 23-24)

Previous studies of immigrants included models of assimilation, integration, and acculturation. Today, because of the “global” nature of our society, more people are recognizing the advantages of having multiple identities instead of assimilating, integrating, or acculturating (Cuero, 2009; Park, 2007; Popkin, 1999).

Postcolonial theory is an important part of this framework because it provides a way to examine the ongoing historical issues between the U.S. and Latinos that may be involved in negotiations between Latino parents and the U.S. schools. These issues include overt power, hegemonic practices, Latino contributions to intercultural relations and U.S. society, and Latino rights of self-definition.

Social and Cultural Capital

Another important aspect of Latino parents' negotiation of language and culture with U.S. schools are the ways in which multiple factors such as class, race, religion, sex, languages spoken, immigrant status, and individuality intersect in the negotiations. Pierre Bourdieu's models of social and cultural capital address this intersection. As a foundation, I use uncomplicated forms of Bourdieu's definitions of social and cultural capital: social capital involves relational networks and the resources that they provide; cultural capital includes acquired dispositions, cultural goods, and education (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). To that foundation, I add other interpretations of these concepts that are particularly useful to this study, as long as they are compatible with Bourdieu's work and do not promote deficit thinking.

Social Capital

Bourdieu defines social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). The multiple factors listed previously, such as languages spoken and immigrant status, often determine the relational networks a Spanish-speaking parent possesses. For example, a working class Latina immigrant parent who does not speak English will most likely not have networks of relationships with U.S. middle class English-speaking White parents. As a result, it is likely that she will not gain the resources that are produced by those networks. However, that does not mean that she

does not have her own networks of relationships that produce resources. Rios-Aguilar and Deil-Amen (2012) warned about the way the concept of social capital has been used in research. They review works that criticize its use to promote a deficiency model where successful groups have social capital and groups that are not successful do not. They believe “researchers should pay close attention to students’ existing social networks and to the social structures that constitute social capital” (p. 181). Speaking to this point, E. T. Trueba (1999) elaborated on the social networks among Latinos and the positive resources that they produce (pp. 15-16).

Others of note, such as Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000), have added to the discussion of social capital. But it is Woolcock (2001) who provided an overview of the “multi-dimensional nature” of social capital’s sources that is important to this study. He wrote:

The most common and popular distinction [of social capital]...on “strong” and “weak” ties—is between “bonding” and “bridging” social capital.... The former refers to relations between family members, close friends, and neighbors, the latter to more distant friends, associates, and colleagues.... As [other researchers] have stressed, social capital also has a vertical dimension...[that] can be called “linkages.” The capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions beyond the community is a key function of linking social capital.... (pp. 11-12)

In this study, I use the distinctions of bonding, bridging, and linking capital delineated above, as a way to create a more accurate picture of the sources of Spanish-speaking parents’ social capital.

Cultural Capital

Closely aligned with social capital is cultural capital. Cultural capital includes

“long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” acquired over time from one’s family; “cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)”; and “educational qualifications” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 82). Lareau and Weininger (2003) asserted that much of the educational research that uses the concept of cultural capital does so by employing a restrictive application of Bourdieu’s concept. They explained:

First, the concept of cultural capital is assumed to denote knowledge of or competence with “highbrow” aesthetic culture (such as fine art and classical music). Second, researchers assume that the effects of cultural capital must be partitioned from those of properly educational “skills,” ability,” or “achievement.” (p. 568)

Their “alternative interpretation of cultural capital” (p. 597) is particularly applicable to examining the acts of negotiation between Spanish-speaking parents and schools. Lareau and Weininger explained:

[T]his approach stresses the importance of examining micro-interactional processes whereby individuals’ strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence come into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation. Students and parents differ, we assert, in their ability to comply with institutionalized standards of evaluation or, put differently, they have different skill levels for managing institutional encounters. (p. 597)

The cultural capital of Latino parents can be an important factor in the success of their children’s education. Valenzuela (1999) gave evidence of this in *Subtractive Schooling*. One example is of a friendship group she studied who were doing well academically. They were helped by the parents of one member of the group. The cultural capital that these parents exhibited included education, the “dispositions” learned from being school teachers in Mexico, and language ability (p. 141-142).

As with social capital, cultural capital must not be used to promote deficit thinking. Gonzales (2012) noted how many researchers and even professional

development specialist for schools have used cultural capital in this way. She explained:

Cultural deficit thinking revolves around the idea that some students lack the right kind of capital and that parents are often to blame for this gap. When institutions adopt deficit-based thinking, teaching, and practices, they validate a narrow habit of life while marginalizing those who see, work, and live differently. Cultural deficit thinking allows education practitioners to focus on individual student and family situations while ignoring major structural inequities that contribute to situations. (p. 128)

Yosso (2005), using Critical Race Theory, also challenged the “traditional interpretations of Bourdieuean cultural capital theory” when it is used to promote deficit thinking. She gives an expanded view of cultural capital with “six forms of capital that comprise community cultural wealth and most often go unacknowledged or unrecognized” (p. 70). These forms include “aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital” (p. 77).

Of particular importance to Spanish-speaking parents’ acts of negotiation, Horvat (2001) argued that Bourdieu did not believe that one’s opportunities in life were determined by one’s place in the social structure. He believed that a person’s ability to act, or their agency, was also important. Yet Bourdieu wanted to examine how inequalities in the social structure were largely maintained or reproduced. Winkle-Wagner (2010) explained Bourdieu “attempted to highlight the *interaction* of agency and structure, or the way that one might be able to use agency to influence social structures in some instances while being affected, even unconsciously, by the social structure in other instances” (p. 4). Using Bourdieu’s models of social and cultural capital provides an opportunity to examine Spanish-speaking parents’ use of agency on the one hand and the effects of the social structure of the school environment on the other. The social and

cultural capital of each Latino parent is unique; as is the way in which his or her social and cultural capital is valued by others. It is important to take these factors into consideration when examining his or her acts of negotiation with U.S. schools.

Discourses

In order to situate the acts of negotiation in a place where they can be examined, I employ the concept of social discourses. The culture of a specific people or entity can be said to contain many discourses. U.S. school discourses are part of the greater U.S. culture. In order to support their children's schooling, Latino parents must access these discourses. The concept of discourses used in this study can be traced to the work of Michael Foucault. Lie (2008) explained that Foucault's

concept of discourse denotes the interrelation between knowledge, meaning, and power, that is, a system of knowledge or meaning that is shared by various people. Discourse denotes the regularities of what is said and done, including the conditions for power and knowledge. (p. 120)

Adding to Foucault's concept of discourse, Scollon, Wong Scollon, and Jones (2012) used the term "discourse system" that they defined as

a "cultural toolkit" consisting of four main kinds of things: ideas and beliefs about the world, conventional ways of treating other people, ways of communicating using various kinds of texts, media, and "languages," and methods of learning how to use these other tools. (p. 8)

Their inclusion of languages is of course important to this study.

The sociolinguistic definition of discourses often mentioned is that offered by James Paul Gee. While Delpit and others disagreed with his conclusions about the limitations of acquiring discourses, they often agree with his definition (Delpit, 1992).

“Discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities” (Gee, 1989, pp. 6-7). The discourse learned at home Gee called the primary discourse. The primary discourse serves as the basis for the acquisition of secondary discourses. Secondary discourses are acquired through interactions “with various non-home-based social institutions...local stores and churches, schools, community groups, state and national businesses, agencies and organizations, and so forth” (p. 8). Mastery of secondary discourses offers the potential of acquiring the social rewards of that discourse such as status, education, money, a sense of belonging, etc.

Gee posited that a person’s primary discourse can greatly affect the acquisition and mastery of secondary discourses depending upon the amount of “tension or conflict” between the two discourses. When a person’s primary discourse is from an entirely different culture, the potential for conflict and tension between it and a secondary discourse is much greater. The example in this study is of course the primary discourse of the Spanish-speaking parent and the secondary discourse of the U.S. school. If Latino parents are not able to access the U.S. school discourses, they also cannot access the social rewards provided by that discourse. Additionally, the issue of power in dominant discourses can greatly affect how those who have not mastered a particular discourse are treated. It can also determine the resources that are available to them.

Gee’s treatment of primary and secondary discourses is helpful to this study, but not his beliefs about the acquisition of secondary discourses. Gee argued that people can only be *apprenticed* into secondary discourses by those who are already members of that

discourse community. Those who enter the discourse by other means have to employ compensation strategies and never gain full membership (Gee, 1989). Delpit strongly disagreed. To illustrate her position, she points to the many African Americans who were not apprenticed into secondary discourses but who became full members of those discourse communities. They were taught in schools by African American teachers in the 1950s and 1960s. Their teachers *taught* them what was necessary to gain membership in secondary discourses such as government, higher education, the legal system, and business (Delpit, 1992). If Latino parents could only fully enter the U.S. school discourses through apprenticeships, instead of by being taught or by teaching themselves, there would be few acts of negotiation to explore.

With that caveat, being able to use the constructs of primary and secondary discourses aids in the understanding of the negotiation of Latino parents with their children's schools in many ways. It allows for the examination of the dynamic and individual nature of Spanish-speaking parents' primary discourses and any conflicts or tensions that may be present between their primary discourses and the secondary discourses of their children's U.S. schools. It provides a way to explore Spanish-speaking parents' own secondary school discourses and any role they may play in their approaches to U. S. school discourses. It also provides a way to explore the U.S. school discourses as discourses of power and how that affects negotiations.

The theoretical framework of postcolonial theory, social and cultural capital theories, and the construct of social discourses provides a way to examine Spanish-speaking parents' acts of negotiation with their children's schools. These three constructs

approach the acts of negotiation from different perspectives, fleshing out considerations of power, agency, and the like, that can be complicated and multi-dimensional.

Postcolonial theory provides an important historical and international perspective that affects the individuals and institutions in this study. Social and cultural capital theories address the ways in which multiple factors such as class, race, religion, sex, languages spoken, immigrant status, and individuality intersect in the negotiations. The use of social discourses provides a way of situating the acts of negotiation between the parents and the schools. Together, these constructs provide a more thorough view of Spanish-speaking parents' acts of negotiation.

Research Questions

Given the arguments presented above, two research questions for the study have been developed:

1. In a new settlement area, how do monolingual Spanish-speaking parents negotiate language with their children's school?
2. In the same situation, how do they negotiate culture?

The following sections will address how these questions will be explored.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This study incorporates the ethnographic methods of participant interviews, naturalistic observations, and data collection (Gobo, 2008; Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010). The design for this study came about after I observed an inner-city elementary school with a Latino population of 90%, and held a formal taped interview with one of the Spanish-speaking mothers whose child attended the school (Bickmore, 2007). This experience left me curious about the growing number of Spanish-speaking parents just 25 miles away in the 90% White population schools that my children attended and where I had previously worked. In reviewing the literature for this very small research exercise, I found few studies conducted in schools whose Latino populations were less than 25% of the total. Additionally, almost all of the studies concerning Latino parental involvement were conducted in larger cities and urban areas, very unlike the small towns of my living and working environment. Wanting to learn more about the growing Latino parent population in small towns, I conducted a pilot study in a new settlement area at a school that averaged a 10% Latino population (Bickmore, 2008). I observed before and after school, and at school events where parents were likely to attend. I collected written materials such as school newsletters, notes sent home to parents, and district forms. I interviewed one Spanish-speaking couple, one Spanish-speaking mother, one Spanish-speaking father, and the principal. After analyzing the pilot study, I refined my questions and added interviews with various school personnel for the present study. All the names of people and places that follow are pseudonyms. Because the research methods did not

identify the participants nor place them at any personal risk, the Institutional Review Board at Utah State University granted this research project exempt status.

Research Setting

The site of this study is Jefferson Elementary School. It is one of two elementary schools in a small town. When the study was conducted in 2010, the town had approximately 7,600 residents, with an estimated family median income of \$55,000. Between 1980 and 2010, the Latino population increased from 4.7% of the total population to 11.7% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), an increase of nearly 250%. This type of population increase categorizes the town as a new settlement area. I purposely chose a site within this particular district because it could be considered a new settlement area. I also hoped that because it was outside of an urban area and had a Latino population under 25% of the total, it would add to the literature of these underrepresented research sites and populations.

On the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) website, the U. S. Department of Education lists the type of location of every public elementary school. The type of location listed for Jefferson Elementary is “town, distant” (NCES, n.d.). The U.S. Department of Education uses four major categorization terms for locales: city, suburban, town, and rural. Each major locale is divided into three subcategories. The “town, distant” designation refers to “Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area” (Chen, 2010, p. B-3). As for student population, in 2010, Jefferson Elementary had 613 students from kindergarten to

fifth grade, with 9% being Latinos (NCES, n.d.).

Participants

Jefferson Elementary's English Language Learners (ELL) coordinator identified 16 monolingual Spanish-speaking parents whose children attended the school. I invited these parents to participate in interviews which I would conduct in Spanish. Twelve Spanish-speaking parents agreed to participate. The personal experiences that they discussed in the interviews are the basis for this study. Further interviews were conducted with the school personnel who had the most contact with Spanish-speaking parents. Those personnel included the ELL aide who teaches the English language learners; the ELL coordinator, who is also a kindergarten teacher; the secretary; the principal; two teachers; and the facilitator at the school district's local family center.

In order to protect the participants' identities in this study, I will refer to the school staff members by their position at the school, such as "the ELL aide" or "the principal." For the Spanish-speaking parents, assigning random names to protect their identity might be confusing because there are twelve of them, and it would be appropriate to know who the married couples are. To avoid the difficult use of "the mother from couple A," or "the individual father," I assigned names using this pattern: the first couple's given and last pseudonyms begin with A, the second couple's names begin with B, and so on for the five couples. The individual father's name begins with X, and the individual mother's assigned name begins with Y. The Spanish-speaking parents are Adán and Abelena Aguilar, Basilio and Beatriz Blanco, Carlos and Celestina Castro,

Diego and Dominga Delgado, Eduardo and Emelda Estrada, Xavier, and Yesenia. I refer to the Spanish-speaking participants by their first names unless the reference is to a couple who will then be referred to by their assigned surname. All of the parents had at least one child attending Jefferson Elementary school and other children of varying ages from infants to high school graduates. Of note, 5 of the 12 parents identified themselves as Peruvian, and the others identified themselves as Mexican. Although one of the Peruvian parents said that they had a lot of family in the area, none of the participants said that they knew any of the other Spanish-speaking parents at the school. I will not give a detailed description of each participant, such as country of origin, number of children, employment position, and so forth, in order to further protect their identity.

There is a special note about Xavier. A few of his answers seemed outside the experiences reported by the other participants, such as saying that he had never been in his child's classroom. He had very recently been widowed and not wanting to intrude on his grief, I did not ask about his wife's participation in the schooling of their children. However, she could have been the one to take the lead in that aspect of their lives.

Methods

Interviews

In order to record the experiences of Spanish-speaking parents in their own words, I conducted two interviews with each of the five couples and the two individuals (Gobo, 2008; O'Reilly, 2009). The couples were interviewed together. Each of the interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. I audiotaped the first interview with each couple

or individual and the interviews were subsequently transcribed in Spanish and English. At the second interview, participants member-checked the transcript of their first interview for correctness and clarity (Glesne, 2006). I gave the participants the option of having the interviews conducted at the school, in their homes, or in a private room at the local library. All of the participants chose to have the interviews conducted in their homes. While the interview questions and subsequent follow-up conversations produced information that covered many topics, the questions were designed to elicit information pertaining to Spanish-speaking parents' negotiation of language and their negotiation of culture. Some questions elicited information about both language and culture. However, questions pertaining to language fell into roughly four categories and those pertaining to culture fell into six categories as listed below in Table 1.

I also conducted interviews with school personnel following the same protocol. I audiotaped their first interviews and then the interviews were transcribed. At the second interview participants member-checked the transcript of their first interview. I conducted all staff interviews at the school. As the basis for this study is the Spanish-speaking parents' personal experiences, the interview questions for school personnel were not as extensive. Again, the questions were designed to elicit information about Spanish-speaking parents' negotiation of language and culture (see Table 2).

Observations

I conducted several observations at the school over a five month period in order to record how Spanish-speaking parents interacted with the school on a day-to-day basis (O'Reilly, 2009; Scott-Jones & Watt, 2010). I usually conducted these observations at the

Table 1

Questions for Parents Pertaining to Language and Culture

Category	Examples
Language negotiations	
School information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you get your information about the school, the rules, and the activities?
Interactions with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whom do you typically talk with when you are at the school?
Need for interpreter/translator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there a situation when you couldn't communicate with someone at the school? What do you do if you want to talk with someone at the school who doesn't speak Spanish?
Heritage language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How fluid is your child in his/her ability to speak, read and write in Spanish? Are you satisfied with their abilities? What do you do to help your child with this?
Cultural negotiations	
Presence at the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you typically go to the school? What events do you typically attend at the school?
Interactions with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whom do you typically talk with at the school?
Outsider/insider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel when you are in your child's classroom? Do you feel that you are treated the same as other parents? Do you feel that you have as much influence as other parents?
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the schools like that you attended? In the schools that you attended or that your children attended before coming to the U.S., how did parents participate in the education of their children?
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your child see him or herself as a Latino/Mexicano? What is your experience with your child using this label? What kinds of things do you do to support development of a Latino/Mexican identity?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you expect schools to run in the U.S.? Have they met your expectations? What are the most important things that you want your child to learn at school?

Table 2

Questions for School Personnel Pertaining to Language and Culture

Category	Examples
Language negotiations	
School information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources are specifically available for Spanish-speaking parents?
Interactions with Spanish-speaking parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you speak Spanish? When do you have casual contact with Spanish-speaking parents?
Need for interpreter/translator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you want to communicate more than casually with a Spanish-speaking parent, what do you do? Who interprets for you?
Heritage language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know of any efforts to help the Spanish-speaking students retain their heritage language?
Cultural negotiations	
Presence at the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you have casual contact with Spanish-speaking parents?
Interactions with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concerns have Spanish-speaking parents shared with you?
Outsider/insider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about the Spanish-speaking parents that you see at the school? How do you like working with this population? Can you make any recommendations that would make your position more effective for them?
Background	
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know of any efforts that help the Latino culture to be viewed positively at your school?
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources are available for helping Latino students achieve at the same rate as their peers?

beginning or end of a school day when parents would be picking up and dropping off their children. During these observations I was specifically looking for interactions between Spanish-speaking parents and staff members or other parents. I scheduled other observations during this same time period to coincide with school events that parents

often attend. These events included parent-teacher conferences, the school play, Community Council meeting, Kindergarten getting to know you, class presentations, Family Literacy Night, Kindergarten Round-up, graduation, a boundary change information meeting, morning with mom, and the Science Fair. During these observations I was not only looking for interactions between Spanish-speaking parents and staff members or other parents, but was additionally interested in attendance levels and types of involvement.

Additional Data Collection

I also collected written materials that are routinely sent home to parents (O'Reilly, 2009). These included such materials as registration forms, applications for school insurance and reduced or free lunches, monthly school newsletters, and various announcements. The purpose of collecting these forms was to catalogue the number and type that were translated into Spanish.

Findings

The interviews, observations, and collected materials provided triangulation and I used them as examples to answer the two research questions: How do Spanish-speaking parents negotiate language? and, How do Spanish-speaking parents negotiate culture? In other words, the focus of the Findings section is on the mechanics, the 'how,' of the negotiations. I organized the findings according to the definitions of negotiating language and negotiating culture. Negotiating language focused on how Spanish-speaking parents found ways to communicate through oral and written language, and on the preservation

of their children's heritage language. Negotiating culture focused on how Spanish-speaking parents found efficacious points of contact in order to observe, participate, and effect change within the school culture.

Analysis

I then analyzed the interview transcripts, observations, and collected materials to identify recurring themes. Following a grounded approach, I developed the themes or categories in an iterative process based on an ongoing analysis of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). I analyzed the themes that emerged from the data using the theoretical framework of postcolonial theory, social and cultural capital theories, and the concept of social discourses. Specifically, this framework helped in understanding how historical considerations affected negotiations between a first world institution and Spanish-speaking parents; how the social and cultural capital of individual Latino parents affected the negotiations; and how Latino parents approached the unfamiliar school discourses and what the school did or failed to do to aid the parents. The analyses were compared to current literature to determine whether the experiences of the participants confirm previous research and or provide new insights and reflect new trends.

Important Considerations

It would be like ignoring the elephant in the living room to overlook the political climate in which I conducted this research. Today, the politics of immigration plays out in many places worldwide. While immigrant workers are fleeing Northern Africa's

political upheaval and looking for other host countries, potential host countries are wary of allowing a surge of immigrants to cross their borders (Donadio, 2011). At the same time, many of these countries are seeking skilled and unskilled immigrants to aid in their countries' economic development (European Commission, 2011). Other immigrants are already an integral part of host countries' economies by providing skilled labor in such areas as healthcare and unskilled labor in factories, agriculture, and oil fields (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2008). The difficulties between immigrants and host countries have been highlighted over the last decade by immigrant riots, protests, and stories of exploitation in such places as France, Greece, and Africa.

In the U.S., immigration is a topic of great political interest with political candidates calling for national reforms and the Supreme Court upholding portions of contested state laws (Liptak, 2012). The interest by state legislatures has exponentially increased over the last few years. In 2005, state legislatures introduced 300 bills and resolutions on immigration and refugees that resulted in the enactment of 39 laws. Six years later in 2011, state legislatures introduced 1,607 bills and resolutions that resulted in the enactment of 306 laws and resolutions (NCSL, n. d.). Some conservative movements within the U.S. political system are also affecting how immigrants, especially the largest group of undocumented immigrants, Latin Americans, are perceived. Many people see them as one of the causes of the high employment rate and the large government deficit (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011). Those perceptions, coupled with such news stories as semi-trucks loaded with a combination of undocumented immigrants from India, China, and Central America that have been

stopped in Mexico on their way to the U. S. border (De La Cruz, 2011), create an unfavorable political climate for immigrants. Adding to the difficulties of achieving effective political action to resolve immigrant issues are politicians who walk tightropes among appearing conservative, finding realistic solutions, and courting the Latino vote (Brownstein, 2011).

In the state of Utah, the site of this research, legislators passed a series of bills on immigration that the governor signed into law in the spring of 2011. These bills are based on a compact that sets forth five guiding principles of federal solutions, law enforcement, families, economy, and a free society (The Utah Compact, 2011). While the state's lawmakers may have considered their legislation unique, the only significant difference from other state's legislation is the establishment of a temporary guest worker program (NCSL, 2010). The bills still include law enforcement officers checking for immigration status, employers verifying employment status, and government employees checking applicants' immigration status when they apply for public services. As a result, the laws these bills would establish are being challenged in the courts (NCSL, 2010).

The tenuous and fearful environment that surrounds Latino immigrants affected this study in various ways. In the district where I conducted the research, the elementary school with the largest Latino population of 17.3% and then the school with the third largest population of 10.2% (NCSL, 2010) would not allow me to contact their Latino parents. (The elementary school with the second largest Latino population was not considered because that is where I had previously conducted a pilot study.) Because of the difficult political climate, the schools' personnel had worked hard to create a safe

environment for Latino parents and felt that any outside presence might disrupt the trust that they had developed and cause these parents to shy away from school involvement. Fortunately, the school with the fourth largest Latino population of 9% consented to the study.

The political climate also affected the design of the study. I made design choices based on diminishing the fears that Latino parents might have in agreeing to personal interviews. Along with the regular procedures for protecting participant identity, I designed the study in such a way that only a “Letter of Information” instead of a “Letter of Consent” was required. This freed the participants from having to sign any documents. Interviews were audio taped instead of videotaped, with participants choosing where the interviews took place.

Another related consideration was the interview questions. Asking Latino parent participants to reveal their documentation status would create several difficult research procedures, not to mention the high probability of participants withdrawing from the study, so this question was not asked. Yet this status assuredly is a factor in Latinos’ negotiation of language and culture with their children’s school. Documentation status very probably affected my study sample as well. The two couples who declined to be interviewed only gave two reasons: lack of time and schedule conflicts. It is highly unlikely that a parent would have openly reported that they did not want to be interviewed because of the fear of calling attention to their documentation status.

The political climate also affects how schools do business and consequently the observations at the school and the interviews conducted with school personnel. The

requirements of No Child Left Behind federal legislation to disaggregate data and assure progress of all student populations affects the choices schools make. For example, at the school where the research was conducted, the principal used some 'migrant' money to add an extra hour each day for ESL instruction which would help all English Language Learners (ELL), not just migrant students who may or may not be ELLs. State legislation also has its impact. During parent-teacher conferences, teachers discussed among themselves the 2010 Senate Bill 150, Reading Requirements for Student Advancement, that required teachers to notify a parent if their child was not reading at grade level and to tell them what measures were in place to help their child advance to the required level. One teacher was worried about her non-English-speaking parents being able to understand that, although their student was not reading at grade level, he was progressing well for an English Language Learner.

The current political climate and its effects on this study needs to be acknowledged. However, this acknowledgement is not meant to give the impression that the political climate somehow undermines the findings. To the contrary, the political situation is just one of the many aspects that make up the negotiations of language and culture enacted by Spanish-speaking parents with their children's school. Individual choices and personalities, interpersonal interactions, as well as institutional choices, leadership, resources, support, and a myriad of other variables are also important considerations. This study highlights many of these variables.

It is also important to acknowledge that I am not a Latina and am looking through the lenses of my life experiences and background as a White, working class female.

While I am not a native Spanish speaker, I have a bachelor's degree in Spanish and lived in Guatemala for over a year. I taught Spanish at the secondary school level for over 11 years. My interest in Spanish-speaking parents began when three monolingual Spanish-speaking students were put in my English class. Being the parent of a child in the same school, I was struck by the added challenge it must have been for the parents who did not speak English and had recently immigrated from another culture.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The negotiation of language for the Spanish-speaking parents in this study was found to be critical in supporting their children's schooling. As defined earlier, negotiating language is finding successful ways to communicate orally and in writing as Spanish-speaking parents with the English language school system and also includes being able to preserve their children's heritage language. Using this definition, the three categories of oral communication, written communication, and preservation and loss of heritage language, will guide this discussion. As all of the parents were chosen to participate in this study because of being identified as monolingual Spanish-speakers, many had similar experiences in negotiating language.

Oral Communication

School Interpretive Resources

At all of the elementary schools in this district, there was at least a part-time staff member who spoke Spanish. Sometimes it was a secretary, an ELL aide, a teacher, or the principal. At Jefferson Elementary it was a kindergarten teacher who was also the ELL coordinator. The interpretive resources at the school site that could have been used to negotiate language were the Spanish-speaking kindergarten teacher who had a full teaching schedule, a part-time three month administrative intern, and a PTA president who could be called at home to see if she were available to translate. However, none of the parents mentioned using the intern or the PTA president as an interpreter.

Whenever at the school, the Spanish-speaking parents were able to communicate directly with the Spanish-speaking kindergarten teacher. They could ask her general school information questions, as well as general educational questions. Because she did not teach any of their children, they could not ask her specific questions about what was happening in their child's classroom or education. Consequently, most of their communications with her occurred as she interpreted for them with other staff members.

As the ELL coordinator, she considered interpreting for the Spanish-speaking parents as part of her duties. Even though she had a full-time classroom aide, interpreting was complicated because she was a full time teacher who had a class to take care of during the day and regular classroom duties associated with that class before and after school. For Yesenia, who had a full-time job, sometimes that meant waiting.

A veces me tiene que esperar hasta que ellos busquen a la persona que me tiene que ayudar porque la profesora está en sus clases. Está ocupada y me dicen si puedo esperar. Entonces como yo voy para tratar de averiguar algo o de solucionar algo entonces yo espero ahí hasta que me atiendan o me ayuden....

(Sometimes I have to wait until they can find someone who can translate because the teacher is in the classroom. She is busy, so they ask me if I can wait. So I just have to wait until they can help me with my problems or concerns or try to get some information....)

The school interpretive resources were not easy to use during the day because of the interpreter's other school responsibilities. Despite these difficulties, four of the five couples and Yesenia stated that they usually used the kindergarten teacher as an interpreter.

Parent Interpretive Resources

In contrast to Yesenia and the other couples, Adán and Abelena said that they

very rarely spoke with anyone at the school, including their child's teacher, and so they did not use the school designated interpreter very often. Instead, they used their six year old son to interpret when needed. When asked whom they spoke with when at the school Adán chuckled and said, "*Con mi hijo.*" ("With my boy.") Abelena agreed, "*Si porque yo no hablo inglés. Yo nada mas con el niño, ni con la maestra hablo.*" ("Yes, because I don't speak English. Just with my boy because I don't even talk to the teacher.") Adán added, "*Muy poquito con la maestro.*" ("Very little with the teacher.") Other participants actually increased their ability to negotiate oral language by increasing their pool of interpreters. They added children or relatives to the pool in combination with the kindergarten teacher. Beatriz said, "*A veces llevamos quien nos ayude. Como ahora tengo un hijo grande, que ya se graduó, ya tiene dos años que se graduó. A veces cualquier problema él va con nosotros a ayudarnos o una cuñada.*" ("Sometimes we bring someone who can help us. Like now we take our oldest son because he graduated already, like two years ago. So he goes with us, or my sister-in-law.") Yesenia also mentioned that at times her daughter had served as an interpreter for her. However, the Castros and the Estradas mentioned no other oral interpreters except the bilingual school teacher, which gave them only one option for negotiating oral language through an interpreter.

The other way that parents negotiated language was through using their limited English. Of the participants who said that they had some use of the English language, they indicated that they understood English much better than they spoke it. For example, when there was no other alternative, the Delgados used what English they could.

Dominga, determined to negotiate language, said that she was not very comfortable speaking English but she sometimes had to do it. On the other hand, Xavier did not mention feeling uncomfortable using English. He said, “*Pues yo hablo un poquito inglés, así no necesito que me interprete nadie. Yo entiendo la mayoría.*” (“Well, I just speak a little bit of English and I don’t need an interpreter because I understand almost everything.”) Relying on his limited English could have affected Xavier’s ability to ask questions or fully express his needs, but he preferred it over the use of interpreters.

Challenges in Negotiating Oral Language

For some of the participants, sometimes the negotiation of oral language failed. Abelena said that she could not communicate over the phone with anyone from the school who was speaking English. She also said, “*Nunca nos han puesto una para traducir, ahí nunca [en la escuela], a nosotros no.*” (“They never had anyone there [at the school] to translate, at least not for us.”) Additionally, she related what it was like for her to try and communicate with her son’s teacher. She commented, “*Para mi [es] incómodo porque no puedo expresarle lo que siento acerca de mi hijo, y no puedo entenderle lo que me quiere decir de mi hijo.*” (“For me, it is uncomfortable because I can’t express my feelings about my son and I can’t understand what she is saying about my son either.”) The Castros had a situation when communication completely failed. Celestina explained what they had to do: “*Solamente hacer otra cita para otro día que haya una persona [para interpretar].*” (“We just made another appointment for a different day when we knew they would have someone [to interpret].”) Yesenia broadened the extent of this difficulty when she reported that her husband had sometimes

gone to the middle and high schools to discuss a problem but had to return home again because there was no one to interpret for him. She said, *“Es un poco difícil o la persona que está ahí encargada de ayudar a los hispanos a veces a esa hora no está. A veces mi esposo se regresa a la casa porque no encuentra a la persona. Generalmente eso pasa en la high school o en la middle school.”* (“It is difficult sometimes because you don’t always get the help you wanted. Sometimes my husband returned home because there was nobody to translate. But usually it happens at the high school and middle school.”) Yesenia’s comments show that this school was not the only one in the district where Spanish-speaking parents had trouble communicating.

General meetings like Back to School Night were also very challenging for Spanish-speaking parents. Jefferson Elementary did not provide a general interpreter for those meetings. This was discouraging to some of the participants. Eduardo reported, *“Yo entiendo a veces, pero cuando me hablan muy rápido tampoco no entiendo. Porque hay personas que hablan demasiado, le voy traduciendo a ella. Mientras le estoy diciendo una cosa ya se me paso lo que está diciendo.”* (“Sometimes I can understand, but when they speak too fast, I cannot. Because there are people who speak a lot, I have to translate for my wife and in the meantime I lose track of what is being said.”) Yesenia also commented on the difficulty of general meetings without an interpreter. *“En las mismas reuniones han hablado sobre las reglas y todo eso pero yo no he podido estar al tanto porque toda la reunión lo llevan en inglés. Entonces hay mucha dificultad he tenido en eso.”* (“At the meetings they talk about the rules, but I can’t understand English and so I am unable to follow the instructions. It’s been difficult for me.”)

Parents' negotiation of oral language included the school interpreter, their own interpreters, and their use of limited English. Sometimes there was not an interpreter available, and an interpreter was not provided at general meetings. Consequently, parents were not always successful at negotiating oral language.

Written Communication

Spanish Translations Preferred

Parents were not always successful at negotiating written communications, either. However, this seemed to be less of a problem for Spanish-speaking parents, even though most written communication from the school was in English. Having materials translated into Spanish was the preferred form of negotiating written communication for the parents. In order to negotiate written language in this preferred way, the Castros and Yesenia requested information from the school in Spanish. However, the Castros, Estradas, and Yesenia said that they had some written information in Spanish at the beginning of the year, but then it stopped. Yesenia said, "*Yo hable ahí en la escuela para que si me pudieran ayudarme en mandarme las reglas y todo eso de la escuela en español. Un tiempo me estaban haciendo así que me traducían todos los papeles pero después ya no.*" ("I spoke with someone at the school to see if I could get all the information or the rules in Spanish. They did this for a little while, but not anymore.") Eduardo's comment was very similar, "Había un tiempo que nos mandaban en español pero ahorita ya casi no." ("There was a time when we were getting them in Spanish, but not anymore.") The samples of written materials collected from the school could explain

this pattern. The translated materials included the registration card, the medical history form, the language survey, the Accident and Health Insurance application, and the Family Literacy Center brochure. All of these were distributed at the first of the year, and all came from the district office.

There were also two flyers that were translated into Spanish and that were distributed in the spring. They announced Family Literacy Night and Family Math Night. The only other school-produced material that was translated into Spanish was the notification of the appointed time to meet with the teacher for parent-teacher conference, held three times a year. None of the parents reported receiving any other translated information from a teacher or an administrator.

Of note, three commercial enterprises had translated material at the school. One was a bank that had a brochure in Spanish that listed its services. Another was the company who took the school pictures. Their money envelope was a combination of English and Spanish. The third was the company who ran the book fair. It had a poster on one of the front doors of the school. It was in both Spanish and English.

Children as Translators

Because translated material was scarce, the most practiced form of negotiating written language was having children translate. Without exception, all parents reported having older children translate written material. This was a successful practice for some parents. Beatriz stated, "*Mis hijos nos traducen. Tenemos hijos grandes...lo que no podemos ellos nos ayudan.*" ("My kids translate. We have kids that are old enough...so when we can't help ourselves, they help us.") Eduardo also said that his oldest daughter

translates because, “*lee...bien el inglés*” (“she reads...English very well.”) The Blancos and Estradas seemed comfortable with this form of negotiating written material. Other parents had less success in negotiating written language in this way. When asked who translated for them, Abelena replied, “*Mis hijos pero cuando quieren. Cuando no, no.*” (“My kids, but only when they want to. When they don’t want to, they don’t.”) Her husband, Adán, added, “*Se van.*” (“They take off.”) Yesenia reported a similar problem with her older children. She said that her children translated “*Un poco, pero casi los mayores no. Pero la niña si un poco que le digo que los lea y que me diga que es lo que dicen. Entonces con lo poco que ella me puede ayudar más o menos pero no totalmente, no sé muy bien.*” (“A little bit, but the oldest don’t care. My girl helps me a little because I ask her to read it for me. So she does more or less, but not totally, so I can’t understand.”) Unlike the Blancos and the Estradas, the Aguilar’s and Yesenia’s negotiation of written language left them with fewer opportunities to support their children’s education because of the school information that they could not understand.

The Delgados, Castros, and Xavier reported using their English skills to negotiate written language. The Delgados did not report on how successful this was for them. However, Carlos and Xavier mentioned that using their English skills was not enough. Carlos reported, “*Algunas cosas entendemos y otras procuramos que nuestro hijo mayor nos ayude a comprenderlas.*” (“Some things we understand and for others we just ask our eldest son to help us.”) Xavier also mentioned the combination of using his English reading skills and having an older daughter help. He said, “*Yo leo ingles también, mi hija mayor, ella nos ayuda también. Pero yo también puedo leer un poquito. Entiendo más o*

menos.” (“I read English too and my oldest daughter helps us also. But I can read a little. I understand more or less.”) For the parents, having some English reading skills helped, but the majority of the translating was done by the older children in the family.

Interestingly, no one mentioned calling or visiting the school for clarification or going to the Family Support Center that listed translating school information as one of its functions. Nor did they mention using other relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances to translate written material. Spanish-speaking parents’ negotiation of written language included the Spanish translations provided by the school, translation provided by older children, and some parents’ use of their limited English. Sometimes the negotiation of written language failed. This happened when the school quit providing translated materials. It also happened when children were uncooperative, or unskilled at translating. One of the reasons for children being unable to translate successfully could be the stalled progress or loss of their abilities to speak in their heritage language.

Preservation and Loss of Heritage Language

Parent’s Reasons for the Preservation of Their Children’s Heritage Language

All of the parents indicated that they wanted their children to maintain or improve their Spanish language. The reasons they gave were varied. Beatriz’s statement was very general, noting that “*mientras más idiomas hablan, mejor es para ellos*” (“the more languages you speak, the better.”) Other parents were more specific, with cultural reasons being the most popular. It is only natural for parents to want to pass their cultural heritage along to their children (Fillmore, 2000). Their children’s ability to communicate

through language with their parents and others who have the same cultural heritage is part of that process. When the Delgados were asked if they would like the schools to help their children maintain their heritage language, Diego said, *“Pues sí, que no dejen perder sus raíces, ¿Verdad?”* (“Hopefully, so they won’t lose their culture, right?”) He equated the ability to speak a heritage language as closely aligned with the ability to maintain culture. Eduardo phrased the same sentiment differently, he said, *“Yo pienso que ellos tienen que también saber de dónde vienen.”* (“I think they should also know where they come from.”) He also saw language as an important part of cultural heritage. Adán saw a link between the ability to speak Spanish and the ability to participate in two cultures. Referring to his son, Adán said, *“Porque [si] puede hablar [el español], puede seguir su cultura y la cultura de aquí.”* (“Because if he can speak [Spanish], he can continue his culture and the American culture.”) Adán could see his son as being bicultural without having to give up his heritage culture in order to participate in the American culture.

Xavier had yet another reason. His reason centered on opportunities, especially those of his oldest daughter who was also learning French. He said:

Si ellos hablan bien el español perfecto, tendrían más oportunidades de trabajo... Yo le digo a la más grande si tú hablas y escribes bien, vas a tener más oportunidades en tu vida así porque te imaginas hablar español, inglés y francés.

(If they can speak Spanish perfectly they should have more job opportunities...I tell my oldest daughter that if she speaks Spanish and she knows how to write it too, she will have more opportunities in her life because imagine being able to speak Spanish, English, and French.)

Celestina’s reason for her child maintaining Spanish centered on opportunities of a different nature, scholastic opportunities. She could see a connection with maintaining Spanish and being able to progress scholastically because of an experience she had with

her oldest son at another school in the area. She related, “*Porque la maestra que tuvo mi niño el mayor, le ayudaba con el español y con el inglés...eso le ayudado bastante.*”

(“Because the teacher who taught my oldest was teaching him some Spanish and English at the same time...that helped him tremendously.”)

All of the participants wanted their children to maintain their heritage language, but not all of them thought that the school should help. In answering if he would like the school to help his child maintain his heritage language, Diego said, “*Ellos no tienen por qué preocuparse en otro, aparte no nada más somos de españoles, somos chinos, camboyanos, la escuela, el sistema no va a poder con todos.*” (“They shouldn’t be worrying about it because you will not only have Spanish, but Chinese, Cambodian, and the system or the school won’t be able to help everyone.”) Diego realized how challenging providing heritage language support can be depending upon the number of heritage languages spoken at the school.

Patterns of Preservation and Loss of Heritage Language

Even though all of the parents wanted their children to maintain their heritage language, and even though all of them spoke Spanish to their children, not all of their children had retained their heritage language. The families who reported that their children had maintained their heritage language were the Aguilars, Blancos, Estradas, and Yesenia. The Aguilars, Blancos, and Estradas each had a child in kindergarten or first grade. Each couple commented that their child spoke Spanish well. Abelena said, “*Sabe hablarlo bien*” (“He knows how to speak [Spanish] well.”) Of his son, Eduardo said,

“Habla bien el español.” (“He speaks Spanish well.”) Being so young, they did not expect them to read or write in Spanish. They also mentioned older children being able to translate from English to Spanish which would imply at least some ability to speak Spanish. Yesenia had children in elementary school through college. She said that all of her children *“hablan bien el español”* (“speak Spanish well”) and that the oldest, who came to the U.S. when he was eleven, could also read and write in Spanish.

The other three families exhibited a different pattern. The oldest child of the Castros, Delgados, and Xavier spoke Spanish well and the Castros and Xavier said that their oldest child could also read and write Spanish. It is not known whether these older children were born in the U.S. or at what age they came to the U.S. If they spent a substantial amount of time in a Spanish-speaking country, perhaps attending school there, that would of course contribute to their ability to maintain their Spanish language skills.

The Delgados and Xavier reported that their middle children did not do as well as their older sibling, and that their youngest child spoke little Spanish. Diego said, *“Así pasa. El grande habla bien español, el mediano ya no muy bien, y este ya no.”* (“It’s the way it is. The oldest speaks well in Spanish, the one in the middle not so well, and the youngest not at all.”) The Delgados seemed worried about their youngest son’s loss of heritage language. Dominga said, *“Y él ya era para que dijera algo y no dice nada.”* (“It’s time for him to say something by now, but he doesn’t.”) Diego added, *“Habla español dos o tres palabras y vuelve otra vez a inglés.”* (“He speaks maybe two or three words in Spanish and then he starts speaking in English again.”) The Castros did not mention any middle children but reported that their youngest child *“lo habla [el español]*

pero no fluidamente, pero si se comunica.” (“cannot speak [Spanish] fluently, but he can communicate.”) Xavier was much less concerned about his younger children’s ability to maintain their heritage language. He thought that maybe his two middle children would pick up more Spanish later “*cuando ya ellos les interese mas.*” (“if they show more interest.”) He said that his youngest son “*ya quiere hablar poquito, así lee poquito.*” (“wants to talk a little and he reads a little.”) This pattern, of heritage language skills being retained best by older siblings with subsequent siblings’ skills decreasing until they are lost in the youngest children, is noteworthy.

Loss of Familial Communication

The loss of heritage language that affected familial communication was also apparent during one of my school observations on a night of parent-teacher conferences. I was observing a family in the hall, waiting for their turn to meet with their child’s third grade teacher. The son and his father were discussing the work that was displayed outside his classroom. Their conversation was a mixture of Spanish and English. When the teacher came out to invite the family into the classroom, she was informed that the kindergarten teacher and administrative intern who spoke Spanish were not able to stay for the conference. Seeing me a short distance down the hall, she asked if I would interpret during the meeting. If I had not been there, the parents would have had no interpreter. I was happy to help.

During the conference, I could not remember the Spanish word for “tease.” The teacher then asked the student to explain to his parents in Spanish the fun way that he would tease her about the difficulty of the assignments, which he could actually complete

fairly easily. The student said a few words in Spanish and then could not go on. The teacher thought that he was embarrassed to be speaking Spanish, but after what I had observed in the hall, the switching back and forth between Spanish and English with his Spanish-speaking father, I asked him in English if speaking Spanish was difficult for him. He told me that it was. His mother was sitting next to me. Although she did not understand our conversation in English, she knew that he could not finish what he had started to say in Spanish. She told me how distressed she was because she could not communicate with him anymore; he had lost his ability to speak and understand Spanish. She said that whenever she spoke to him, he would just look at her and say that he did not understand. This experience illustrated the great loss of familial communication that happens when children, in this instance a boy of eight or nine, lose their ability to speak the language of their monolingual parents.

The study participants offered many reasons for wanting their children to maintain their heritage language. Their reasons were cultural, economic, and academic. Some of them also reported on a pattern of language loss where the oldest children maintained the language, the middle children were not as fluent, and the youngest children struggled in heritage language use. Additionally, the experience that I had at a parent-teacher conference illustrated what can happen to familial communication when a child loses the ability to communicate in his or her heritage language.

Negotiating Culture

Just as negotiating language was critical for Spanish-speaking parents to be able

to support their children's education, so was negotiating culture. Negotiating culture was described earlier as finding efficacious points of contact within the U.S. school culture from which to observe, participate, and effect change. Points of contact within the U.S. school culture include physical spaces and objects such as the school grounds and papers sent home from the school. Points of contact also include other ways in which parents come in contact with the school culture that are not physical in nature, such as the affect the school has on their children's feelings of safety or self-worth. Learning is also an important part of negotiating culture, and accompanies observing, participating, and effecting change. However, to differentiate learning from these other activities and to establish reliable criteria that would indicate learning has occurred is beyond the scope of this study.

Using this definition of negotiating culture, the following discussion is divided into the categories of observing, participating, and effecting change. The points of contact for each of these activities vary with the activity. These activities also overlap: A person can observe while he or she participates or effects change. At the same time, these activities have no linear order. In fact, the process of negotiating culture can be characterized as an iterative process. A person could participate in conversations with others, then observe, and then go back to participating. Despite the iterative nature and the overlapping characteristics of cultural negotiation, I have tried to concentrate on each activity, but exclusive delineation is impossible.

Given that the parents selected for this study were chosen on the basis of their monolingual Spanish-speaking abilities, they faced somewhat similar challenges in

negotiating language. That was not the case in negotiating culture. While groups of people share some characteristics, the lived culture of every family, couple, and individual within a group can vary extensively. Spanish-speaking parents in this study can be broadly described as belonging to a Latino cultural group. However, parents hailed from different national contexts (Perú, México), and this was one differing characteristic, among many, that produced variation across participants. Because of these variations, it is only natural that in negotiating culture individual participants and couples faced different challenges.

Observing

Opportunities to Observe at the School

Observing the U.S. school culture as represented by Jefferson Elementary and the other schools that their older children attended was an important form of negotiating culture for the participants in this study. The most obvious point of contact from which the parents observed the school culture was at the school building and grounds. Watching what took place, how people interacted, who was present, how people were dressed, even observing the colors on the walls, were details that the parents observed which related to school culture. Being present at the school to observe these and other details varied among the study participants. Most parents said that they typically went to the school when there were parent-teacher conferences or events where their children were involved. For example, Adán said that he went to the most important meetings or *“A veces que cuando el niño o los niños lo invitan a comida, o también cuando el niño la vez pasada*

cuando estuvo 'graduating,' también estuvimos con él." "(Sometimes when the kids have a special meal or like last time when my son was graduating, we were there with him.)" Carlos said they went "*Cuando hay un tiempo durante el mes que toman lonches los padres con los niños.*" "(When there is a time during the month when parents eat lunch with the children.)" Dominga mentioned having attended "*Concursos de canto de los niños, [con] bailes, y poesías.*" "(Singing competition for kids [with] dances and poems.)" Eduardo said they were present "*Cuando hacen teatro a veces. Pero mayormente vamos cuando están las juntas para informarnos sobre el avance de los niños. Cuando es de las notas si hacemos lo posible de ir para saber cómo están yendo ellos.*" "(When they do drama sometimes. But we attend mostly when they have meetings to inform us about the kids. When it is about their grades, we do our best to be there and find out how they are doing.)" The Aguilars, Castros, Delgados, Estradas, and Yesenia said that both parents attend school events like birthday lunches and class or school presentations.

For the Blancos, their presence at the school was very limited. They said that they were both very busy with work and consequently did not make it to many school activities. Basilio explained, "*Los trabajos no nos dejan ir. Como es de Lunes a Viernes los trabajos, ya cuando se ocupa ir es porque es necesario ir. Si no, no nos vamos casi muy poco por esa razón, por el trabajo.*" ("Our work schedules don't allow us to go. We work Monday through Friday so we only go when we have to. If not, we don't go at all because of work.") Like the Blancos, Xavier said that he did not attend many school events. However, he did take his kids to school every day and said that the office staff

knew him well.

Spanish-speaking Parents' Observations

All of the participants, even those whose contact with the school was limited, related what they had observed at the school and through other points of contact. Yesenia had a very positive comment about what she had observed. As always, she was articulate:

Lo que me gusta o yo admiro y me gusta mucho de que ellos tienen todo al alcance. Allí como en nuestro país no tenemos una computadora, ellos no conocen una computadora por allá, no tienen esa facilidad como acá cada niño tiene una computadora y desde Kinder ya les están enseñando a manejar una computadora, tienen una biblioteca, tienen muchos libros, en un Kinder por ejemplo tienen todas las comodidades, juegos que le van a ayudar a desarrollar su creatividad, tienen de todo, por eso les digo ustedes acá tienen de todo aprovechen pues todo lo que tienen.

(What I like and admire is that they have everything there to give to our kids. In my country we don't have computers; they don't know what a computer is. Here, each kid has access to a computer and from kindergarten they show them how to use it. They have a library with a lot of books. In kindergarten the kids have games that help them to develop their creativity. They have everything. That's why I always tell my kids, please use what you have and don't use it in vain; take advantage as much as you can of what they are offering you.)

Yesenia observed the wealth of resources available to her children in the U.S. schools and encouraged her children to take full advantage of those resources.

Yesenia not only observed the good things that the U.S. school culture had to offer, but she also observed some of the negative elements as well. Along with the Delgados and the Estradas, Yesenia observed the lack of discipline and behavioral oversight at the schools. Each of these families gave examples of when their children were bullied and mistreated by other students, with one incident even involving a teacher. Celestina also lamented what she perceived as a lack of control at the middle school her

son attended. She shared the following:

Como tenía dos años en la Middle School, lo que no me gusta es que no hay mucho control con los muchachos. Entran y salen de las clases y si entran bien y si no también. Ya lo toman [la escuela] como una opción para ellos, ya no es un deber que ellos tienen que hacer. Parece que no hay mucho control con esto, ya eso es lo que a mí no me ha gustado.

(When he was in his second year of middle school, I observed that there was no control over the kids. They were able to come in and leave their classes anytime or just simply skip classes. They are taking it [school] like an option. They don't see it as an obligation or duty. I think there is not much control and I don't like it.)

Celestina's comments indicate that she not only observed the lack of discipline, but also a lax attitude towards school that some of the students exhibited.

Other participants noted a variety of topics related to school culture. Regarding the curriculum, Adán said, "*Aquí en los Estados Unidos se habla más de matemáticas.*" ("Here in the United States, math is emphasized.") His perception is easily understood given the fact that there has been a national and local push to raise math scores with phrases and practices of "double dose" math (where students receive math instruction twice a day) present in the community. His wife, Abelena, brought up a long-standing issue that has been part of the U.S. school culture for many years. The prevailing argument is that it does more harm than good to hold a student back in the lower grades. She commented, "*Lo que le digo que los pasan de grado sin que ellos sepan.*" ("What I am saying is that they passed their class even if they don't know anything.") She went on to explain that in her home country of Mexico, tests had to be passed as proof of learning before children were allowed to advance to the next grade. Her emphasis was not one of punishment, but of a desire that her children learn the material.

Basilio observed something quite different but also quite prevalent in this

particular community. *“Pues eso es muy bueno para los niños porque siempre están en deporte siempre, se ubican en una cosa y siempre están haciendo algo por hacer algo. No andan en la calle y eso es muy bueno.”* (“Well it is very good for the kids because they are doing sports all the time. They put their mind on one thing and they are always busy. They are not on the streets and that is good.”) The community surrounding Jefferson Elementary does put a lot of emphasis on sports. There are feeder programs for most of the high school sports and it is not unheard of for youth teams to go to state and national playoffs. On another positive note, Diego mentioned, *“La seguridad sobre todo en el estado que estamos. Estamos muy seguros. No hay tanto vandalismo...todo está muy bien aquí.”* (“The security, especially here in this state. We feel secure. There is no vandalism...everything is ok here.”) Unfortunately, while Diego’s comment is mostly true about the area surrounding Jefferson Elementary, it is not true for the entire state. In 2010, there were only 56 criminal incidents reported in the town where Jefferson Elementary School is located. However, in a large city just 35 miles away, over 9,000 criminal incidents were reported during the same year (Utah Department of Public Safety, 2010).

Spanish-speaking parents observed the U.S. school culture while being present at Jefferson Elementary School and at the secondary schools where their other children attended. They also observed the way their children were treated, how the schools handled discipline, the curriculum, advancement norms, extra-curricular activities, and security issues. Many of these observations were made while they were also participating within the school culture.

Participating

Participating at the School

Spanish-speaking parents participated at the school whenever they had conversations with teachers or staff members. They also participated by being audience members at the school play, eating lunch with their children at the birthday table, or attending a class activity. All of the parents reported that they participated in parent-teacher conferences. Just like most parents, knowing how their children were doing in school was a priority to the participants in this study. Even the Blancos, who said that they rarely attended school events, felt that participating in parent-teacher conferences was important. Basilio stated:

Me siento a gusto ahí y compartir esto con las mismas maestras ahí y ver el niño como va. Eso es muy bonito y es necesario.... Se va dando cuenta uno también como van en la escuela el niño, como lo tratan en la escuela también. Y eso es muy bueno también. Por eso para no vivir en la ignorancia que no sabe ni que está pasando allá.

(I feel really comfortable there. I can share with the teachers and find out how my boy is doing. That is a great feeling and it is necessary.... You start to realize also how he is really doing and how he is being treated at school. And that is very good, too. We don't want to be ignorant about what is going on at school.)

With a chuckle, his wife, Beatriz, added, “*Cuando le dicen a uno cosas buenas se siente uno orgulloso de sus hijos. Pero cuando nos dicen cosas malas no nos gusta.*” (“When they tell you good things about your children you feel proud of your kids. But we don't like to hear bad things about them.”) All of the events that parents participated in directly involved their children. Besides participating at parent-teacher conferences, parents noted participating at class presentations, talent shows, special days with mom or dad, birthday

tables, graduations, school plays, and holiday carnivals or presentations.

Other parents commented on why it was important to them to participate at the school during events such as plays, class presentations, birthday tables, and so forth.

Adán said, “*Son muy agradables cuando uno va a participar. Ellos se sienten muy seguros y se sienten más protegidos, más capaces.*” (“My kids love to see me active at school. They feel more secure, more protected, and more capable when they know I am there.”) This is an interesting statement from a man who said that he did not communicate often with others at the school. Despite the communication difficulties, he clearly wanted to support his children in their schooling. Celestina felt the same way about how participating at the school affected her son. She said, “*Y en parte le ayuda mucho a él porque al vernos a nosotros ahí, él se siente como respaldado.*” (“So in part it helps him a lot because when he sees us there he feels supported.”) Her husband, Carlos, also said that he got a lot of satisfaction out of being at the school and seeing how his son socialized, but stated, “*Me gustaría entender mejor, pero si está muy bien para mí.*” (“I would love to understand better, but it is ok with me.”) Again, another parent was willing to participate in the school culture, even though doing so came with some discomfort. Most of the parents expressed positive sentiments about participating at the school, but not all. Abelena only felt frustrated when trying to participate, because of the language. She noted, “*Para mí es frustrante porque no puedo ayudar a mi hijo.*” (“For me it’s frustrating because I can’t help my son.”)

Participating at Home

Parents also negotiated culture by participating in school-related practices in their

homes. The practices that parents reported were in answer to two of the interview questions. One question asked what the parents did to help their child learn English and the other question asked what they did to help their child retain his or her heritage language. The answers to these questions can serve as examples of the practices used at home by the parents to support the general schooling of their children. In regards to helping their children learn English, only Xavier said that he did not do anything to help. All of the other parents mentioned helping their children (as much as possible) with, or having them do, their homework. Abelena said, “*Lo ponemos a hacer tareas, [pero] no podemos ayudarlo como es necesario.*” (“We ask him to do homework, but we can’t help him as much as is necessary.”) Beatriz also commented:

Ayudarlos a veces con sus tareas, lo poquito que uno puede.... Por ejemplo yo a mi niño el que tiene cinco años ahora que fue al Kinder, A veces yo no puedo, no le entiendo sus tareas pero mi hijo el grande luego le digo ayuda al niño yo no entiendo esta pregunta.... Gracias a Dios tenemos unos hijos buenos que si lo ayudan mucho a su hermano.

(We help with their homework, well just a little, as much as we can.... For example, my son, who is five years old now, is in kindergarten. Sometimes I can’t help him so I ask my oldest son to help him because I don’t understand.... Thank God we have good kids that are willing to help their brother.)

Clearly, Abelena and Beatriz want to help their children succeed in school. In fact, they both express some frustration at not being able to help their children as much as they would like.

Realizing that he also could not help as much as he would like, because of his English language skill level, Eduardo bought a computer for his children. He explained:

Les compre una computadora para que ellos traten de también ayudarse, traducir algunas cosas que no entiendan o como ahí sale hasta la pronunciación y todo. Como por yo no hablo también el inglés, ¿cómo puedo ayudarles? Si yo hablaría

bien al inglés, yo los ayudaría pero no puedo. Por eso busco otra manera como comprarles una computadora o cosas así.

(I bought them a computer so they can help each other. They can translate words and they can learn the pronunciation, too. If I don't speak English, how can I help them understand? If I spoke English correctly, I would help them, but I can't. That's why I look for other ways, like buying a computer.)

Another home practice was having children read. Two mothers, Emelda and Yesenia, said that they had their children read to help them learn English. Yesenia said, "*Les digo que lean libros; ustedes van leyendo más libros van a saber y van a aumentar más su vocabulario. Pero casi al mayor no le gusta leer mucho, a esta mi niña, sí. Le gusta leer mucho mucho libros....*" ("I tell them to read books because if they read, they can grow their vocabulary. The oldest one doesn't like to read but my daughter likes to read. She reads a lot of books....") For a child who was too young to read, Celestina looked for and bought materials that would help her son. She reported that "*Yo últimamente he comprado un libro de actividades que enseña en inglés y español para que yo le pueda ayudar a él.*" ("Not too long ago I bought a book full of activities that teaches in both English and Spanish so that maybe I could help him a little.")

To help their children maintain their Spanish, all parents spoke to their children in Spanish. The Delgados insisted that their children speak Spanish in the home, although some of their children struggled with speaking the Spanish language. Even though her youngest one had difficulties, Dominga said, "*Aquí en la casa tiene que hablar español.*" ("At home he has to speak Spanish.") Speaking of his son, Carlos said, "*Si, algunas palabras que él se ubica mas en inglés y nosotros tratamos de ayudarlo.*" ("There are some words in English that he knows better but we try to help him anyways.") The

Estradas and the Aguilars not only spoke to their children in Spanish, but they also taught them Spanish. The Estradas helped their son with the vowels and alphabet and had their son spell, read, and write the family names and birthdays in Spanish. The Aguilars dictated Spanish words to their son. Beatriz expressed how much easier it was to help her child learn Spanish. She said, "*Pues, en español podemos ayudarlo mucho en poner las palabras como escribirlo y a pronunciarlo.*" ("Well, we can help him a lot with Spanish, how to put words together, how to write and pronounce.") These examples show how the parents in this study helped in direct learning when possible, when the learning was in Spanish. They also show how the parents encouraged children or found other ways to help them when they were not able to help directly when the children were learning English.

Participating Through Interactions with Their Children about Education

The last point of contact in negotiating culture by participating is the interactions that the parents had with their children concerning education. A significant piece of any parent's participation in their children's education is the importance that the parent places on education and how they convey that to their children (Jeynes, 2005). The interview question, "How important do you think education is for your child's future?" uncovered how the parents felt about this topic. All of the participants said that education was important to their children's future, with Diego saying that it was the *most* important thing for his child's future. Beatriz' answer was inspiring: "*Pues que tengan una meta de siempre ir más lejos, pues estudiar, sacar sus estudios lo más que puedan y graduarse y*

seguir adelante, entre mas estudios tengan más preparados van a estar.” (“Well, we want them to have a goal so they can go really far, study, graduate and continue on because the more educated they get, the more prepared they are going to be.”) Basilio added, “*Sí, pueden ir a la universidad y graduarse de algo. Qué bueno para que tengan un buen trabajo y no estén como uno [con] un sueldo muy bajo.*” (“Yes, they can go to college and later graduate. It’s good so they can get a good job and they won’t have to be like us [with] very low salaries.”) Xavier’s answer was similar. He felt that education was important “*Que se preparen para el día que yo falte ya ellos no tengan que andar batallando, trabajar en trabajos sencillos pues. Prepararse para encontrar una buena manera de vivir la vida.*” (“To prepare them so that when I am gone one day they won’t have to be fighting to survive. So they won’t have to get simple jobs; to be prepared to find a good way of living.”)

In answer to this question, Yesenia shared an experience that she had with her oldest son:

Es muy importante porque si uno no estudia una persona no llega a ser nada y si vas estudiando te vas haciendo más profesional, tu mente ya no va a ser igual, vas a ser otra clase de persona. Entonces para eso es muy importante. Nosotros les hablamos a nuestros hijos [porque] el mayor he tenido ese problema. [Después de la escuela secundaria] él se puso a trabajar y el trabajo fue duro y no fue como él esperaba y al final dijo ‘no, mejor no voy a trabajar, mejor voy a estudiar.’ Y ahí se dio cuenta de que, o sea pues, si tú no vas a estudiar, no vas a ser un profesional. Una persona educada entonces siempre vas a estar allí, y tú siempre vas a ganar poco, y él vas a ganar más. Y encima, toda tu vida te vas a pasar en un trabajo donde ni te va a gustar o vas a padecer tanto. Entonces mi hijo se dio cuenta de eso y dijo ‘bueno, pues si, tienen razón,’ dice, ‘yo no pensé que iba a ser así. Pensé voy a trabajar, voy a ganar mi dinero, y me voy a comprar un carro. Me voy a comprar ropa.’ El pensaba que era todo eso pero no es así. Se dio cuenta que uno necesita estudiar; que uno necesita, pues, alcanzar niveles de estudio donde va a empezar mejor y va a tener una mejor vida pues si ellos estudian, si llegan a ser profesionales.

(It is very important because if you don't study, you don't go anywhere. Once you become a professional, your mind changes and you become a different person. We talk to our kids [because] I had a problem with the oldest. [After high school] he found a job and then he realized that was really hard and he changed his mind. He told us that he was going to college. He understood that if you don't finish a career you won't have good opportunities. But if you are educated, you can make more money. Otherwise you have to work in whatever you can find and receive only a little bit of money and suffer. So he realized that we were right. He thought that getting a job would be fun so he could make some money, buy a car and clothes and that was it. But he finally saw the truth: that you have to go to school and be a professional so you can have a better life.)

These examples show how important schooling is to the parents in this study. Their attitudes about its importance and how they share those attitudes with their children are an integral part of negotiating culture through participation.

Participating in the U.S. school culture for the study participants was a valued activity. They participated at parent teacher conferences and school events. Parents also participated at home. Their activities varied from making sure their children did their homework, to buying computers, to teaching them to read and write in Spanish. Parents also participated by valuing education and the part that it would play in their children's future.

Effecting Change

Effecting Change Through Proactivity

A very important part of negotiating culture for Spanish-speaking parents is effecting change in order to support their children's education. Abelena stated that she would go to the school "*cuando tengo alguna duda acerca de mi hijo.*" ("when I have doubts about my son.") To help her daughter, Yesenia explained, "*Yo iba muy seguido*

por cualquier inquietud que pasaba ella de lo que no entendía o de lo que a veces pasaba con los compañeros en la clase.” (“I was going very often, every time I had a concern about things that she couldn’t understand or things that sometimes happened with the other students in her class.”) Yesenia and the Castros were proactive when they requested that written materials be translated into Spanish before being sent home. They did receive some papers in Spanish in the beginning of the school year, but then only a few others throughout the remainder of the year. One reported success involved the Delgados. They effected change when they spoke to the principal about their son being bullied and were able to get the bullying stopped. Diego said, *“Fuimos [al director] con una queja de un niño grande que lo estaban como humillando al niño, bullying más o menos. Y fuimos a decirle a el que le estaban haciendo cosas. Dijo que se iba a encargar de todo.”* (“We went [to the principal] because we had a complaint about something that was happening to our boy. He was being bullied. We went to tell him what was going on. He said that he would fix it.”) The Delgados were happy with the outcome.

The Estradas had a very different experience when they tried to do something about how their son was being treated at school and on his way home. Emelda went to the school to get help. Eduardo said, *“Como él llegó apenas y no sabía el inglés, le hostigaban, le insultaban y cosas así y fuimos a la escuela.... Bueno yo ese tiempo no pude ir yo porque yo entro muy temprano al trabajo y salgo muy tarde. Fue mi esposa y no le hicieron caso.”* (“Because he just arrived here, and didn’t know English, he was bullied. He was harassed and things like that, so we went to school.... Well, I couldn’t go at that time because I worked very early and I finished late, too. So my wife went and

they ignored her.”) As time went on, the bullying escalated. Their son’s skateboard was taken and his and his sister’s bike tires were slashed. Emelda again returned to the school, found the teacher who spoke Spanish to interpret for her, and explained what was happening. Eduardo related the outcome:

Y no le hicieron caso tampoco, le dijeron que vamos a ver, que tengan cuidado y nada más. Se supone que hay cámaras y ahí deben saber quien hizo todo eso, pero no quisieron investigar la escuela, y no más lo dejó así. Yo por no tener problemas, y yo digo es pérdida de tiempo estar yendo para que no me hagan caso, pos ya lo dejé así también. No más les arreglé las bicicletas.

(They didn’t care. She was told that they would do something, just be careful, and nothing else. I assumed that the schools have cameras so you can see the things that are happening at school, but they didn’t want to investigate. I didn’t want to have problems, and it was just a waste of time going there and having them ignore me, so we left it like that. I just fixed their bikes.)

Even though the Estradas reported that the bullying eventually stopped, they were clearly frustrated, hurt, and angry over what had happened to their children and how their requests for help were ignored.

Language and Skin Color as Challenges in Effecting Change

An important challenge that parents faced in effecting change through negotiating culture was that of language. The Blancos, Castros, Estradas, and Yesenia all expressed that not being able to communicate held them back from contributing in many ways. Beatriz said, *“La misma influencia no. Por el idioma.... Uno se va retirando un poco porque pues uno si a veces yo tengo una duda, cualquier cosa si no tengo quien me ayude, a veces no puedo explicarme bien.”* (“We don’t have the same influence [as other parents] because of the language.... We don’t get involved because we are not able to get

the help we need when we have concerns and we can't express ourselves.") Likewise, Eduardo reported, "*Es muy difícil. Es muy difícil interactuar con los demás padres y familiares de la escuela, ¿no? Por el idioma. [Pienso si] hablaríamos su idioma...nos relacionaríamos más con los padres, con los otros padres de familia, las mamas y los maestros y todo.* ("It's very difficult. It's difficult with the other parents and families of those who attend the school, right? Because of the language. I think that if we spoke their language, we would be able to interact with the parents, with the other fathers, mothers, and teachers.") Yesenia also commented about this difficulty saying, "*Quisiera estar involucrada dentro de las actividades que se puedan hacer allá, pero yo misma no puedo hacerlo porque no sé como lo voy a ser si no sé hablar el inglés, ¿cómo voy a estar involucrada ahí dentro?* ("I would like to get involved or get into some of the activities that they have there, but I can't because I don't speak English, so how am I supposed to get involved?") These comments show how frustrated some of the parents were at not being able to negotiate culture in order to contribute or effect change because of challenges relating to language.

The second challenge that the participants reported in negotiating culture in order to effect change related to the color of the participants' skin. The Aguilars, Delgados, Estradas, and Yesenia all mentioned challenges relating to the color of their skin or their ethnicity. Adán and Abelena did not feel that they had as many opportunities to be involved at the school as other parents. When asked if they felt it was because of language issues, Abelena said, "*Posiblemente pero se nota mucho la diferencia.*" ("Possibly, but you can tell the difference.") Adán clarified, "*Yo pienso también que hay*

parte un poquito del idioma y el color.” (“I think it is the language but also the skin color.”) Abelena then said, “*Si porque hay muchos padres hispanos que hablan muy bien el inglés y tampoco son tomados en cuenta.*” (“Yes, because there are a lot of Hispanic parents who speak English very well and they are ignored too.”) Adán offered, “*Yo pienso que hay un poquito de problemas por el color.*” (“I think there is a little problem with the skin color.”) Their feelings and observations were corroborated by Diego and Eduardo. Diego said, “*Nada mas lo único es el color. Yo pienso que me siento como un intruso.*” (“The only thing is my skin color. I think I feel like an intruder.”) Eduardo’s statement about this challenge was poignant: “*Somos personas igual; sea el color, el país de donde vengamos o el idioma que hablemos, somos iguales. Pero hay personas o sea me he topado con personas que no les gusta.*” (“We all are human being; whatever our color, the country we are from, or the language we speak, we are the same. But there are some people who don’t like that.”)

The Challenge for Participants’ Children in Effecting Change

Challenges for effecting change not only involved the parents, but also their children. A change that the Castros and Yesenia wanted to effect was to eliminate the mistreatment their children experienced because of their ethnicity. The Castros also told of how a teacher had maltreated their son and the rest of the Latinos in his class for the entire school year. Only at the end of the year did their son tell them what was going on. The Castros did not attempt to rectify the situation because the teacher was changing schools. Celestina explained:

El es muy callado y no nos contaba hasta cuando termino el año de la escuela, cuando me dijo de que un maestro de su escuela se iba a retirar a otra y él dice que bueno que se va este maestro. Y le pregunté ¿Por qué? Y me dice de que este maestro los menospreciaba o los subestimaba a ellos haciendo burla cuando ellos no aprendían.... El nunca me contaba acerca de esto y él no se sentía muy cómodo en esta clase. Años anteriores en esta materia él tenía muy buenas calificaciones pero en este año bajó bastante.... El pensaba que era porque hay varios latinos en la clase. Y pensaba y él decía porque somos "Brown." Agarraron ellos un dicho: "because I'm Brown." Se decían entre ellos mismos "because I'm Brown" y decían "maybe because I'm Brown."

(He is very quiet and it wasn't until the end of the year that he told us that one of the teachers at school was moving to another school and that he was happy that he was leaving. So I asked him why. He confessed that the teacher looked down on or despised them, laughing at them when they couldn't learn. He never told me about this, that he was feeling uncomfortable during the class. A few years back his grades were good, but that year they dropped drastically.... He thought that it was because there were several Latinos in the class. He said that it was because they were Brown. They created a saying: because I'm Brown. So they would say to each other, "because I'm Brown." They said, "maybe because I'm Brown.")

Celestina and Carlos continued explaining how the teacher kept the Latino students from participating by not calling on them when they raised their hands or wanted to show him their work. They related how he was sarcastic and would not help the Latino students when they got something wrong.

Yesenia did try to do something about the way her children were mistreated by their classmates, but her children found it difficult to cooperate. In this narrative she exposes the racism they faced at school and their fear of reprisals if they did anything about it. She reported,

[Tenía] un problema con mi niña, la más pequeña.... Lloraba porque ya no quería ir a la escuela. Entonces pues ya un día me dice, "Mami, ¿sabes porque no quiero ir a la escuela? Porque hay una niña me dijo que yo no soy de su color y por eso yo no soy su amiga ni quiere jugar conmigo." Entonces para mí fue eso muy duro. ¿Como una niña puede expresar eso a otra niña y decirle tú no eres de mi color y tú no puedes jugar con nosotros?... Mi niña no me quiso decir quien fue la niña. La principal me dijo que quería saber quien fue la niña para que

hable con la niña y sus padres pero mi hija me dijo que no quería decir quién es.

(I had a problem with my daughter, the youngest...she was crying because she didn't want to go to school. Finally one day she said to me, "Mommy, do you want to know why I don't want to go to school? It's because a girl told me that because I'm not her color, I'm not her friend and that she doesn't want to play with me." So that was really hard for me. How can one girl tell another girl you are not my color so you can't play with us?... My daughter didn't want to tell me who the girl was. The principal wanted to know who the girl was so that she could talk to the girl and her parents, but my daughter never told me.)

Yesenia's older children also faced racism:

Los niños más grandes míos también les han pasado eso de que siempre los muchachos de aquí siempre lo han tratado mal a mis hijos grandes también, diciéndoles, insultándoles pues porque ellos no son de aquí. Por eso ellos a veces [se sentían] un poco así intimidados a veces en la escuela.

(My oldest kids went through some hard times too because they had been treated disrespectfully because they are foreign. Because of that, they sometimes [felt] afraid while at school.)

Not only did Yesenia's children tell her of verbal abuse, but also of physical abuse. One of her sons told of how he was physically restrained by "un grupo de muchachos americanos" ("a group of American boys") in order to take his camera away from him.

He was fearful of what else they would do if he reported them to the administration:

En la tarde llega y le digo, ¿y la cámara? ¿Tomaste fotos con tus amigos? Nooo me dice ¿Por qué le digo? No me quería decir. A la finales me dijo, no es que hay unos muchachos me la quitaron. Dice que lo agarraron del brazo y le quitaron su cámara y todas las fotos se las tomaron y se acabaron el rollo de la cámara. Yo le digo, me tienes que decir quiénes son para yo ir a hablar a la escuela. Tampoco me dijo, no mami no quiero que vayas a hablar porque ellos me van a ser peor a mí, se van a venir mas contra mí y no vayas, no quiero que hagas nada, entonces todas esas cosa se van viendo y eso ha pasado dentro de la escuela y yo digo pues donde están los profesores o personas que están encargadas de estar mirando dentro de la escuela, yo digo pues no hay mucho control de los muchachos dentro de la escuela y como le digo pues allá dentro hacen lo que mejor les parece a los muchachos.

(When he came back from school I asked him, where is your camera? Did you

take any photos? And he responded no, so I said why? And he didn't want to tell me, but later he told me that some kids took the camera away from him. He said that the boys grabbed his arms and they took his camera and they took all the pictures and used all the film. I told him that he needed to tell me who did it so I could go talk to the school. But he said, no, mother, because otherwise they are going to harm me even worse and I don't want to have them as enemies. Don't go, I don't want you to do anything about it. These things are happening inside the schools. So I am asking myself, where are the teachers or personnel to stop this inside the schools? They aren't watching the kids, so there is no control and the kids do whatever they feel like doing.)

Even though Yesenia wanted to affect change by addressing the prejudice, racism, and mistreatment to which her children were subjected, her children feared the consequences that could come from such actions.

Changes the Parents Would Have Liked to Effect

When the challenges of language and racism are taken into consideration, it is understandable why many of the participants did not attempt to effect change. They did however mention what they would like to have changed regarding their children's schooling. The Estradas wanted the way that their son was being rewarded for reading to stop. He was going into the fifth grade and could not read English. He would come home from school each day with a lot of candy that he had been given as a reward for reading. They disliked the way that he was motivated to read by candy instead of by the desire to learn. Emelda said, "*Y a veces yo le digo no que te pongan un poquito duro y no te den nada.*" ("Sometimes I tell him that I hope they get a little bit rough with you so that they won't give you anymore candy.") Eduardo continued, "*Y él lo hace al día siguiente. 'Voy a leer otra vez para que me den dulce' pero no dice él 'voy a leer para aprender.'*" ("And the next day he does it again. 'I am going to read so I can get candies' but he never

says ‘I am going to read so I can learn more.’”) Their attempt at effecting change was to talk to their son and try to change his attitude. They did not attempt to effect change at the school by having this practice stopped.

The change Yesenia wanted was more communication about her children’s scholastic behaviors. She wanted to know long before they received a “C” in a course if they were not doing their work or not understanding some of the concepts. She said:

Yo quisiera que las escuelas fueran así más exigentes y hubiera más comunicación cuando los hijos están fallando o en comportamiento si están haciendo mal ellos. Llamarnos a nosotros los padres para nosotros saber, pero casi no. Pero sí, llaman cuando faltan o hay una tardanza o una falta si, te llaman por el teléfono y te avisan su niño no vino hoy a la escuela o su niño llegó tarde a la escuela, eso sí llaman, pero lo que es cuestión de trabajo o de sus tareas no. Entonces en esa parte, si me gustaría que fuera más exigente la escuela.

(I wish that the schools were more on top of this and that there would be more communication when our children are failing or not behaving well. Call the parents so that we know, but they hardly ever do. Yes, I do get phone calls though, to let me know if they didn’t show up or if they were late, but as far as schoolwork or their homework, I don’t get any information. So I wish the teachers would change that.)

Adán and the Castros also wanted a solution to the communication problem.

Additionally, Adán wanted more science in the curriculum. Because of the mistreatment of their son and other Latino classmates by their teacher, which was discussed above, the Castros wanted to have teachers evaluated more closely. Carlos said:

Yo pienso de que psicológicamente deberían ser evaluados los maestros. No sé si anual o bi-anualmente para ver también en qué estado psicológico se encuentran algunos. Puede ser que algunos estén muy estresados y la escuela sea una forma de explotar o descargar su estrés.

(I think that psychologically-speaking they should be evaluated annually or bi-annually to see if they are psychologically ready and not stressed out so they won’t use the school as a way to explode and leave their stress.)

Negotiating culture in order to effect change was very challenging for the study participants. Even when the participants were proactive, the results were mixed. The parents faced two great challenges: language and racism. Adding to the difficulties was their children's fear of reprisals if prejudices and maltreatments were exposed. Given these circumstances, it is understandable that participants reported changes that they would like to see, but very few interactions with the school to effect change.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS

Several themes emerged during the iterative process of reviewing the collected materials, interview transcripts, and observations. These themes can be roughly divided into two categories. The first category contains themes that are more micro in scope, or that are more specific to the discussion of Spanish-speaking parents and their negotiation of language and culture with their children's schools. These themes include caring, limited levels of discourse participation, tension between discourses, children serving as interpreters, and maintenance of heritage language. The second category contains themes that, while integral to this research, are broader in scope. They include social and cultural capital, linking capital, racism, and the hegemony of the English language.

Caring

One of the misconceptions exposed in the literature about parent involvement is that Latino parents do not value or care about the schooling of their children (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Lieshoff, 2007; Olivos, 2004; Quioco & Daoud, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, and Nero (2010) discussed the factors that influence this deficit thinking.

As already noted, a great deal of research indicates that ethnic minority and low-income parents are less involved in their children's education. Other work indicates that a lack of involvement is often interpreted as a lack of concern.... Still other work indicates that teachers who are culturally different from parents are more likely to believe that parents are disinterested.... In short, the poor outcomes of Latino students combined with the tendencies to judge them more negatively and to interpret a lack of involvement as a lack of concern may lead

many to conclude that Latino parents do not value education. (p. 392)

The Latino parents in this study are an example of how incorrect that thinking is.

Additionally, the educators at Jefferson Elementary recognized how much the Latino parents at the school cared about their children's education.

Evidence of Caring

The Spanish-speaking parents in this study demonstrated that they cared about their children's schooling by their participation and attendance at school events, their efforts to advocate for their children, their desire to be involved in school decisions, their perceptions about the importance of education in their children's future, and their at home practices. For example, Eduardo's caring is evidenced in his efforts to attend school events:

No es mucho el trabajo cuando se trata a veces de la escuela. Yo hago muchas veces sacrificio y salgo del trabajo más temprano. O salgo y me voy sin bañarme, me voy pa' la escuela. Y a veces le digo [a mi esposa], vas con los niños allá y yo llego allá...Vemos la manera de hacer algo.

(It is not so much about our jobs because when it's about the school I sacrifice many times and I try to leave work early. Sometimes I leave work without having a chance to take a bath first and I go to the school like that. Sometimes I tell my wife, take the kids and wait for me at the school. But we find a way to do something.)

Eduardo's actions emphasized his commitment to his children's education. He was willing to sacrifice "*muchas veces*" ("many times") to be able to attend school functions. His words also revealed his commitment when he said, "*Vemos la manera.*" ("We find a way.") The study participants demonstrated their caring by attending and participating in meetings, parent teacher conferences, dramas, birthday tables, singing concerts,

Halloween carnivals, breakfasts, Mother's Day programs, and graduations.

Advocating for their children and wanting to have some influence in school decisions are other ways that the parents showed their caring. Several of the parents mentioned initiating contact with the school when they were concerned about their children. Abelena said that she went to the school "*cuando tengo alguna duda acerca de mi hijo.*" ("when I have concerns about my son.") Beatriz went "*va uno a ver cómo van en la escuela.*" ("to check on how they [her children] are doing in school.") Yesenia said, "*Yo iba muy seguido por cualquier inquietud que ella me platicaba de la escuela que a veces pasaba ella, de lo que no entendía o de lo que a veces pasaba con los compañeros en la clase.*" ("I was going very often, every time I had a concern about things that happened to [my daughter] in the classroom, or things she couldn't understand, or things that happened with her classmates.") The Estradas and Yesenia also tried to intervene when their children were bullied and subjected to racism. Adán showed his caring when he said that he wanted to have some influence in the decisions that the school made in his children's education because "*los hijos dependen de nosotros.*" ("our kids depend on us.") Carlos could see an even broader picture than just caring about the education of his own children. He said, "*Nos gustaría aportar algunas ideas porque es muy interesante para la comunidad dejar alguna aportación.*" ("We would like to give some suggestions or ideas because it is important to leave some type of contribution to the community.")

All of the parents commented that education is important to their children's future and many demonstrated their commitment to education through the educational practices they carried out at home. Yesenia shared the story of her oldest son not going to college

right after high school but getting a job so he could buy clothes and a car. After working for a while he finally saw that his parents were right. “*Se dio cuenta que...va a tener una mejor vida si ellos estudian y llegan a ser profesionales.*” (“He finally saw the truth that you have to go to school and be a professional so you can have a better life.”) Beatriz expressed how much she cared about her children’s education when she said, “*[Queremos] que tengan una meta de siempre ir más lejos, estudiar, sacar sus estudios lo más que puedan y graduarse y seguir adelante, entre mas estudios tengan más preparados van a estar.*” (“We want them to have a goal so they can go really far, study, graduate and continue on because the more education they get the more prepared they are going to be.”) Xavier felt education was important to his children’s future in order to “*Prepararse para encontrar una buena manera de vivir la vida.*” (“to be prepared to find a good way of living.”) Several of the parents shared what they did in their homes to support their children’s education. The Estradas and Yesenia had their children read, and Celestina bought a bilingual picture book to help her young son. The Aguilars, Blancos, and Delgados helped their children with homework, or directed the older children to help the younger ones. Contrary to the misconceptions about Latinos’ lack of caring about their children’s education, the actions and attitudes of the parents in this study demonstrated that they cared deeply about the education of their children.

The activities exhibited by the present study’s participants are similar to those reported by other researchers as evidence of Latino parents concern for the education of their children. Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2011) culled Latino parental activities from several studies that included:

emphasizing the value of education and the importance of respect for others, monitoring the child's schoolwork and peer relationships...talking with the child about school...regular involvement in several school-based activities, including conferences regarding their children's academic performance, advocacy for their children's needs, and attendance at school wide meetings. (pp. 412-413)

The Latino parents in this study wanted to be involved in the schooling of their children. They cared about their children's educational outcomes as demonstrated by their presence at school and their interactions with their children.

Educators' View

The actions and attitudes of the Latino parents in the present study were noted by the personnel at Jefferson Elementary. Although several researchers report that some educator believe that Latino parents do not care about the schooling of their children (Lieshoff, 2007; Olivos, 2004; Quioco & Daoud, 2006), that is not true for the educators in this study. The principal found Spanish-speaking parents very "interested in their child's education and are sincere in helping them, making sure that they get a good education. I feel that they are genuine in wanting to help their child to excel." The third grade teacher remarked:

They are very concerned about their kids. I have one [Spanish-speaking parent] that I have been a little bit sad about that when I talked about some concerns educationally that she just kind of shook herself and said, oh, well...but then I have had tons of other [Spanish-speaking parents] that are extremely concerned and really are pushing....

The second grade teacher and the ELL aide concurred, stating that Spanish-speaking parents wanted what was best for their children and that they really wanted their children to learn. The recognition by the educators at Jefferson Elementary of the interest that Spanish-speaking parents have in their children's education echoes a shift that Valencia

and Black (2002) found in the reduction of deficit model research of Latino parental involvement to research models that had “a more nuanced and sympathetic view” (p. 94).

The Spanish-speaking parents in this study demonstrated that they cared about the education of their children and that is how they were perceived by the school personnel. For the most part, they had their children do their homework and helped them with it when they could. They bought computers and books to help their children learn English. They spoke Spanish to their children and taught them to read and write it to help them preserve their heritage language. They attended conferences to find out how their children were doing academically. They also attended other school activities and events when their children were involved and when they had a concern or a problem, they met with school personnel to have their concerns addressed.

Limited Levels of Participation in the School Discourse

Spanish-speaking parents must negotiate language and culture in order to be able to participate in the school discourse. As Gee (1989) observed, being able to access school discourses can lead to acquiring wealth, social position, and other sought after social “goods” (p. 8) and Delpit (1992) argued that access to school discourses can aid in eventual membership in such secondary discourses as business, government, higher education, and the legal system (Delpit, 1992, p. 298). As active participants in school discourses Spanish-speaking parents can help their children take full advantage of what the schools have to offer. They can also advocate for their children and others. They can become an integral part of the discourse, shaping it, and contributing valuable

perspectives and experience. Ultimately, they can help their children obtain their own unique “cultural toolkits” (Scollon et al., 2012) equipped with the tools needed to participate in any desired discourse. However, that level of participation in the school discourse was not seen in this study.

The criteria used to judge the participants’ levels of participation in the school discourse are the categories that were used in examining their negotiation of language and culture: the participation in oral and written communication, the preservation of their children’s heritage language, and the finding of efficacious points of contact to observe, participate, and effect change. A summary of each couples’ or individual’s experiences in negotiating language and culture produces an overall picture of their discourse participation.

Couple’s Participation

Abelena and Adán Aguilar. The Aguilars seemed almost completely shut out of the school discourse. They rarely spoke to anyone even though they said that they attended many events and reported that their five year old son served as their interpreter. Abelena received phone calls in English that she could not understand and said that an interpreter was never at the school when she needed one. Their older children only translated written material when they wanted to translate, but had maintained their heritage language. Their participation at the school was usually just attendance without interaction. Abelena reported frustration when trying to participate. Both Adán and Abelena felt that they were not treated the same as other parents. They also did not feel like they had the same influence as other parents. They stated that they felt that they and

the other Hispanics did not have as many opportunities to be involved as other parents did because of their ethnicity.

Beatriz and Basilio Blanco. The Blancos had better success at participating in the school discourse, but it was still limited. In order to communicate, the Blancos used the school interpreter or brought their own. They seemed to be determined to communicate. Basilio said, “*Siempre andamos preguntando que sea bilingüe para poder entender todo.*” (“We are always asking for someone bilingual so we can understand everything.”) Beatriz shared an example that illustrates her determination:

Pues si a veces si cuando uno quiere saber algo. Por ejemplo, yo ahora tengo un hijo que tiene 16 años, a veces he tenido un problema de que no asiste a la escuela, que se salió en horas de escuela. Entonces me ha llegado una carta de que él no está asistiendo a la escuela, o me llaman por teléfono. Y va uno que no sabe quién le interprete, pidiendo quien le ayude por ahí, a ver quien habla español. A veces uno tiene problemas por esa razón. Yo hablé con el Director que él habla español o sea que yo llegué a la oficina y pregunté por alguien que hablara español y el Director me atendió.

(Well, when you want to know something, you find your way. For example, my son is sixteen and sometimes there is a problem because he doesn't show up at school or he leaves school early. So I received a letter saying that he didn't show up at school, or they called me over the phone. That is when I decided to go to the [high] school, without knowing if there would be someone there to translate. Sometimes there are problems because of that. So I went to the office and I asked someone to bring an interpreter. But that is when I found out that the principal was able to speak Spanish.)

The Blancos were also able to use their older children to translate written material and reported that their children had maintained their heritage language.

The Blancos expressed the importance of attending parent teacher conferences, and yet, they also stated that they did not come to many school functions because of work obligations. They felt that they did not have the opportunities that other parents had nor

as much influence. Beatriz said, “...*uno se va retirando un poco porque pues uno si a veces yo tengo una duda, cualquier cosa si no tengo quien me ayude, a veces no puedo explicarme bien.*” (“...we don’t get involved because we can’t get the help we need when we have concerns, and we can’t express ourselves.”)

Celestina and Carlos Castro. The Castros made attempts to participate in the school discourse with little success. They showed up at the school, only to have to come back another day when there would be an interpreter available. They asked for written material to be translated, which only lasted for the first part of the school year. They used their English language skills to read school notices, but did not understand everything and had their oldest son translate for them. He could speak, read, and write Spanish, but their youngest son could not speak Spanish fluently, nor read or write in Spanish. Celestina tried to help him maintain and improve his Spanish by buying a book that incorporated both English and Spanish. Both parents liked being at the school so that their son would know that they supported him. However, Carlos commented on not being able to understand what was going on very well. They also told of their son’s experience of being mistreated by a teacher because of his being a Latino. They said that they had very few opportunities to be as involved as other parents because of language issues. Celestina reported that they did not know if they had as much influence as other parents saying, “*Al menos como nunca hemos platicado con los padres de los amigos de nuestros hijos pues no podríamos responder esto, ¿Verdad? Porque no tenemos mucha comunicación allá en la escuela.*” (“We can’t really respond to that because we haven’t talked to any of the parents of our kid’s friends. To be honest, we don’t participate in a lot of communication

there at the school.”)

Dominga and Diego Delgado. The Delgados’ expressed comfort with their level of participation in the school discourse. They never used an interpreter, but used their limited English when interacting with school personnel; even though they reported that they were not very comfortable speaking English. However, they said that they spoke mostly with the bilingual kindergarten teacher when at the school. Their children exhibited the pattern of gradual loss of heritage language from the oldest to the youngest, with the oldest speaking, reading, and writing Spanish, to the youngest having few skills in the heritage language. The Delgados reported attending school events but that they did not talk with other parents or school personnel while there. They were successful in stopping the bullying of their son and despite Diego feeling like an “*intruso*” (“intruder”), he said that he felt like he and his wife were treated “*probablemente a veces mejor porque tienen que darle a uno atención especial que a otros no. No tiene que darle atención especial.*” (“probably better than the others sometimes because they know we need more attention and they don’t have to give it to us.”) They also felt that they had just as many opportunities to participate as other parents and that they had just as much influence as well.

Emelda and Eduardo Estrada. The Estradas expressed a lot of frustrations at not being able to participate in the school discourse. While they said that they knew many of the teachers at the school because of their other children, they said that they could only speak with them when the teacher who translates was present. They tried to get the bullying stopped that their children were experiencing, but felt ignored. Emelda said that

she would like to speak to her son's teacher about rewarding him with candy for reading, but she did not. Earlier in the interview she had said, "*A mi es que se me hace un poco difícil de ir a la escuela y todo, siempre se me ha hecho difícil. Porque no se me pega nada el inglés. Quiero aprender y no [puedo].*" ("For me, it is very difficult, hard for me to go to school, very difficult. I can't retain any English. I would like to learn and I can't.") Eduardo felt that he could understand what was being said in English at meetings if they spoke slowly, but by the time that he translated it to his wife, he had lost track. Neither parent could read English but their oldest daughter translated for them. Eduardo also said that they did not understand at first how the grades worked and what the letters meant. He admitted that even after a few years they still only understood the grading system "*más o menos*" ("more or less"). When asked if they would like to have some influence on the decisions that the school makes Eduardo said, "*Casi nunca nos consultan [en] lo que van a hacer o sea...cuando ellos nos dicen vamos a hacer tal cosa y ya nos dicen nada mas.*" ("They almost never ask us about what they are going to do... they tell us what is going to happen and don't say anything else to us.")

Individual's Participation

Yesenia. Yesenia's participation in the school discourse has diminished over time as her children learned English and she began to work full time. She reported, "*Yo iba muy seguido pero últimamente ya no voy porque yo estoy trabajando entonces se me ha hecho un poco difícil.*" ("I was going very often but lately I have been so busy with work that it is difficult for me to go.") She, too, needed someone to interpret for her whenever she wanted to communicate within the discourse. She said that every time she went to the

school, they would call the kindergarten teacher to help her. As reported earlier, sometimes this meant that she would have to wait until the kindergarten teacher was able to leave her classroom. Yesenia also said that now that her daughter's English is better, she sometimes uses her as an interpreter. But her daughter's ability to translate written material is not very good and Yesenia gets little help translating from other family members. All of Yesenia's children can speak Spanish and her oldest son can also read and write in Spanish.

Yesenia has had some difficult frustrations while participating in the school discourse. Her children endured acts of racism and bullying and yet they would not tell her who their tormenters were because they thought that it would make things worse for them at school. Still, determined to do what she could, Yesenia went to the school and asked that they watch the students more closely and improve the general discipline. She was also frustrated at not being able to contribute to the discourse because of language. When asked if she felt that what she had to contribute was as important as other parents she replied, "*Yo pienso que si pero como le digo hay mucho como nosotros los hispanos de lo que podemos dar dentro de la escuela, de lo que podemos compartir pero tenemos la dificultad porque es el idioma y eso es lo que nos impide hacer.*" ("I think so because as Hispanics we have a lot to show and share inside the schools, but the language is the problem which stops us.")

Xavier. Xavier did not seem to mind his limited participation in the school discourse. When interacting with school personnel, he did not use an interpreter. Although he said he understood most of what was being said, he said that he did not

speaking much English. That would preclude his being able to ask detailed or technical questions about his child or to ask for clarifications. An observation made during one of the interviews with Xavier bore this out. After answering a phone call, he gave a few simple answers in English and then asked the person he was speaking with to excuse him for a moment. He found his teenage daughter and asked her to take care of the phone call because it was in English. He also said that he read English, but would ask his daughter for help when he did not understand. Xavier's children exhibited the same pattern as the Delgado children, with the oldest being the most proficient and the youngest struggling to communicate in Spanish. While Xavier did not attend many events at the school, he took his children to school every day and was known by the office staff. Xavier felt that he had the same opportunities to participate as other parents, and that the only limiting factor was whether or not he chose to be involved.

Unlike this study, participation in school discourses by Latino parents from other studies included both individual and collective participation, varied in amount, and encompassed many forms (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994, 2005; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Olivos, 2004; Ramirez, 2003; Villalba et al., 2007). In this study sample, there was no collective participation reported or observed and the individual and couple participation in the discourse did not vary much among participants. It usually consisted of attending events, attempting to solve problems when they arose, speaking Spanish in the home, and making sure that their children did their homework. The parents tended to participate in the school discourse when their children were directly involved in some way. They did not participate as leaders, committee members, or volunteers in any of the school

programs, organizations, or events. Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) found similarly limited patterns of participation among other Latino parents.

Tension Between Discourses

Gee (1989) posited that if there is a lot of tension between the two discourses, a person's home or primary discourse can greatly affect the ability to acquire and master secondary discourses such as school discourses. The literature reveals mismatches or disconnects between Latino home cultures and U.S. school cultures. These disconnects include parent and teacher role expectations, language and communication difficulties, independent versus cooperative behaviors, trust issues, and parental education (De Gaetano 2007; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Smith et al., 2008; Valdés, 1996; Villaba, Akos, Keter, & Ames, 2007).

I would like to suggest that a secondary discourse that a person has already acquired in a different culture can also affect the ability to acquire the same type of discourse in a new culture, depending on the amount of tension between the two discourses. Auerbach (2002) explained that one way that parents "view the educational process is through their own experiences of school as students" (p. 1369). The school discourses that parents learned as students in their native countries were quite different from U.S. school discourses.

Parents' School Experiences

Participants were asked about their own schooling and how it compared to their children's current setting. The parents reported having very different schooling

experiences. Abelena said, “*¡Oh! totalmente diferente. Totalmente es otro mundo.... Las entrevistas con los maestros no son como son aquí. Es todos en grupo, entonces es total diferente. Nos adaptamos a todo pero la situación de la escuela tan solo en tareas, en trabajos es otro mundo.*” (“Oh, totally different! It’s another world.... The meetings with teachers are not the same as here. We get together as a group so it’s different. We try to adjust to everything, but as far as homework and projects, they are totally different. It’s a different world.”) Beatriz’s educational experience was also very different from her children’s experiences as well:

Muy diferente. Se puede decir que nosotros casi no estuvimos en la escuela. Nosotros vivíamos en un rancho y había semanas que había maestros, pero había semanas que ni iba el maestro y muy poca escuela. Si muy diferente era, había menos preparación para uno, menos facilidades de salir uno adelante.

(Very different. We didn’t really have school. We lived on a ranch and there were weeks when there was a teacher, and weeks when the teacher didn’t come and there was very little school. There was less preparation for us, less chance for us to do something in life.)

Carlos’s answer to this question followed the same theme. He said that it was “*totalmente diferente, una experiencia completamente diferente*” (“totally different, a complete different experience”). His wife, Celestina, elaborated:

Mas disciplinados en cuanto al aprendizaje; es exigente muy exigente. En cambio a mi me parece de que aquí es voluntario, Si puede uno, está bien y si no pues hay más ayuda. Pero allá es más exigente, tanto los padres como los maestros.

(More discipline in terms of learning; demanding, very demanding. My impression is that here it is more voluntary. If you can do it, it’s fine and if you can’t then they provide more help. But over there it is more rigorous, not only the teachers, but the parents too.)

The Delgados talked about discipline also. Referring to punishment, Diego said, “*A mi me tocó todavía que me pegaban los maestros...hoy en día no les pegan a los*

niños.” (“Back when I was in school, the teachers hit me....but that has changed now.”)

Eduardo brought up many differences between his schooling and that of his children. He mentioned having a notebook for each subject, taking dictation, wearing uniforms and having a lot of homework. The greatest difference he talked about was advancement through the grades and how difficult it was to see his son passed on to the next grade without mastering a subject:

Por ejemplo, llevas seis cursos y si de los seis cursos te jalas tres cursos, desapruebas, no pasas de año.... Al año siguiente repites el mismo año, pero aquí yo veo que pasan todos. Con el niño yo he tenido problemas, le decía ¿vas a pasar de año?

(For example, you have six courses and if you failed three you can't go to the next grade, you failed the year.... The next year you have to do it again, but here I see that they passed no matter what. So I had problems with my boy and I asked him, 'Are you passing with those scores?')

His wife, Emelda, had the most unique experience of all of the participants. She reported, “*Éramos tan pobres en mi casa, pues, no había para escuela.... Y aprendía poquito a leer acá yo sola, solita. Leyendo periódicos así empecé a leer pero yo no fui casi a la escuela.*” (“We were so poor that school wasn't a consideration.... I learned how to read a little bit, but I did it by myself. Reading newspapers, I learned like that, but I hardly ever went to school.”)

All of the parents reported that their schooling was much different than that of their children. Adding to the difference is the fact that they attended school a generation ago. The tensions between the school discourses that the parents had already acquired in their home cultures coupled with the tensions between their primary discourses and the U.S. school discourse at Jefferson Elementary might be a factor if the parents desire to

acquire and master the U.S. school discourse.

Discipline

One tension mentioned often by this study's participants is the perception of a general lack of behavioral and academic discipline (Ixa Plata-Potter & de Guzman 2012). For example, Celestina related that when her oldest son was in middle school she did not like what she saw happening there. *"No hay mucho control con los muchachos. Entran y salen de las clases; y si entran, bien, y si no, también. Ya lo toman como una opción para ellos, ya no es un deber que ellos tienen que hacer. Parece que no hay mucho control con esto."* ("There is no control over the kids. They are able to come in and leave their classes anytime or just simply skip classes. They see attending class as an option, not as an obligation or duty. It appears that there is not much control with that.") Spanish-speaking parents may not seek school leadership roles if they do not want to adapt to what they perceive as a less authoritarian adult style or work with others who do. Yesenia, who actually worked at a government sponsored preschool, described the tension she felt:

Se nos han dicho de que nosotros tenemos que esperar que los niños nos digan si quieren o no quieren hacer los trabajos. Y yo me pongo a pensar y digo pues si desde ahorita los niños pequeños estamos esperando que ellos nos digan si quieren o no quieren hacer el trabajo yo digo cuando sean mas grandes ¿como van a ser, no? Yo pienso que en eso está mal.

(They told us that we are supposed to wait for the kids to tell us if they want to work or not. And I thought, if when they are little we wait for them to tell us if they want to do school work or not, I can't even imagine what it is going to be like when they grow older. I think that they've got this wrong.)

Besides illustrating the tension surrounding discipline, Carlos and Yesenia's statements indicates another concern. Parents might also shy away from greater involvement if they

are not sure of how to work with groups of children who they perceive are used to a less disciplined environment than the one the Latino parents associate with schools.

Roles

Another possible tension is the difference in perceptions that U.S. teachers and Latino parents have of their roles in education (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Smith et al., 2008; Tinkler, 2002; Valdés, 1996). Marschall (2006) reported that “Latino parents perceived their role as providing nurturing, teaching values, and instilling good behavior, whereas schools were expected to handle the actual learning.” In his study involving Latino parents, Ramirez (2003) found “many of the parents felt that it was not their place to attend or to go the schools for they felt the teachers were better suited to teach and educate their children” (p. 99). This tension may be the reason that the Estradas did go to the school when their children were being bullied (fulfilling their nurturing role), but did not contact the school over a teaching matter. Their son was entering sixth grade and had a very low reading level. They were very displeased over his progress and the use of candy as a motivator for their son to read. In one of the interviews they discussed their displeasure at length and yet said that they had not contacted the teacher about their feelings. Eduardo said, “*En parte es culpa de él y también yo creo que los maestros tendrían que buscarle la manera como él aprende. Porque yo creo para eso están los maestros.*” (“In part it is his fault, but I also believe that the teacher should find the way for him to learn. Because I think the teachers are there to figure it out.”) This statement reinforces the view that teachers are responsible for the learning of their students.

Competence and Efficacy

A third source of tension between discourses could be the lack of competence (Ixa Plata-Potter & de Guzman, 2012; Valdés, 1996) or efficacy (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001) that some Spanish-speaking parents felt when engaging in the school discourse. There are many reasons for these feelings. The most prominent reason is probably the difficulties associated with communication. Villalba and colleagues (2007) reported that “for many Latino children and families, the most evident and significant obstacle upon entering the academically English-centered educational environment of U.S. schools is the language barrier” (p. 465). Abelena said that there was never anyone at the school to translate for her, that being in her son’s classroom was frustrating because language kept her from being able to help her son, and that speaking with the teacher was “*incómodo porque no puedo expresarle lo que siento acerca de mi hijo, o no puedo entenderle lo que me quiere decir de mi hijo*” (“was uncomfortable because I can’t express the feelings about my son, and I can’t understand what she is saying about my son either.”) When the Blancos were asked if they felt that their background influenced how they interacted with their child’s school, Basilio replied, “*Un poco por la razón lo mismo todo viene a dar a el idioma ya le decíamos. Porque a veces uno dice ¡Ay! iré allá pero luego si no hay nadie quien me ayude, un poquito si.*” (“A little. The reason is the same; because of the language. Sometimes we really want to go, but we are afraid that we won’t get the help we need.”) They both felt that they had few opportunities to be involved at the school “*por el idioma*” (“because of the language.”) Similarly, Eduardo felt that his answers to the interview questions were becoming redundant and said, “*O sea mucho es el idioma,*

mucho tienen que ver el idioma” (“Everything has to do with the language.”) When asked what they liked least about the school, the Castros said that they could not communicate very well and that the school had no one there just to translate, that there was no help. Yesenia answered:

Lo que menos me gusta, lo que a mí me apena es el idioma. El que nos impide a tener una buena relación de los profesores con nosotros los padres. Eso es lo que mucho me apena y yo creo, que le dije antes, era la comunicación o hacer llegar la problemática de nuestros hijos a nosotros los padres.

What I like least, what troubles me is the language. It is what keeps the teachers from having good relationships with us parents. This is what bothers me a lot and I believe, as I told you before, it was communication that was problematic for our children and us parents.

Most of the participants in this study struggled because of communication issues. That is a challenge faced by many Spanish-speaking parents (Johnson, 2011; Ramirez, 2003; Smith et al., 2008; Worthy, 2006).

Other reasons also contribute to Latino parents feeling that they lacked competence or that their efforts to participate in the school discourse would not be productive. Two additional reasons mentioned in the research are low literacy and academic skills (Auerbach, 2002; Lieshoff, 2007). Lee and Bowen (2006) reported, “Parents with low levels of education, for example, may be less involved at school because they feel less confident about communicating with school staff owing to a lack of knowledge of the school system” (p. 198). This could have affected Abelena and the Blancos whose educational opportunities ended with elementary school, and also Emelda who taught herself to read because her family’s poverty did not permit her to attend school. Lastly, some parents “lack basic information about the U.S. educational system”

(Ixa Plata-Potter & Guzman, 2012, p. 95), making it hard to feel competent within the school discourse. Eduardo expressed this sentiment when he said, “*Al comienzo yo ni entendía el método de calificación. Le ponían una H o una A o una C. Yo no sabía cómo era*” (“In the beginning, I couldn’t understand the method of grades. They would get H, A, or C. I didn’t know any of that.”) He was still uncertain, following up with, “*Ya más o menos sé cómo es ahorita*” (“Now I know, more or less.”)

When added together, it can be seen how tensions between discourses could limit participation in the school discourse at Jefferson Elementary. The past school environments of the participants and that of Jefferson Elementary were substantially different, making the U.S. school discourse difficult to navigate because of the unfamiliarity. On becoming more familiar with the discourse, many parents felt that what they perceived as a lack of discipline in the U.S. schools was incomprehensible. Parents also fulfilled their roles in harmony with their primary discourses, which typically did not include involving themselves in school governance, in academic matters, or in interfering in teaching techniques. Additionally, difficulties with language and communication were significant barriers to engagement within the school discourse. Parents felt frustrated at how difficult it was to get an interpreter, that there were no interpreters in general meetings, and that written notices were almost always in English. They knew that they were missing information and so might have felt less competent in the school environment. The difficulties with communication, their own amount of schooling, and their lack of knowledge about how the school system worked might also have contributed to a sense that their efforts to participate in the school discourse would not be effective,

which would in turn contribute to lower levels of participation within the discourse.

Children Serving as Interpreters

Because of the primacy of the English language at the school, Spanish-speaking parents in this study engaged their children as interpreters or language brokers (Corona et al., 2012). The success of negotiating language can depend upon the skill of the language broker. For example, the Aguilar's 5-year-old son would not have the language sophistication of the Blancos' sister-in-law. Another consideration is whether or not the child edits the information. The information a child supplies the school may be altered to suit the child. A child may also alter information coming from the school by omitting pieces or choosing what he or she feels is relevant (Morales & Hanson, 2005). More important than these concerns are the affects that brokering language has on the child. When a child serves as a language broker, it not only affects the process of negotiating language, but it also affects the child.

Concerns with Children Serving as Interpreters

Worthy's (2006) research highlights how language brokering affects the children who serve as language brokers. In her study, a group of students expressed both pride at helping their parents by serving as interpreters and also embarrassment, frustration, and anger. They did not like being put into situations that were difficult for them or feeling like they had to take care of their parents (p. 149). Similarly, Reynolds and Orellana (2009) reported that translating for parents often involves linguistically technical and mature communications for which children are not prepared based upon their age and

English language development.

When the principal of Jefferson Elementary was asked if he ever had children interpret for him, he replied, “A couple of weeks ago we had an IEP [meeting] and during the IEP [meeting] the child did interpret for that.” A legal requirement for students who receive Special Education services is an Individual Learning Plan, or IEP, developed after the student has been evaluated and then adjusted every year thereafter. The school is required by law to deliver the services specified in the IEP. According to the Utah Parent Center (2011), in an IEP meeting, “parents and school personnel jointly make decisions about the educational program of a child with a disability based on the student’s needs as determined by the evaluation” (p. 23). Additionally, “The LEA [local education agent, in this case the principal] must take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the parent understands the proceedings of the IEP team meeting including arranging for an interpreter” (p. 28). The principal did not state the reason for having the child interpret in his or her own IEP meeting, but based on the legal requirements, discussion of the child’s evaluation, and decisions made during this meeting, serving as the interpreter for the adults clearly involved “linguistically technical and mature communications” that may have been inappropriate for this child.

Usually the child is present during an IEP. However, if a child is asked to interpret during this meeting, he or she may face the same paradoxical positions that Garcia-Sanchez and colleagues (2011) found when researching children interpreting during their own parent teacher conferences. They stated that in these situations child interpreters are:

...the objects of evaluation, but asked to take up the voice of an evaluator. They are translators, but sometimes also participants in the exchange. They are children speaking *to* and *for* adults, but under scrutiny of two different kinds of authority figures. They are the children of immigrants, but are asked to act as institutional agents...for the host society.

Of the three teachers I interviewed, one spoke Spanish and was the school's designated interpreter. The other two teachers said that they did not have students interpret during their own parent teacher conferences. The third grade teacher added, "I have had an older brother of a student before that's in middle school [translate]. He has done a conference with his mom before for me. But not third grade students, no." Nor did I observe any child interpreting for their parents at parent teacher conferences. I did observe the bilingual teacher interpret during several conferences.

Reynolds and Orellana (2009) investigated what children are subjected to when they interpret for adults in medical situations, during business transactions, in stores, or with government and community agencies, including schools. Unfortunately, what Reynolds and Orellana found in their research involving child interpreters gives one pause:

The very work of service opened them to ethnicized and racialized surveillance. As well, because they were children, they easily became the objects of adults' evaluations of their competencies. Ironically, the very act of speaking for adults exposed children to adults' critiques of their linguistic, cognitive, social, and behavioral competencies. The fact that their translations were evaluated and judged by adults who were incapable of translating underscores that irony. Judgments were especially searing when they were infused by racialized assumptions about the youth and their families; in some cases, children were left feeling responsible for their families' maltreatment, despite the fact that they had no real institutional authority to manage the events. (p. 221)

Even though parents naturally look to the resources held within their families, it can be understood how many children do not wish to serve or hold negative feelings about

serving as language brokers for their parents.

Complicating the Findings

The participants in Worthy's (2006) study reported both positive and negative feelings about language brokering. Corona and colleagues (2010) report that their participants had similar dichotomous feelings, while Villanueva and Buriel's (2010) participants mostly felt positive about brokering language. Morales and Hanson's (2005) review of 24 sources in the literature on language brokering found the researchers divided:

Some of the research reveals that brokers see translating as something normal, something they do. These studies have also shown that children enjoy translating because it gives them feelings of pride and allows them to learn more about their first and second languages, as well as their culture.... Other studies have reported findings that contradict those mentioned above. These studies have reported that language brokers experience feelings of frustration, embarrassment, or pressure to translate accurately. (pp. 489-490)

Because the children were not interviewed in the present study, there are only a few hints as to how language brokering affected them. Yesenia said that her youngest daughter was effective in interpreting in an oral language situation, but not at translating written English. Her older children, along with the Aguilar's older children, seemed reluctant to translate written material, but the parents did not indicate why.

Xavier reported that his 17-year-old daughter brokered both written and spoken English for him. During one of our interviews, I observed that after he had spoken for a moment on the phone, he called to her and asked her in Spanish to take care of the phone call because it was in English. She seemed very comfortable doing so and did not consult with her father at any time during the phone conversation. The Castros mentioned using

adults, a son who had graduated from high school or a sister-in-law, to interpret oral language at the school. Their older children that were still in public school served as language brokers to help the youngest child with his homework. Celestina remarked, “Thank God we have good kids that are willing to help their brother.” From the tone of Celestina’s statement, it seems that the Castro’s children did not mind language brokering in this way. The Aguilars said that their kindergarten son was very good at interpreting and had interpreted for them at the school. Brokering at this young age is not representative of the research which places the age that children start brokering between eight and twelve (Morales & Hanson, 2005).

From the very limited data on how language brokering affects the children in this study, it is impossible to draw any conclusions. However, all of the participants mentioned that they have had their children serve as language brokers in some way. That makes it important to discuss this issue, especially because of the concerns raised in the literature.

Maintaining Children’s Heritage Language

The reasons that parents gave for wanting their children to maintain their heritage language were cultural, economic, and academic. While all of the parents expressed a desire for their children to maintain their Spanish language abilities, the concern that the parents exhibited about this topic varied greatly. Some parents were adamant that their children spoke Spanish, others devoted time to teaching their children to read and write Spanish, while still others thought it would be nice, but not essential. Diego’s youngest

son struggled with Spanish. Diego said that they only spoke Spanish to him, even though he could only speak a few words in reply. Diego said, “*Le digo ¿Eres gringo o mexicano? El dice mexicano y ¿Usted no sabe el español?*” (“I ask him, are you Gringo or Mexican? He says that he is Mexican and I say to him, don’t you know Spanish?”) Xavier’s attitude was almost opposite of Diego’s. He was glad that his oldest daughter could speak, read, and write Spanish, but of his other children he said, “*A lo mejor ellos mas adelante, a lo mejor cuando ya ellos les interese mas*” (“Maybe the others will get it later, if they show more interest.”)

The immediate and future need for their children to speak English seemed to eclipse many of the parents’ concerns over their children maintaining their heritage language. Emelda said the most important thing that she wanted her children to learn in school was English. She remarked, “*Lo más pronto porque la necesidad ya que aprendan el idioma eso se les va hacer más fácil aprender lo demás.*” (“The sooner the better because it would be easier to learn the rest if they know how to speak [English].”) Carlos also answered that learning English was the most important. He said, “*Bueno, el idioma es algo muy importante para ellos porque nosotros le enseñamos español pero ellos necesariamente hablan el inglés, escriben y leen el inglés. Para ellos y para nosotros es una ayuda poder comunicarnos.*” (“Well the language is very important to them because we teach them Spanish, but they have to speak English and they write it and read it too. For them and for us, it helps to be able to communicate.”) Earlier in the interview he had understandably said that his son “*se ubicó [hablar] en el idioma que todo hablan en este país*” (“had no choice but to speak in the language that is used here in this country.”)

Heritage Language Maintenance and the Connection to Learning English

The Estradas and Celestina voiced a belief in a connection between their children's capacity in their heritage language and in their ability to learn English. The Estradas felt that their son was confusing Spanish and English because he did not have a good foundation in Spanish. Eduardo commented:

Confunde mucho. El problema es que él no sabía el español. Entonces se le hace más difícil así y yo pienso que si él aprende un poco más el español, no más ya va a traducir. En cambio si le pones a estudiar puro inglés, es como si lo tendríamos que mandar al Kinder para que empiece a hablar el inglés porque él no sabe nada. Es como un niño que nació y no sabe nada, tiene que aprender hablar el idioma.

He is very confused. The problem is that he didn't know Spanish. I think it is difficult for him, but if he learns a little bit more Spanish then he would just have to translate. But if you have him study just English, it is like you have to start him in kindergarten again because he doesn't know anything. He is just like a newborn that has just started talking.

Celestina's belief that knowing their heritage language helps children learn English stemmed from the experience she had with her oldest son at a different school in the district. She said, "*La maestra que tuvo mi niño el mayor, le ayudaba con el español y con el inglés. El un año tomó clases de español. Del inglés ya no, lo agarró sino del español, entonces eso le ayudado bastante.*" ("The teacher who taught my oldest was teaching him some Spanish and English at the same time. He took one year of Spanish classes. He did not take English, but rather Spanish, and that helped him tremendously.") Celestina's belief was based on experience. Eduardo's was based on the assumption that it would be easier to translate from a first language to a second. There is also empirical evidence that competence in a person's first language (L1) correlates with abilities in a

second language (L2).

Dixon et al. (2012) reviewed 71 studies about second language acquisition from the perspectives of foreign language educators, child language researchers, sociocultural researchers, and psycholinguists. Results from a few of these studies showed that abilities in a first language influenced second language skills (p. 40). One of the studies they included was Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, and Goldenberg's, (2000) longitudinal study of 91 children from Spanish-speaking homes. Their findings noted specific L1 literacy practices:

Emergent Spanish literacy at the beginning of kindergarten is a significant predictor of English reading ability eight years later. Students who were read to, who had early experiences with print, who developed early notions of the relationship between letters and sounds and between printed and spoken language in their native language not only exhibited advantages in initial literacy performance in that language but also continued to experience advantages in later performance in English. The more Spanish literacy a child exhibited at kindergarten, the faster he/she was judged ready for English reading instruction. Thus, the best Spanish readers in our sample were the earliest to transition to English reading instruction. (p. 655)

These findings are substantiated by numerous studies discussed by Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, and Humbach (2009). Their discussion gives an overview of the interplay between L1 skills and L2 proficiency and achievement, known as cross-linguistic transfer (p. 729). The studies they highlight offer consistent evidence “that L2 learners with significantly stronger L1 skills exhibit stronger L2 aptitude and L2 proficiency and achievement” (p. 729).

One study found that “over half of the variance in L2 vocabulary, writing, and listening comprehension were explained by students' L1 word decoding, listening and reading comprehension, and phonological memory skills” (p. 729). Most interesting was

the long term effect of L1 skills found in two studies:

In the first study, findings showed that measures of L1 literacy in elementary school accounted for 40% of the variance in oral and written L2 proficiency in high school, and that measures of L1 literacy (reading, spelling), receptive vocabulary, and verbal ability in elementary school accounted for 73% of the variance in L2 aptitude on the MLAT [a measure of L2 aptitude] in 9th grade.... In the second study, Sparks et al. found that the best predictor of L2 decoding skill in 10th grade was a measure of L1 decoding skill administered in elementary school and that the best predictors of L2 spelling were L1 spelling skills and L1 phonological awareness.... (p. 730)

These studies indicated that Celestina and the Estradas were correct in believing that their children's abilities in their heritage language would help them learn English. The long-term effects of cross-linguistic transfer are important for all children who have a heritage language other than English, although many parents are not aware that there is empirical evidence of a connection between their children's abilities in their heritage language and the acquisition of English.

Importance of Familial Communication

The Castros, Delgados, and Xavier reported that their youngest children were not maintaining their ability to speak Spanish. To the Delgados and Xavier, this did not seem to pose a great concern. They have limited use of English and can still communicate within their families. For the Castros, it could mean the loss of direct communication with their child. Many of the other parents would face the same situation if their children failed to maintain their heritage language. At least one of the parents at Jefferson Elementary school was already in this position, as was revealed when I described an experience that I had when I interpreted during parent teacher conferences. This issue is important because "Parents guide, nurture, and teach their children in the context of the

family's language and culture" (Orozco, 2008).

Of course, all of the parents know that they live in an English-speaking country and it seems reasonable to assume that the parents would learn English. Unfortunately, learning English as an adult in the U.S. is not as easy as it would seem (Worthy, 2006). First, there is a time factor for all second language acquisition. Cummins (1994) established that it takes around two years to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), or language used in informal social situations. It takes five to seven years to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS), or more technical language proficiency. Second, the demand for resources far outstrips the supply. Worthy explained that entities like businesses, churches, schools, and communities used to offer classes to new immigrants, but that type of support has declined. Third, for some adults, learning a second language is very challenging. One of the study participants, Emelda said that although she had a great desire to learn English, nothing she studied stayed with her. Fourth, the demands of life on an adult's time can preempt being able to regularly attend language classes. Many of the study participants mentioned working long hours, and some of the women spent much of their time at home with small children where their exposure to English would be limited.

Historically in the United States, loss of familial communication was not a problem. First generation immigrants usually retained their heritage language and passed it on to their children, the second generation. The second generation of immigrants not only learned English, but maintained their heritage language, thus being able to communicate with their parents. The third generation did not learn their parents' heritage

language, but because their parents were bilingual, familial communication was not lost (Fillmore, 2000; Tran, 2010). Fillmore found a disturbing trend to this pattern. Unlike Tran, who believed that bilingualism is resurging, she posits that second generation immigrants are not becoming bilingual and so familial communication is in jeopardy. Without the ability for parents to communicate with their children, she believed that they cannot provide their children with “what is most fundamental to success in life” (p. 206). She called this the “curriculum of the home” and it includes knowledge of who one is and where one comes from, an understanding of how one is connected to the important others and events in one’s life; the ability to deal with adversity; and knowing one’s responsibilities to self, family, community. Parents socialize children as they mature. When children lose their heritage language, if their parents do not speak English the socialization process can break down and leave children without many important attributes needed to be successful adults.

The views about their children’s maintenance of their heritage language varied greatly among the participants. A few of the parents tied the maintenance of the heritage language to their children’s ability to learn English. A parent who was not interviewed for this study, but for whom I interpreted during parent teacher conference at Jefferson Elementary, was greatly distressed over her son’s loss of Spanish. She regretted not being able to communicate with him. Other parents felt that the ability to speak Spanish was part of their culture and wanted their children to maintain that aspect of their culture. Conversely, a few participants did not seem to place a high priority on their children maintaining Spanish.

Social and Cultural Capital

Another theme that emerged from the data is the social and cultural capital of Spanish-speaking parents. Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) stated:

Much less research has been conducted on the social and cultural capital of Hispanic parents, their strengths, and their desire to connect with schools in ways that are meaningful to them.... As critical researchers, we suspect that the power and influence Hispanic parents can have on their children's education has been ignored by many and underestimated by most. (pp. 322-323)

If that statement is true, then there is even less research on this subject from new settlement areas. Along with the regular considerations of social and cultural capital, the new settlement area in this study affected the social and cultural capital of the participants in significant ways.

Social Capital

The social capital of Spanish-speaking parents includes their relational networks and the resources that they provide. As such, it plays a role in Spanish-speaking parents' negotiations of language and culture. The networks that include close family and friends can be called "bonding" capital, and the networks that bring previously unknown persons together can be called "bridging" capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998, p. 15). Many factors influence a person's social capital. Some of the influences are personal, such as personality type or personal prejudices. Others are external such as economic opportunities or discrimination. This analysis only discusses the participants' social capital in relationship to negotiating language and culture and the factors that may have had an influence.

Bonding social capital. Bonding capital was evident in several situations. When asked how the parents found out about the school their children would need to attend, all but one participant said a family member helped them. That the participants located near other family members speaks to the strength of bonding capital among extended family members. Within their nuclear families, many of the participants also mentioned having older children help the younger children with homework. By far the greatest evidence of a resource produced by bonding capital was the availability of family members to serve as language brokers. The Blancos had their adult son or a sister-in-law interpret and all of the participants mentioned their children serving as language brokers. Another example of participants drawing upon their bonding capital was the way in which many of the Spanish-speaking parents worked as a couple to advance their children's education. Almost all of the parents mentioned attending events at the school together. Eduardo would translate for Emelda during meetings, and when he could not go to the school because of work, she went as their representative. Yesenia and her husband also had a pattern of one parent taking care of a situation at school when the other was unavailable.

Social capital not only produces positive resources, but it also produces obligations that can sometimes be unwanted. The unwillingness of the Castro's and Yesenia's oldest children to translate may be evidence that the children did not want to fulfill an obligation. Woolcock (2001) criticized those who do not acknowledge that social capital can have negative consequences. He stated:

Intuition and everyday language also recognize an additional feature of social capital, however. They acknowledge that social capital has costs as well as benefits, that social ties can be a liability as well as an asset. . . . In our everyday language and life experiences, in short, we find that the social ties we have can be

both a blessing and a blight.... (p. 11)

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) mentioned several of the negative consequences of social capital. One situation they analyze is that of immigrant youth who have to choose between fitting in with the local youth culture and fulfilling the expectations of their parents (pp. 1342-1343).

Bridging social capital. Bridging networks that involve school can produce important resources for parents. In her recent study, Wanat (2012) presented many advantages to networking:

Networking gives parents access to information about school policies, teachers, and students' peers.... Parents and other adults who engage in sustained interactions build social capital to generate productive outcomes for children.... Parents who interact with other parents at school become involved through mutual support.... Parents may influence decisions collectively at school and district levels by forming groups to solve shared community issues.... (p. 277)

All of these resources could aid parents in negotiating language and culture.

Unfortunately, bridging capital reported by the parents in this study was almost completely nonexistent. One participant offered information about nonschool related social capital. Carlos said, "*Nosotros participamos mucho en la iglesia e interactuamos con mucha gente. Claro que la mayoría son de habla hispana. Pero si, nos relacionamos mucho con la gente y también en el ambiente del trabajo y todo eso.*" ("We participate a lot in church, so we interact with a lot of people. I have to say that most of them speak Spanish. But we also interact with people all the time and at work, too.") In reference to bridging capital involving school, when asked if there was anyone to help them with school concerns besides school staff, only one parent, Xavier, answered yes. He said that he had a friend who was a teacher, several states away where they used to live, who "*ha*

sido muy amiga de nosotros muchos años y yo a veces pues cuando tengo preocupaciones le hablo a ella, le pregunto qué es lo que debo hacer” (“has been our friend for many years and sometimes when I am concerned or worried, I ask her what to do.”) Those two statements are the extent of the bridging capital mentioned by the participants.

When asked if they spoke with any of the parents of the other students who attended the school, all of the parents answered no. Of speaking with other parents, Yesenia said:

No hay mucha comunicación con los padres porque la mayoría de o sea casi todos hablan inglés. Ese es el problema que tenemos, o sea nosotros los padres que no podemos hablar en inglés. No nos podemos comunicar. Solamente saludo y es de vista que se les ve. No hay comunicación con los demás.

(“There is no communication with them because the majority of them only speak English. That is the problem we, the parents who can’t speak English, have. We can’t talk to anyone. We just say hi when you see them but there is no conversation between us. There is no communication with the rest of the people.”)

During five months of observations at the school, during the day, before and after school, and at various after school and evening events, I did not see any interactions between Spanish-speaking parents and other parents, English or Spanish-speaking, that went beyond a greeting. In contrast, I saw many White parents chatting quite frequently with one another.

Alfred (2010) observed:

As a bridging function, Putnam suggests that social capital can provide linkages to networks and acquaintances that are external to one’s immediate community, thus widening the pool of available resources and social networks. However, Putnam failed to account for factors such as race, class and nationality, (among others), which tend to serve as barriers among minority populations to other white-dominated networks or social groups, thus denying them the bridging

opportunities that he speaks of. (p. 228)

Auerbach (2002) also pointed out that because of the “marginalized social location of parents of color.... They are less likely to know fellow parents at the school through social networks....” (p. 1372). While language cannot be ignored as the major barrier for Spanish-speaking parents in this study to bridging networks, the other factors that Alfred and Worthy proposed may also be involved. There did exist language resources that could have been employed in bridging capital. Those resources were bilingual Latinos and White Spanish-speaking parents like the PTA president. However, during my observations at the school I never observed a White parent interact in Spanish with another parent nor did I observe any Latino interact in Spanish with another adult who was not obviously a relative.

Social capital in new settlement areas. Spanish-speaking parents who live in places where there is a large concentration of Latinos face fewer barriers in building bridging capital. Many of the other parents at their children’s schools and in their neighborhoods share the same language and racial or ethnic background and quite possibly nationality. In contrast, the Spanish-speaking parents in this study live in a new settlement area where the multiple barriers they face make it challenging to build bridging capital and so have a narrower “pool of available resources and social networks” (Alfred, 2010, p. 228). Based on this study’s participants, it does not seem that bonding capital is affected by the new settlement area. Perhaps it is because even in new settlement areas, families choose to live near their relatives. Bonding capital could also be strengthened as families look to their members to provide resources such as

interpreting that are more readily available from outside sources in areas with large concentrations of Latinos.

Cultural Capital

There is a dilemma for many researchers in reporting the cultural capital of study participants. That all participants have cultural capital is not the issue. The issue is how other entities involved in the study value that capital. In reporting this issue, many times it produces a deficit model, as if the cultural capital of the participants is intrinsically less valuable. Of course the cultural capital of the participants is not intrinsically less valuable but is actually undervalued by other entities.

Bourdieu (1986) described cultural capital as “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” acquired over time from one’s family; “cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)”; and “educational qualifications” (p. 82). If only *certain* dispositions, *certain* cultural goods, and *certain* educational qualifications are assigned value, then it would be easy to say that those who possessed them had cultural capital and those who did not possess them did not. For example, if the only educational qualifications assigned value were post high school institutional qualifications, then Emelda Estrada’s teaching herself to read when her poverty prohibited her from attending school would have no value. It is not that the Latino parents in this study do not have a lot of cultural capital. It is that they may not have the kind that is valued by the school system. With the aforementioned considerations, the cultural capital exposed in this study best lends itself to a combination of Bourdieu’s definition above and the examination of the study participants’ “strategic use of knowledge, skill,

and competence” offered by Lareau and Weininger (2003).

Because of the nature of this study, the cultural capital exhibited by the participants had direct ties to their children’s learning. Yesenia’s husband’s vocation included computers and he excelled at math. She said that her husband helped her children with their math homework. She herself had received post high school training in early childhood education. She used her knowledge and skills of the learning process to help her children when they had problems in school, even though she did not speak English. Strategic use of knowledge can be seen when participants had their children read, made sure that they did their homework, and had older children help younger children with schoolwork. While all of these activities were done in English without the parents being able to directly participate, they knew that these activities would be beneficial to their children. Besides these activities, there were some cultural goods mentioned by the participants. They were the books the parents had their children read, the picture book bought by Celestina to help her son learn English, and the computer bought by Eduardo.

“Consejos” also emerged as part of the cultural capital of the study participants. Consejos are “spontaneous homilies designed to influence behaviors and attitudes” (Valdés, 1996, p.125). Villenas and Moreno (2001) called them “nurturing advice and moral lessons” (p. 675). Their purpose is to provide guidance, influence attitudes and behaviors, support goals, and produce and pass on knowledge (del Carmen Salazar & Franquiz, 2008; Ixa Plata-Portero & de Guzman, 2012; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). The Estradas tried to influence the attitude of their son when they talked to him about the

danger of reading just to get candy from the teacher. They told him that the purpose of reading was to learn and that if he did not learn to read school would be difficult.

Eduardo also told him that passing with low scores was not enough, that he should actually master the material. Yesenia tried to guide her son when he would not tell her who was bullying him. She told him, "*Si uno no expresa lo que está pasando pues, la escuela o la persona que está encargada de la escuela no va a saber y no va a poder hacer nada.*" ("If you don't complain about what is happening, the school will never know what is going on and won't be able to do anything.") Because of the great resources that she saw at the school she told her children, "*Les digo, ustedes acá tienen de todo. Aprovechen pues todo lo que tienen.*" ("I tell my kids, you have so much there. Take advantage of what they have for you.") Additionally, she and her husband talked to their children about the importance of education, "*va a tener una mejor vida pues si ellos estudian, si llegan a ser profesionales.*" ("that you have to go to school and be a professional so you can have a better life.") Xavier mentioned two consejos that he gave his daughter. The first one affirmed her intelligence and independence. "*Le dije a mi hija que si ella quiere no necesita de mi porque con su inteligencia que ella tiene, puede agarrar becas y no necesita de mi si ella quiere salir adelante.*" ("I told my daughter that if she wants she doesn't need to rely on me because with her intelligence she can get scholarships if what she wants is to keep advancing.") The second one was about her opportunities. "*Le digo a la más grande, si tú hablas y escribes bien [el español], vas a tener más oportunidades en tu vida*" ("I tell my oldest daughter that if she speaks and writes Spanish well, she will have more opportunities in her life.")

Another aspect of the participants' cultural capital was the long-lasting dispositions the parents demonstrated in their capacity to nurture their children. Even though the language was a substantial barrier, and arranging work schedules difficult, parents attended parent teacher conferences, birthday tables, plays, classroom presentations, and talent shows. They commented that they wanted to know what was happening with their children, and wanted their children to see them at the school to feel their support. When they had concerns about their children, they initiated contact with the school. They waited for interpreters or came back another day when one would be available. When their children were being bullied, and subjected to racism, they did what they could to remedy the situation, even if their efforts seemed ineffectual. Emelda combated her shyness and perhaps feelings of incompetence because of her lack of conventional education to advocate for her children when their bike tires were slashed at school. Beatriz doggedly sought help, giving the school no alternative but to find someone to interpret.

Lastly, their Latino heritage was part of their cultural capital. The parents in this study spoke Spanish to their children, taught them to read and write in Spanish, ate food typical of their countries of origin, held cultural celebrations with extended family members, and practiced their religions. Beatriz supported the development of her children's Latino identity by telling them "*lo que uno es y como uno se crió y que no olviden siempre como ellos son y su familia*" ("who one is and the way one was raised so that way they won't forget where they are coming from and their family.") Carlos said, "*Les enseñamos nuestra cultura*" ("We teach them our culture.") And one participant,

Diego, because he had seen it happen to his cousins, feared that as his children grew older “*se van a avergonzar*” (“they will feel ashamed”) of being Latino.

Bourdieu’s model of cultural capital included agency and power. Whoever gets to decide what forms of cultural capital are valued has the power. The power to place value permeates society’s institutions such as schools. People then have their agency to accept those valuations, find a way around them, or work individually or in concert to change them. While acknowledging that individuals within institutions differ greatly, and circumstances cannot be completely understood, I believe that the data from this study does provide some insight as to what was valued by the institution of the U.S. school as represented by the staff and students at Jefferson Elementary and the other schools in the area. They valued seeing parents at school functions supporting their children. They valued the way the parents wanted what was best for their children educationally. They valued a person’s ability to speak English and placed less value on hiring personnel to interpret and translate for Spanish-speaking parents. The several incidents of bullying and racism were evidence that the Latino culture was not valued as highly as the White culture. Many of the parents just accepted which forms of cultural capital were valued. Others used their agency to work around them through such actions as bringing their own interpreters, or giving *consejos* to their children. And still others tried to change what was valued by speaking with principals, voicing their concerns, and asking for change.

A Critical Link: How the District, School, and Staff

Members Reached Out

Linking social capital is defined by Woolcock (2001) as “the capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions....” (p. 12). Instead of discussing the study participants’ capital produced through links with the school, I would like to turn that around by examining what Jefferson Elementary School and its agents did to provide, resources, ideas, and information to Spanish-speaking parents. As public institutions, paid in the most part through local property taxes, schools are charged with educating the community’s children. Part of that responsibility at Jefferson Elementary and in other new settlement areas includes negotiating language and culture with Spanish-speaking parents so that they can support their children’s education. Up until this point the emphasis has been on the parents’ acts of the negotiation. It is now time to turn to the other negotiators involved, the school as an institution and its personnel, and how well they fostered linking capital between themselves and the study participants.

Scarcity of Language Resources

Language has been shown to be a critical issue in the negotiations examined in this study. It is almost impossible to forge links between the school and Spanish-speaking parents without being able to communicate. The necessity of using an interpreter to communicate orally with school personnel is very challenging and perhaps not understood by the educators at Jefferson Elementary. When parents and school staff members share the same language, many of the oral tasks associated with school are not

even noted. Parents can make a quick call to talk with the secretary, teacher, administrator, or to make an appointment. They can drop in at almost any time before or after school and take care of a concern or find out information. Many parents work or have other obligations such as child care, and so the ability to drop in or call when convenient is extremely helpful. Parents who do not share the same language, such as the parents in this study, face a much greater challenge. They have to coordinate everything with an interpreter. If they call the school or drop in, they have to wait for the interpreter to be available. Once the interpreter knows what is needed, she then has to either find out the information, or get a second staff member and interpret between the staff member and the parent. What an English-speaking parent could do on a lunch break or while caring for other children would take too much time for a Spanish-speaking parent. This was further complicated in this study because the interpreter/translator at the school was a full time teacher who had a class to take care of during the day and regular classroom duties associated with that class before and after school. She did have a fulltime aide, but was not always able to leave her classroom at a moment's notices. Because of this situation, participants reported having to wait, having to come back another day, or not receiving any help with interpretation.

Other parents had positive experiences using the kindergarten teacher as a translator. The kindergarten teacher confirmed this through some of the examples she shared:

We have one Hispanic student that's Jehovah Witness and so I met with the parents and with some of the teachers and just explained things about what he could and couldn't do...we did a behavior [intervention] where the parent was concerned [that] the child was not bringing home any homework.... I helped a

parent looking for the parts of her child's costume [for the play], explained to her exactly what they needed.

It appears that communication with Spanish-speaking parents greatly depends on the availability of the kindergarten teacher, and her availability has not been consistent as reported by the parents.

The school district did provide translations of the forms filled out by parents when they register their children. They included the registration card, the medical history form, the language survey, the Accident and Health Insurance application. The only other translation they provided was and the Family Literacy Center brochure. The school provided translations for parent teacher time notifications and flyers for Family Math and Family Literacy Nights. The bilingual kindergarten teacher could send notes home in Spanish and the second grade teacher and English Language Learners aide said that she had also translated notes or letters for them.

When school newsletters and notifications are not translated, parents miss information and important opportunities for their children. During the pilot study at a different school in the district (Bickmore, 2008), a notification in English only was sent out for parents to sign up their children to construct rockets with local engineers. Children who regularly translate for their parents may not have deemed this notice important or been unable to translate the technical language. Parents would have missed out on enrolling their child in this excellent opportunity. Most of the notifications for curricular enhancing activities are sent to parents in newsletters or notifications. Such activities include arts, science, and math enrichment. When schools do not assure that parents get this information they are effectively narrowing the curriculum and

educational opportunities for some children.

The school principal and staff were cognizant of the need for better interpretive and translations services. The principal tried to do what he could with his limited resources and told of a time he called the Parent Teacher Association president to translate when the kindergarten teacher was unavailable after school. He also commented, “Well it would be nice if I could have an assistant that could speak Spanish and just have somebody; I guess I don’t have to say an assistant, someone that would be a little more handy.” The second grade teacher said, “I would love it if we just had someone on call that we could, whether it be district wide or school wide, maybe someone in the school like a parent liaison or someone who could translate for us whenever we needed that.” The third-grade teacher’s comment was similar.

I wish we had more, but there is not enough money. I would love it if there was somebody in the school that was a little bit more available. The [kindergarten teacher] is awesome and helps me when she can, but she is also teaching a class. It so would be awesome if there was somebody available to translate letters and notes, and phone calls and all that, that that was their job. But that is in a perfect world and I don’t know that that will ever happen. That would sure be nice.

The staff at Jefferson Elementary could see the advantages of having an interpreter who was not also a classroom teacher. They also acknowledged that funding for a person to be a translator was probably not feasible. One solution other schools have found is to hire bilingual aides or secretaries.

Missed Opportunities to Create Linking Capital

One obvious position to fill with a bilingual Spanish/English-speaker would be the ESL aide, because the school’s ELL population is Latino. Usually when a student

qualifies for ELL services, their parents are not bilingual. The aide would be able to communicate each student's progress with the parents and also serve as a liaison between the regular teacher and the parents. When I was chatting with the ELL aide, I asked her how she was hired for the position. She said that she got a call from a friend telling her that the job had opened up and to hurry and apply. She did and got the job. There may not have been any bilingual applicants, but it did not appear as if the job was left open for very long.

I observed another missed opportunity at parent teacher conferences. The school social worker had a table set up with information for the parents to take. I asked her if she had any information that had been translated into Spanish and she answered no. When she saw me later that night, she told me that my question had made her stop and think. She had decided to go through her materials and choose a few that she thought would be the most helpful for Spanish parents and have the kindergarten teacher translate them. She had not even thought about having any of them translated, let alone having them ready for parent teacher conferences.

That evening I also observed another lost opportunity. As I circulated around the building, stopping outside of doors to listen to the conversations between parents and teachers, I overheard the kindergarten teacher telling the administrative intern that she had to leave and would not be able to interpret for another teacher. He knew how to speak Spanish and agreed to interpret. As the appointment drew near, I sat in the hall a bit removed from the designated classroom. The administrative intern stood opposite the teacher's door. Between us on the chairs by the teacher's door was a Latino family. The

son was showing his father the work on the wall and they were conversing in both Spanish and English. I watched as the administrative intern just stood there. He looked at his watch and basically ignored the Latino family. The time for the appointment came and went without the family being called into the classroom. When the teacher finally came to her door saying goodbye to the parents who had ended their conference with her, the intern told her that he was sorry but that it was now too late for him to stay as he had another commitment. Seeing me nearby and knowing that I spoke Spanish, the teacher then asked me to interpret during the conference.

It was very hard for me to only observe during the time before the conference, but I did not want to inject myself into the dynamics at play. I remained observing and did not follow through on any of my reactions. My first reaction was to introduce myself to the parents and speak with them in Spanish, just to be friendly, knowing that there were so few Spanish-speakers about. My second reaction was to wonder why the intern was not introducing himself, especially because of his position representing the administration of the school. My third reaction was to introduce the intern to the parents. I found it hard to sit by and watch as an opportunity that did not present itself often to the Spanish-speaking parents at this school was wasted.

Lack of a Well Thought Out Plan

The rapid increase to the percentage of Latino children entering schools in new settlement areas has left some districts and schools ill prepared to meet their needs and those of their parents. Jefferson Elementary's district was in the process of drawing new boundaries as it closed old schools and opened new ones. They held several meetings,

figured out how to shift students for one or two years while one school was being renovated, and created financing options. They had a well thought out plan. The same cannot be said about their approach to the increase of Latinos to the district and how to reach out to Spanish-speaking parents. Most of the district's efforts centered on complying with state mandates and involved the students, and as such impacted the parents.

After having taught the English language learners for four months by the time of her interview, when asked what would make her position more effective, the ELL aide said:

I wish the district would have a training, tell me what they expect their program to be doing. They haven't really told me that. You know when people ask me, why is that child in that program, I'm like, because they qualify. I don't really know what their intention for their program is. It hasn't been outlined to me.

If the ELL aide did not know what the objectives of the ELL program were, she would have a very hard time building linking capital with the parents of the students she taught. All districts are mandated to give services to English language learners. As part of that compliance, each school has an English Language Learner Coordinator who oversees the services the school offers. At Jefferson Elementary the coordinator was the Spanish-speaking kindergarten teacher. She lamented:

I wish I had more time to be the ELL coordinator. I think that would actually really help me if in a perfect world I could work half a day [teaching] and half a day [coordinating], so I wasn't just trying to throw that in on the side. I could be more involved and dedicated to that, be more on top of teachers and notes and things...that would help me be more effective.

Even the coordinator knows that the way the district has set up the program; it is not functioning as it should.

Another program run by the district that was also not functioning as it should was the Family Literacy Center. The two centers, one in the north and one in the south of the district, were provided for by a grant from the federal government to the school district. The coordinator explained that its main function was to help Spanish-speakers learn English. The coordinator reported, “Many of [the Spanish-speaking parents] who come into the center are perfectly willing to learn English and eager as a matter of fact. However, most of them have gotten discouraged when they found out we do not have any actual lesson plans for them.” The Latinos who come into the center are given two options to learn English. The first is a computer program to use at the center. The second is to find an English as a Second Language class somewhere else and come to the center for tutoring and support. The coordinator said that there were plans to actually teach an English course at the center. He felt that, “If we can get that information out, we will see a huge increase in attendance.”

While there were several things that the school and district did to help the Spanish-speaking students and parents, there seemed to be no cohesive plan. It was probably more luck than planning that the kindergarten teacher spoke Spanish. Most of the comments from the staff only mentioned the need for better communication, as if other considerations besides language had never been discussed. When asked for recommendations that would make their positions more effective for Spanish-speaking parents, the principal, secretary, teachers, and ELL aide all mentioned better interpretive and translation services.

Even though the ELL aide did not have the full picture of what she was doing, she

did give services to the students that their parents would appreciate. When asked what resources were available to help Latino students achieve at the same rate as their peers she answered:

Well, that's what I hope my job is, that extra time that a lot of times they need, one on one time, smaller groups to kind of keep up with the rest of the class.... I am a lot like a reading group, but I do more than just their reading. Really vocabulary development and communication on top of the reading group things.

Likewise, the ELL coordinator performed the services required of her. After the yearly test for English language proficiency she sent letters home informing the parents of their child's proficiency. She tracked all of the ELL students. Every six weeks she met with their teachers and sets goals with them for the students' academic progress. They reviewed the goals from the previous six weeks and make adjustment and searched for solutions to ongoing academic problems.

The principal found extra money to expand the time the ELL aide was at the school so that more students could be served and the second grade teacher mentioned a computer program that was used with ELLs to build vocabulary. The principal did try to find avenues for parents to be more involved and each year would encourage Latino parents to be part of the school's Community Council, but had no success. Services given their children build linking capital between the school and Spanish-speaking parents. However, there did not seem to be a plan to reach out and build links between Spanish-speaking parents and the school, but rather district mandates were met and concerns over communication voiced.

Caring Expressed Through Actions

The third grade teacher I interviewed created linking capital for Spanish-speaking parents through her acts of caring. I specifically wanted to interview her after hearing her student read a poem to her parents during parent teacher conferences. The student had written two versions, one in English and one in Spanish. This teacher demonstrated her caring in many ways. She had gotten her English as a Second Language endorsement which teaches skills to use with English language learners. She was friends with an ESL teacher at another school and said, “I have gone to her Catholic masses and things like that, and some different quincietas, parties, just to try to acclimate myself to the culture a bit more.” She also differentiated her teaching which was made evident as she spoke about her student who had written the poem:

I have given her books that are written in Spanish. I’ve ordered from Scholastic. So she is doing home reading in both languages because she can read, that one can. My other little gal that is struggling, we actually had her tested and she actually tested having a low IQ so I haven’t pushed because she doesn’t read in Spanish. But her mom doesn’t read. And so therefore I don’t know how to teach her to read in Spanish because I don’t know all of the inflections and those sorts of things. But the other little gal where she has some background in that and she can pronounce the words and read it, we are having her do her at-home reading in both languages.

Not only did she care enough to differentiate her teaching, she also sought ways for her student to use, preserve, and advance in her heritage language, letting her write in either Spanish or English and finding Spanish books for her to read. She had fostered this student’s bilingualism where another teacher may not have taken the time to do so.

Another experience she shared also demonstrated her caring. A few years before the interview she had received a student in the third grade who had not been to school

before and could not speak English. She told of the many challenges that the student faced in adjusting to the new environment, especially without being able to communicate. She commented, “I feel for him because that would be so hard to suddenly be stuck in a classroom where nobody speaks what you speak.” She said that it was really hard the first couple of months but then she found a level AA book with pictures of animals and objects and the words for each item. She would sit with him and help him pronounce the words. Then she said, “He would tell me the word in Spanish and then I would sit and try and say it. That finally ended up working because he had comic relief at how I pronounced it.” This teacher had an attitude of caring. She tried to do whatever she could to meet her students’ needs.

A second educator promoted linking capital with the Castros through his attention and care. He was a Spanish-speaking counselor at the high school. After Celestina had briefly mentioned how he had helped their oldest son, Carlos said:

Solo [quiero] recalcar que el trabajo del counselor en la escuela de mi hijo el mayor ha sido de mucha ayuda para él porque el año pasado hasta fines de Diciembre sus calificaciones estaban bien baja. Nosotros procuramos hablar con alguien y el profesor estaba disponible y nos ayudo mucho a hablar con todos los maestros para que él se ponga al corriente y en un mes él pudo alcanzar realmente el nivel y aún más del nivel que nosotros esperábamos.

I would like to mention again that the counselor of my oldest boy was a tremendous help for him because last year in December his grades were really low. We were looking for someone to talk to about this and he was available. He helped us so much by talking to my son’s teachers so that he could catch up in his schooling. In one month my son was able to reach the level he was supposed to be at and even more than we expected.

The acts of caring of these two educators created social capital for Spanish-speaking parents by providing resources, ideas, and information.

Having the Right People on the Bus

Sometimes a staff member is exceptional at creating linking capital with Spanish-speaking parents. The Castros and Yesenia mentioned such a staff member. She did not teach at Jefferson Elementary but at another elementary school in the district where both families had previously lived. Mrs. Zuñiga was the ELL aide at the school. Mrs. Zuñiga, a native Spanish speaker, worked directly with both the students and their parents.

Celestina described the experience of having Mrs. Zuñiga's help. She said:

Con mi otro hijo me sucedía diferente porque la maestra que le enseñaba a él no del grado sino la que traducía, ella estaba siempre ahí. Y ella siempre todo el tiempo nos ayudaba.... él podía participar más en las actividades. Había competencia de spelling y feria de ciencias y otras cosas más donde yo podía recibir orientación en español. Entonces a la vez yo podía ayudar a mi hijo a apoyarlo en esas actividades a él.

With my other son it was different because the teacher, not his regular teacher but the one who translated, she was always there. She was there to help us at all times He was able to really participate in all the activities. There were spelling competitions and science fair and other things where I was getting orientation in Spanish. So I was able to both help my son and support him in these activities.

The linking capital fostered by Mrs. Zuñiga was evident in the way Celestina was able to support her son in his school activities. Mrs. Zuñiga also valued her students' heritage language and understood the connection between competence in a student's first language and their ability to learn a second language. Celestina's husband, Carlos related, "*Ahí tenía una clase para todos los niños hispanos para que puedan aprender a leer y a nivelarse en su inglés y también a no perder el idioma que traían.*" ("There they had a class for all the Hispanic students to learn how to read English, and to reach the level they needed, and to learn and to keep their native language as well.")

Yesenia's experiences with Mrs. Zuñiga were similar. She said that when they

came from Peru her children did not know English but the school welcomed them and Mrs. Zuñiga helped her children a lot in the beginning. She reported that Mrs. Zuñiga *“fue la que nos ayudó tanto a nuestros hijos y también a nosotros porque hubo un tiempo, ella se dio un tiempo para ayudarnos a nosotros los padres también con el inglés.”* (“was the one who helped our children so much and there was a time, she set aside time to help the parents with their English also.”)

Yesenia had another experience with an educator who created linking capital.

This educator helped her oldest son at a critical time:

Había una profesora que lo ayudó mucho. Ella estuvo siempre al tanto de él en lo que el fallaba ahí estaba la profesora hasta que lo hizo terminar High School. No lo dejó porque le hizo terminar y le hizo graduar. Siempre le estuvo orientando y diciéndole sabes que tienes que seguir estudiando. Le ayudó lo que es a buscar la Universidad, que carrera quiere seguir. Le oriento mucho y yo estoy bien agradecida de esa parte a la profesora que le ayudo bastante a mi hijo.

There was a counselor who helped my son a lot. She was always up to date on what he needed academically; making sure that he graduated High School. She was always by his side until the end so that he was able to finish high school and he finally graduated. She gave him support and orientation, telling him that he needed to continue his education. She even helped him to find the right university for him and the major. I am so thankful that she directed him to find his path.

The resources produce through linking capital with schools are important. Mrs. Zuñiga helped the Castro’s and Yesenia’s children learn English and maintain their heritage language. She helped the parents with their English and made it possible for them to support their children by orienting them to the school’s practices and activities. A high school counselor helped Yesenia’s son obtain a high school diploma, find a college, and begin his higher education.

Hegemony of the English Language

The lack of resources for those who do not speak English at this school reflects the hegemony of the English language in the U.S. schools. Abelena said,

Que no hay quien ayude cuando uno ocupa decir algo o explicar algo que la maestra tenga la información para nosotros. Y también lo que no me gusta es que mandan toda la información en inglés. Yo se que estamos en el país que se habla inglés, pero también habíamos muchos hispanos que necesitamos que nos manden bilingüe.

They don't have someone who can help us when we have concerns or when we want to say something. Nobody is there to explain what the teacher is saying. Also, they send everything in English. I know we are in another country, but there are so many Hispanics that we need things translated.

Several of the parents in this study acknowledged that they were in an English-speaking country, but at the same time, just like Abelena, they recognized a need that if fulfilled would benefit both the schools and the parents. Both school staff and parents were frustrated by communication difficulties, yet the hegemony of the English language still persisted.

Historic View

The debate over the primacy of English in the U.S. is as old as the country itself. Castellanos and Leggio (1983) documented how, from the founding of the 13 colonies through the 20th century, the use of languages other than English in U.S. schools has been simultaneously embraced and rejected. Throughout the 19th century, not only did many forms of bilingual education flourish, but some schools were taught in Native American languages as well as other languages such as German, Spanish, and Italian. However, during the same time period, a few states banned the use of any language other than

English in the schools. In the early 20th century, there was a marked change. “While only 14 of the 45 states had regulations requiring that English be the sole language of instruction in 1903, by 1923 some 34 of the 45 states had such provisions” (p. 39).

Castellanos and Leggio (1983) explained that as the U.S. likelihood of engaging in World War I increased, the acceptance of languages other than English decreased. “It was generally feared that the non-English speaking immigrants or non citizens would feel no loyalty or obligation to fight for the United States” (p. 37). Other reasons after World War I diminished the use of other languages:

The period after World War I was characterized not only by the almost complete abandonment of bilingual education in the U.S. but by a declining interest in the study of foreign languages. A combination of reasons for this posture included (1) the advent of mandatory attendance laws for public schools (2) the elimination of public funding for church-affiliated schools and most importantly, (3) the isolation and nationalism that pervaded America after the war.... Language legislation was so prohibitive that it bordered on the ridiculous. (pp. 37-38)

It was not until World War II that the advantages of knowing other languages became apparent. The lack of foreign language ability among our troops was extremely detrimental. American soldiers found it difficult to find someone who could interrogate prisoners, translate documents, read road signs, understand local civilians, communicate with allies who spoke other languages, or pose as enemy soldiers. The soldiers were also exposed to citizens of other nations who spoke several languages without it seeming to affect their loyalty to their countries. Because of these reasons, speaking a second language was seen in a different light after the war (Castellanos & Leggio, 1983, p. 48).

The transition back to looking favorably on other languages was slow. It took some time to unseat the entrenched attitudes of many state legislatures. Help came in

1968 with the passage of the federal Bilingual Education Act, which promoted bilingual education from 1968 to 2002. As this act was renewed five times, it was also strengthened and expanded. This did not signal a general acceptance of other languages in U.S. schools. Just as in previous history, many still fought for English to be the only language of instruction and communication spoken in school. Once again there was a shift. In the late 1990s three states passed ballot initiatives banning bilingual education (Harper, 2011). In 2002, the Bilingual Education Act was replaced with the English Language Acquisition Act, which led to a drastic reduction in bilingual education (Mitchell, 2005). The result of this last shift is that most schools today have special language services for their non-English-speaking students to learn English, but not other school subjects. Dixon and colleagues (2012) reported that currently 16 states permit regular instruction in a student's heritage language and three states mandate English only instruction (p. 47).

Issues with Hegemony

An ironic example of the hegemony of the English language in our schools is the encouragement of students to learn a second language if their first language is English while at the same time discouraging the maintenance of heritage languages for English language learners. Dixon and colleagues (2012) explained:

In a representative subsample of the General Social Survey, only 10% of respondents who studied a foreign language reported they spoke the L2 "very well...." Conversely, 67% of respondents who said they learned a language other than English at home reported they spoke the language very well. U.S. policy on L2 learning does not reflect this reality by encouraging children and adolescents who speak a language other than English at home to maintain and develop that language to high levels; on the contrary, a quick transition to English is

emphasized. L1 English speakers, on the other hand, are then encouraged to study a foreign language, at least if they are planning to attend university, despite their low chances of actually learning the L2 well. In addition, U.S. policy does not address issues regarding identification of L2 students who may need more support or may excel in L2 learning nor development of effective L2 teachers. (p. 48)

School policies that push students away from their heritage languages are not based on research. They also demonstrate the institutional hegemony of the English language by subtracting heritage language from language minority students and advising the addition of languages to students in the English language majority.

Another mark of the hegemony of the English language that concerns the parents in this study is the ideology in the U.S. that English should be learned by all of the people who immigrate here despite their age, circumstances, resources, opportunities, or innate language acquisition abilities (Worthy, 2006). In the present study, Emelda found it hard to go to her children's school because of not being able to learn English. She lamented, *"A mi es que se me hace un poco difícil de ir a la escuela y todo, siempre se me ha hecho difícil. Porque no se me pega nada el inglés. Quiero aprender y no [puedo]."* ("It is very difficult, hard for me to go to school, very difficult. I can't retain any English. I would like to learn and I can't.") Even if it were possible for all immigrants to learn English, research shows that it takes between three to seven years to acquire the language ability necessary to operate at levels beyond basic communication (Dixon et al., 2012; Hakuta, 2011; MacSwan & Pray, 2005). This of course affects Spanish-speaking parents as they interact with U.S. schools. Unlike their children who are attending school and getting English instruction every day, many parents are working or taking care of other children. They may or may not have the opportunity to attend regular English classes, and their

work situations may not be in English rich environments. At any rate, they still require the three to seven years to acquire the English skills necessary to converse in academic language.

If the hegemony of the English language were not so pervasive in U. S. schools, there would be more resources for Spanish-speaking parents to negotiate language to support their children's education. Of the last two decades, Harper (2011) wrote:

Despite the fact that the U.S. has always been a multilingual country, U.S. law and culture have shifted antagonistically against linguistic diversity. When the explicit policies of the U.S. work in combination with the country's *de facto* English dominated linguistic culture, language minorities in the U.S. have limited power to control their own cultural and linguistic destiny in the face of a powerful Anglophonic hegemony. (p. 528)

All of the study participants wanted their children to maintain their heritage language.

Considering the hegemony of English at Jefferson Elementary, controlling the linguistic destiny of their children was difficult. In fact, a few of their children had already lost their ability to speak Spanish. Parents and staff also worked at overcoming communication difficulties with mixed success. Despite the difficulties, most of the families in the study and a few educators worked to maintain and expand children's heritage language and find ways to communicate.

Racism

When asked what the most important things were that he wanted his child to learn at school, Diego said, "*Igualdad. Igualdad y los derechos de todos y este pos si eso.*" ("Equality. Equality and civil rights for everyone, and that's it.") That people of color in the U.S. have endured racism is not new. Latinos in many places and circumstances have

been subjected to racism. Racism also emerged as one of the themes in this study. It affected both the children and the parents. Parents contended with racism as it affected their children and also themselves. It is embedded in history and resisted by the courageous parents in this study.

At the School Level

The most overt act of racism reported in this study was Yesenia's daughter's rejection by a group of girls at school. *“Una niña me dijo que yo no soy de su color y por eso yo no soy su amiga ni quiere jugar conmigo; una niña pequeña. Entonces para mí fue eso muy duro. ¿Como una niña puede expresar eso a otra niña y decirle tú no eres de mi color y tú no puedes jugar con nosotros?”* (“There was a girl who told her that she had a different color skin and because of that they can't be friends and she can't play with them. So that was really hard for me. How can one girl tell another girl you are not my color so we can't play together?") Much of the bullying reported was also linked to racism by the parents or the children. Yesenia reported, *“Los niños mas grandes míos también les ha pasado eso de que siempre los muchachos de aquí siempre lo hay tratado mal a mis hijos grandes también, diciéndoles insultándoles pues porque ellos no son de aquí.”* (“My oldest kids went through some hard times too because they had been treated disrespectfully because they are foreign.) When the Estradas told the story of their son being bullied that eventually led to his tires being slashed, Emelda said, *“Así fue mucho tiempo que el niño venia y se quejaba hasta lo venían siguiendo los güeritos y le echaban piedras así.”* (“Time went by where my boy was coming from school complaining that he was followed by the kids with blond hair and they threw stones at him.”) By

mentioning the color of their hair, her son was drawing a distinction between himself and his tormentors. While racism may not have been the only motive for the bullying, these comments indicate that the parents and their children felt as if it had something to do with it.

As difficult as these situations were, it seems even more egregious when children feel that they have been discriminated against by a teacher. The Castro's son reported that he and the rest of the Latinos in his class were ridiculed and laughed at by their teacher. He told his parents that they were ignored when they tried to participate and when they made mistakes the teacher did not help them learn. Celestina said, "*Él pensaba de que era porque hay varios latinos en la clase y pensaba y él decía porque somos brown*" ("He thought that it was because there were several Latinos in the class and he said that it was because they were brown.") As a way to cope with their treatment, the children created a nickname for themselves: I am brown.

Children were not the only ones to feel discriminated against because of their race. Three of the five couples and Yesenia reported that they felt their race was an issue in negotiating culture with the school. Adán and Abelena felt that it was not only language but also race that prohibited them from being more involved at school. Abelena commented, "*Si porque hay muchos padres hispanos que hablan muy bien el inglés y tampoco son tomados en cuenta.*" ("Yes, because there are a lot of Hispanic parents who speak English very well and they are ignored too.") Both Adán and Diego mentioned the color of their skin having an effect on their interactions with the school and Eduardo commented that although we were all human beings, there were some people who did not

like the fact that some human beings were from different countries, had different skin color, and spoke different languages.

In contrast, Carlos, whose son believed that he had been discriminated against in class for a year, said, “*Sentimos que en la escuela no nos ha habido ningún tipo de discriminación ni nada.*” (“We feel that at school there was never any type of discrimination towards us [meaning himself and his wife].”) The Blancos mentioned only positive feelings when they were interacting at the school and they never mentioned race in their interviews. The principal also reported how he had tried to reach out positively to Latino parents by getting them involved in school governance. He said:

I have tried to get a Latino family on the Community Council. Either they say it's because when we meet, which is 3:15, they're working, or they just don't feel comfortable. But each year I make it a point to ask: would you like to run; would you like to be a part of this; I think you would be really good at this.... But we have had a few room mothers, so I feel that was a good step.

Even though not all of the participants felt impacted by racism, it is clearly an issue that affected the negotiation of culture. The experiences of the children and the perceptions of some of the parents substantiate this conclusion.

A Disturbing Incongruity

While not all of the experiences of racism happened at Jefferson Elementary, some of them did. Some of the parents also felt that their skin color made a difference in how they were engaged by the school. What is disturbing is that none of the staff mentioned any problems whatsoever with racism. A most disturbing incongruity is how the staff saw this as a nonissue. The ELL aide and the third-grade teacher did not comment on the perception of Latinos in the school. All of the other staff members did.

From the coordinator at the Family Literacy Center to the principal, they all felt that there was no mistreatment of Latinos at the school. When asked if there were any efforts that helped the Latino culture to be viewed positively at the school, The Family Center coordinator said, "I've never seen anybody look down on them. They are seen as just people." The kindergarten teacher reported, "I feel like, in our school, they aren't segregated. I really feel like they are made part of the school.... I've met with [the parents] with teachers, met with them with the principal and I feel like that it's been...a positive experience for them." The secretary said, "I don't think there are any negative things that are happening as far as the Latino culture. It seems to me like the students and the teachers view the Latino children and families just like everybody else."

The second grade teacher and the principal had more to say on the subject. The second-grade teacher said:

And one of the things that I have noticed though is that the other students, it's kind of funny at this age, they don't see color. They don't see difference. They don't see color unless it has been pointed out to them at home or somewhere else. But I just think it is interesting. They don't really see it. They do know if they speak another language at home and then they start to ask, well, how do you say this, and it's really cute.

The principal was very profuse.

I can say we never put [the Latino culture] down. I never see anybody, any students, especially not teacher say, you can't do that, you can't speak Spanish. I can honestly say that there is a good feeling among the students, among the staff, and I feel in the community with the Latino populations here. It's not that we promote it. I think we just accept it, and it's just part of life. It's just come and join. And maybe I'm living in a, I'm thinking everything's grand here. But I really do feel that way and I feel that the parents feel that way, that they feel accepted here.... At one time this was known as the Mexican school and it kind of had a negative connotation. But I feel really good about this school. I feel that everyone is accepted here. I haven't heard from anyone that they feel that they are not welcome here. On our student council we've had quite a few Latinos.... I just

think that they feel a part of the community, a part of the school. I feel good about it. I've never seen any type of you're brown or you're different. I've never heard that or never seen that so I feel like it is a good mix here and good feelings and that comes from the staff. The staff teaches that the right way. They are not preaching that but they are being the example and they are very accepting.

The staff at Jefferson Elementary appear to have adopted a color-blind stance to race in regards to the school community (Lewis, 2001). Castro Atwater (2008) traced the use of the word "color-blind" to the dissenting opinion in a court ruling in 1896. Justice John Marshall Harland wrote that although the white race felt itself superior, the constitution was color-blind and allowed for no establishment of a superior ruling class or any class system (p. 246). Being color-blind to race may appear to be a positive stance, but in fact it can perpetuate injustice.

Marx and Larson (2012) defined color-blindness as "the avoidance of talking about race, racism, and systematic inequity" and that it "contributes to racial inequality by preventing useful conversation about race and racism from taking place" (p. 265).

If race is never acknowledged, then racism in a school setting can be dismissed as just regular teasing or bullying. Other explanations such as shyness or language barriers can be promoted as reasons for lack of Latino parental involvement and mask issues of racism. Obviously, not every negative interaction is an instance of racism, but if the door to discussing race is closed, then those motives can never be explored and corrected if they are present. The color-blind stance of the Jefferson Elementary staff could have contributed to missing the racism in the bullying, the conduct of a colleague, and the perceptions of some Latino parents that they were treated differently because of the color of their skin.

The Broader Picture

In 1846, approximately 80,000 Mexican citizens who lived in the southwest became citizens of the U.S. when the land was annexed from Mexico. Those who came after 1846 were considered immigrants. As citizens from a conquered nation and as immigrants from a third world country, Mexicans, and later other Latinos, have been subjected to the hegemony of a first world state. Between 1846 and 1924 there were no comprehensive immigration laws and Mexican nationals could come and go between Mexico and the U.S. quite freely. In 1924 the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act eliminated that practice. Those who did not obtain the correct paperwork were given the status of illegal aliens. The act also expressed the racism of the time: “[It] defined all Europeans as part of a white race distinguished from and superior to people of ‘colored races’” (Odem, 2008, p. 363). From the annexation of the Southwest to the present day, Mexican immigrants have been subjected to a second class status or subaltern existence. Odem wrote:

Since the beginning of large-scale Mexican migration to the US in the early twentieth century, Mexicans were positioned as subaltern immigrants—they were accepted as cheap, temporary workers, but not desired as permanent citizens. In the making of the American nation, brown-skinned people from south of the border performed essential back-breaking work in US fields and factories but, unlike European immigrants, they were expected to return to their country of origin. (p. 361)

Their subaltern position was institutionalized during the 1930s when agricultural workers were excluded from labor and social legislation which included the Social Security Act, the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. These Acts “recognized the right to organize and bargain collectively, provided for social insurance

for the elderly, and established a minimum wage” (Ngai, 2004, p. 136).

This subaltern position was entrenched with the contract laborer Bracero program instituted in 1942 to relieve a supposed labor shortage caused by World War II. Ngai (2004) explained:

Like the slave, the contract laborer was not free to bargain over wages or working conditions, either individually or collectively. He did not have the right to choose his employer or to quit.... It was also an expression of the legacies of slavery and conquest. The old plantation class and its modern cousins in agribusiness in the South and Southwest succeeded in molding the modern agricultural workforce into modes of racialized labor that had more in common with nineteenth-century colonial practices than with modern industrial relations. As African American share-croppers and tenant farmers in the South continued to bear the marks of race slavery, Mexican workers in the Southwest and California were racialized as a foreign people, an “alien race” not legitimately present or intended for inclusion in the polity. (pp. 137-138)

The Bracero program was terminated in the 1960s, long after World War II was over.

The 1960s also brought immigration reform which eliminated racial designations in the immigration code. However, this did not help Mexican immigrants. Through just the Bracero program alone, 200,000 Mexican immigrants were allowed to enter the U.S. per year. After immigration reform only 20,000 were permitted entry, even though demand for workers did not decrease. This resulted in high numbers of Mexicans entering the U.S. as illegal aliens (Odem, 2008).

This racialized “other” legacy of alien noncitizens is still prevalent today, and is applied to most Latinos no matter their country of origin. Johnson (1996/1997) discussed the legal term “alien” and how it is used to exclude and separate. He states that the term places immigrants outside of the national community. “Even if they have lived in this country for many years, have had children here, and work and have deep community ties

in the United States, noncitizens remain aliens, an institutionalized ‘other,’ different and apart from ‘us’” (p. 264). This status invites continued discrimination. For example, Huntington (2004) stated “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially from Mexico” (p. 32). He claims that new white nationalists are not looking for racial supremacy “but believe in racial self-preservation and affirm that culture is a product of race. They contend that the shifting U.S. demographics foretell the replacement of white culture by black or brown cultures that are intellectually and morally inferior” (p. 41).

Mexicans and Latinos have been and continue to be treated by some as subaltern immigrants. Today they are viewed as taking jobs away from U. S. citizens and accessing resources such as healthcare, social services, schools, and government programs to which they are not entitled (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). The participants in the present study are also subjected to these same stereotypes and perceptions. In negotiating language and culture with a U. S. institution, they do not negotiate from the stance of a highly regarded immigrant from a European country. They negotiate from the stance of a long history of being an alien, an “other,” whose “race” was delegated to the heavy labor of industry and agriculture. Taking all of this into account, the participants in this study showed great resilience in negotiating with their children’s schools in order to support their education.

Choosing One’s own Identity

Complicating the historical subaltern position of Latino immigrants, much is said about the danger of immigrants not becoming “Americanized.” The prevailing argument

is that immigrants need to assimilate, or in other words, join the mainstream U.S. culture and abandon their previous ones. The fear is that if they do not, the U.S. will lose its national identity (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). Indeed, Huntington (2004) theorized that because there are a large number of Latino immigrants who speak the same language and live in concentrations near the source (i.e., Mexico, of a continual influx of similar immigrants), the U. S. may become two different nations. His critics dismissed his arguments as “wrong-headed,” while Citrin, Lerman, Murakami and Pearson (2007) conducted a study based on his assertions. They found that “things may change, but the balance of evidence available at present suggests that Mexican immigration is not the threat to American national identity that Huntington and others assert” (p. 47).

Established Latinos and Latino immigrants today are different than the immigrants of the past. They are different because the world is different. Instead of completely assimilating, they are choosing which parts of the U.S. culture are important to embrace, parts that Suarez-Orozco (2000) called “instrumental culture.” It includes “the skills, competencies, and social behaviors that are required to successfully make a living and contribute to society.... These include communication, higher-order symbolic and technical skills as well as habits of work, and interpersonal talents” (p. 20). Those parts of the culture that they may not wish to appropriate Suarez-Orozco called “expressive culture,” which includes “the realm of values, worldviews, and the patterning of interpersonal relations that give meaning and sustain the sense of self” (p. 20). For example, Suarez-Orozco mentioned practices in American youth culture such as “cultural attitudes and behaviors that are anti-schooling (“school is boring”) and anti-authority, the

glorification of violence, and sexually precocious behaviors” (p. 20).

They are also choosing to forge their own identities, breaking away from the historic identities that others have given them and resisting the identities others presently wish to give them. Instead, many are choosing a transnational or transcultural identity. Because of the ease of communication and travel today, many immigrants are not cutting ties held in other countries as most immigrants of the past had to do. Pedraza (2000) stated:

Under the impact of changes in the nature of modern communications at this century’s end, the immigrants’ experience—their lived experience—has changed. Many immigrants now fail to shed their old identities, to totally assimilate; instead they develop new bicultural identities, living their lives being quite involved in more than one nation, more than one world—in effect making the home and adopted countries both one lived social world. (p. 710)

Developing more than one cultural identity is not just happening in the U.S. The “European Manifesto for Multiple Cultural Affiliation” recognizes this new global trend. It states that a special feature “of contemporary society, given its openness, potential for mobility and technical and material scope, is the way in which one and the same individual may simultaneously belong to several groups, thus experiencing a situation of multiple belonging or affiliation” (Council of Europe, 2007, p. 57).

About half of the parents did not seem concerned about their children losing their heritage culture as they embraced the American one. Other participants, however, demonstrated the transcultural traits Pedraza detailed above. These parents wanted their children to learn English and to do well in school. They wanted their children to be successful in the American culture. They also wanted their children to maintain their heritage culture. Adán said that his son felt proud to be Mexican and Abelena said, “*Toda*

la cultura la tenemos en casa.” (“We have the whole culture at home.”) Carlos, like the Aguilars, said that he and his wife taught their children their Peruvian culture. Xavier said that his children were comfortable in both cultures. He commented, “*Entonces ellos son mexicanos también pero también no reniegan del país donde estamos. Ellos están contentos donde estamos. Me imagino que nos fuéramos para México, ellos también estarían contentos en México. Ellos están contentos donde están.*” (“They are Mexican too, but they don’t deny the country where we are living now. They feel happy that we are here. I think that if we moved to Mexico, they would be happy there also. They are content wherever they are.”) Yesenia reported that her children, “*siempre que han tenido amistades siempre ellos han dicho somos de Perú y tenemos estas costumbres y nos vestimos de esta forma y hablamos de esta forma, comemos, no?*” (“always tell their friends that they are from Peru and we have habits, the way we eat, dress, and speak shows that, right?”) These parents wanted their children to be able to move within and between the American culture and their heritage culture.

Racism impacted the parents and the children in this study. Parents reported bullying and exclusion tied to race. Parents felt uncomfortable and discriminated against because of the color of their skin. Many of the school staff seemed to adopt a colorblind approach to race which may have left them unaware of the racial problems that existed. Even though Latinos have been viewed historically as a racialized “other,” and presently are seen by some as the cause of the poor economy and the overburdening of social services, the Latino parents in this study did their best to negotiate language and culture to support the education of their children. There is also evidence that some of the

participants are resisting the old model of immigrants giving up their cultures in order to maintain a cohesive American culture. Instead they are choosing a transcultural identity for themselves and their children.

CHAPTER VII

RECOMMENDATIONS

Negotiating language and culture in a new settlement area has many challenges for both Spanish-speaking parents and educators. Many suggestions could be made, but a balance needs to be achieved between the ideal and the real. The recommendations in this section hope to find such a balance. Instead of proposing a large number of recommendations, I have chosen to concentrate on three that I think would have the greatest positive effect on Spanish-speaking parents' negotiation of language and culture with their children's schools.

Language Support

A crucial need for the Spanish-speaking parents in this study is better way to communicate with the school staff. Jeynes (2010) gave a review of several researchers' findings on the importance of parent school communications:

As Graham-Clay...observed, "In fact, communication begins with the welcome sign when the parent first enters the school building...." Graham-Clay added, "A 'customer friendly' school environment reflects how highly communication with parents is valued by school staff...." Bailey...also affirmed that "open communication is important.... Families should be viewed as competent and legitimate participants in the team, and interactions with families should generally be positive in nature." St. Clair and Jackson...asserted that quality communication is particularly essential if one is to appreciably help economically disadvantaged children. Henning-Stout and Goode...noted that parent-school communication is also especially important for children with special needs. Bauch and Goldring...averred that effective communication is one of five qualities that define a responsive school. (p. 761)

Ixa Plata-Potter and de Guzman (2012) also affirmed that communication between

parents and the school is critical for parents and children to be able to understand the way the school system works. Their study findings were similar to this study in that “although the parents recognized that the schools made substantial efforts to help overcome this issue (e.g., by providing translators), those solutions were often insufficient and sometimes introduced new sets of challenges” (p. 103). The insufficiency of interpretive services were also reported by Good and colleagues (2010). They stated, “Parents could not have meaningful conversations with teachers because there just were not enough bilingual teachers or liaisons in the schools to serve as interpreters and translators to help bridge language gaps” (p. 322).

Jefferson Elementary provided an interpreter, but she was a full-time teacher. This arrangement was not adequate as evidenced by parents waiting, parents reporting several times when there was not an interpreter available, a child interpreting during his own IEP, and my being asked to interpret during a parent teacher conference. Ramirez (2003) suggested, “Hire and support the hiring of staff members (including community liaisons, bilingual/ESL coordinators, administrators, and teachers) from the language and cultural backgrounds of the students” (p. 107). This is a worthy goal, but unrealistic for this small district with limited applicants who fit those qualifications. Still, the district should do all it can to hire a staff member whose duties are easier to set aside when there is a need for interpreting.

Some schools have used bilingual aides or secretaries. However, just hiring anyone who is bilingual is not sufficient. There is another consideration. During the pilot study, a couple revealed to me that at a secondary school where their daughter attended,

they never used the Latina bilingual secretary. Instead they always found a White bilingual teacher they had met there. They said that the secretary was very unfriendly, whereas the teacher was helpful and sincere. It is important that the interpreter not only be skilled at communicating in both languages, but that he or she also be approachable and caring.

Another needed support is translations of written material (Graham-Clay, 2005).

Montgomery County Public Schools in Rockville, Maryland greatly increased their ability to communicate with parents by adopting an aggressive translation initiative:

The district created a multifaceted, multilingual professional unit to provide translations in multiple languages. Translators cross media platforms, working in Web publishing, print, and television to keep the district's diverse community informed. Direct translation is only part of the unit's work. It provides information to parents and others through five multilingual mini-sites on its Web page. Parents also gain information through the unit's work via videos, television, DVDs, and audiotapes. That ensures that parents who may not be literate in their own language still can access what they need. Translations of all types increase parents' understanding of school system guidelines in such areas as curriculum and instruction, homework policies, student rights and responsibilities, summer school, and graduation requirements. (Translating Language for All, 2007, p. 26)

It is obvious that the district in this study did not need translation services on this level.

However, it is possible for the Spanish bilingual speakers in the district to contribute in the various ways mentioned. One could be a Web master, another could make videos that could be shown at school sites that provide information about school and district policies, and another could translate written materials sent to them from district teachers or schools. The district could provide stipends for the extra work completed.

Lastly, school staff could support the maintenance and growth in children's heritage languages. Good and colleagues (2010) reported that there was "greater success

when educators accepted and encouraged students to retain their culture and language while at the same time helping them learn about a new culture and language” (p. 322). Bilingual ESL aides could be encouraged to teach students Spanish as part of their curriculum. Because most of the ESL aides in the district are not bilingual, staff members could encourage parents to work with their children in their heritage language, teaching them whatever skills they can. Staff members could allow students to use their heritage language when appropriate in writing, translating, and interpreting in low stress situations. Like the third grade teacher who gave her student the same book in English and in Spanish, teachers could find appropriate materials and situations for students to use and grow in their heritage language. For example, students could read picture books in Spanish and then translate them for their classmates, they could research Spanish language materials on a favorite athlete, they could take part in skits where one child speaks Spanish, and one acts as an interpreter for a third English-speaking child, they could teach the class colors or weather in Spanish. The possibilities are limitless.

Link to Latino Families

It is very difficult for Spanish-speaking families to create linking networks in new settlement areas. Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) discussed general reasons for the difficulty in creating these networks. “Among the factors studied are excessive individualism...; feelings of embarrassment...or rejection; and the reluctance to reveal one’s inadequacies, to incur debts, or to impose on the helper...” (p. 117). They also explained the importance of such networks:

In the study of school inequality, the analysis of social networks reveals how

success within the educational system, is dependent on the formation of genuinely supportive relationships with institutional agents. By institutional agents, we mean those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly or to negotiate the transmission of institutional resources and opportunities (such as information about school programs, academic tutoring and mentoring, college admission, and assistance with career decision making. (pp. 116-117)

Spanish-speaking parents in new settlement areas also have difficulty forming bridging networks. While bridging networks are usually not the school's responsibility, there are many advantages to aid in their formation for Spanish-speaking parents along with the formation of linking networks with the school. Without bridging and linking networks, Latino families feel isolated, miss important information, miss opportunities to support their children, and do not know how to participate in leadership roles (Wanat, 2012).

The school could help Latino parents form bridging capital with other parents in the school. The study participants said that they did not speak with any other parents at the school, and yet there were bilingual parents and other Spanish-speakers besides themselves with whom they could have communicated. The school could take the initiative to introduce Spanish-speaking and bilingual parents to each other. Perhaps meetings with Spanish-speakers and bilinguals could be set to inform parents and create bonds. Bilingual staff, parents, and community members could be enlisted as liaisons or culture brokers to help Spanish-speaking parents navigate the U.S. school system (Good et al., 2010). Liaisons can fill a very important role as advocates for Spanish-speaking parents. Aparicio-Clark and Dorris (2006) affirmed this approach:

As schools tap into community resources, they must identify individuals who are both bilingual and well-acquainted with the local education system and who can function in a bridging role to facilitate the development of trusting relationships between parents and school personnel. Some schools are fortunate to have on-site

community liaisons (or staff members with similar titles) who reach out to Latino parents regularly. These individuals make it their priority to help families navigate the ins and outs of an unfamiliar education system. They take the time to establish rapport with families and often serve as the first school-affiliated employee that parents contact for help. (p. 24)

As was seen with the example of Mrs. Zuñiga, a culture broker can make an important difference in educational outcomes. Culture brokers can aid parents and students in many aspects of U.S. schooling and education. Additionally they can be a tremendous help to school staff to help with understanding cultural differences and attitudes.

Perhaps the most effective way for school staff members to create linking capital for Spanish-speaking parents is through active caring. Jeynes (2010) reported:

In a number of program review studies of major parental involvement initiatives, researchers have consistently found that the extent to which parents are treated with love and respect is a major contributing factor in determining whether parental engagement is enhanced. (p. 759)

He further asserted, “That is, whether teachers, principals, and school staff are loving, encouraging, and supportive to parents may be more important than the specific guidelines and tutelage they offer to parents” (p. 748) and that “the dissemination of the fact that the motivations and personal qualities of teachers and administrators may be more important than specific practices is of utmost importance” (p. 757).

In this study, three staff members demonstrated that level of caring; the school counselor who helped the Castro’s child, the third grade teacher who supported her student’s heritage language and learned about the local Latino culture, and Mrs. Zuñiga the ESL aid from another school. The challenge is in how to create, awaken, or mobilize that quality in all educators. Principals and district staff who hire personnel could be trained in recognizing those types of characteristics in an applicant and then give that

asset high priority when making hiring decisions. Current staff member could be made aware of the research and specific examples could be given as to how that caring can be expressed for those staff members who are uneasy about creating that type of a relationship with their students' parents.

Cultural Sensitivity

The school staff should consider whether or not they have adopted a colorblind stance and if so, consider other possibilities. Recognizing and talking about race and racial issues opens up the opportunity for those who feel discriminated against to talk about what is happening to them and how it feels. If no one creates a safe environment to discuss racial issues, they probably will not be brought up by the victims and an undercurrent of racism could be perpetuated. When given the opportunity in a different study to talk about school issues, one of the participants said, "The real gift you gave me today was a voice. The fact that you invited me hear and tape-recorded my words makes me believe that you are listening and what I have to say matters" (Good et al., 2010, p. 337). The participants in the present study echoed the feelings of racism found in a study conducted by Good and colleagues (2010):

Other concerns revolved around issues of class, race, and national origin. Parents felt that these issues were caused by a lack of cultural awareness and understanding by teachers; they called it racism. They felt that their concerns were not taken seriously and that they were not viewed as equal partners in the education of their children. Parents felt ignored when they tried to communicate with the school or express their views; they did not feel empowered to influence decisions affecting their children. (pp. 336-337)

Abelena mentioned Latino parents being ignored, and the Estradas said that no one asked

them their opinions about school decisions. The study participants also mentioned being treated differently because of the color of their skin.

Instead of a colorblind stance staff members could adopt a culturally sensitive stance. A culturally sensitive stance requires staff members to understand the culture of their students' families. This is not an understanding of a generalized Latino culture, but the lived culture of their students' homes (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Graham-Clay, 2005). Staff members could be taught how to go beyond cultural celebrations and food in order to gain a better understanding of their students' cultures. They could be brought to understand that there is no "one" Latino culture. For example, in this study, some of the families were from Peru and others were from Mexico. These are two separate places with two separate cultures.

Van Velsor and Orozco (2007) gave an excellent description of cultural sensitivity:

All parents, regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, race, ability/disability, sexual orientation, or religious orientation, have a rich culture—including their history, language, and traditions—that deserves to be honored, respected, and cultivated. Valuing that background is the basis of a climate that welcomes and calls all parents to be involved in their children's schools. Involvement is a two-way process where parents are knowledgeable about what is taking place with their children's education, and educators understand, embrace, and seek input from the communities from which the children come.... (p. 34)

Cultural sensitivity allows staff members to acknowledge and value the home cultures of their students. It opens up avenues for communications and understanding. When parents feel that their lived experiences are valued, they find it easier to approach the unfamiliar school discourse and negotiate language and culture in order to support their children's schooling.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Latino immigration to the U.S. has slowed due to the decrease in immigration from Mexico (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2010). However, the percentage in Latino student population will continue to increase in the future because Latinos have the highest birthrate in the U.S (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). The majority of Latino births have been to women who are immigrants. According to the Passel, Livingston, and Cohn (2012):

Immigration is an important contributor to higher birth rates among Hispanics, because foreign-born women tend to have more children on average than U.S.-born women. Most growth in the Hispanic population from 2000 to 2010 was due to births, not immigration, a change from the long-time pattern. But most births to Hispanic women are to those born outside the U.S. (n. p.)

Parents who are born outside of the U.S. increases the likelihood that they do not speak English or do not speak English well (Kandel & Cromartie, 2004). These Latino immigrants are continuing to locate outside of urban areas where there are less established resources for Spanish-speakers (Jordan, 2012). In these new settlement areas, Spanish-speaking parents negotiate language and culture with the U.S. schools in order to support their children's education.

I have defined negotiation in this context as interactions between two or more parties as they come to an agreement or manage a situation, such as when businesses negotiate contracts and nations negotiate treaties. Each party has interests to protect and desires a fair if not advantageous outcome. Latino parents are not just overcoming language and cultural differences or barriers. They are negotiating language and culture

with schools in the hope of producing a more equitable and successful outcome for their children. The present study of five couples and two parents in a new settlement area has highlighted those negotiations.

Negotiations

Examining how Latino parents met the challenges of negotiating language revealed many aspects of those negotiations. Except for a few participants who used their limited English skills, first and foremost, the Spanish-speaking parents relied on interpreters. They used the bilingual kindergarten teacher at the school, their relatives, and their children. Having the kindergarten teacher as an interpreter was difficult as she was not always presently available. Bringing other bilingual relatives was very successful. Using children was sometimes successful, but perhaps not as reliable as an adult who would be less likely to sensor information and more able to communicate on a mature level (Morales & Hanson, 2005). The same challenges existed when children acted as translators of written text. The participants preferred translated text, but only received district documents and a few notices from the school in Spanish. As reported by the participants, negotiating oral and written language was very difficult for the parents in this study and hindered much of what they wanted to do to support their children.

As part of negotiating language, parents wanted their children to maintain their heritage language. They offered economic, cultural, and educational reasons. All of the parents spoke Spanish to their children, but a few of their children were losing their heritage language. The pattern of loss for a couple of the families was similar. Their older

children had maintained their language, the middle children were not as skilled in Spanish, and the younger children were losing their ability to speak Spanish altogether. The consequences the loss of a child's heritage language can have on a family were poignantly demonstrated when I interpreted during a parent teacher conference. The mother expressed her sadness and frustration with not being able to communicate with her 8-year-old son who would tell her when she spoke the only language she knew, Spanish, that he did not understand her.

Examining the ways that the Spanish-speaking parents negotiated culture also produced insights into the negotiations. Many of the parents in this study were frequent observers of the U.S. school culture at the school and through the affects schooling had on their children. They observed the emphasis on certain subjects in the curriculum, the extra-curricular activities, and the relative security as compared to other areas of the country. They also observed what they perceived as a lack of discipline and behavioral oversight. Despite being characterized differently (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006), the parents in this study usually participated quite frequently in the U.S. school culture in order to support their children's schooling. Most of the parents attended the events held at the school such as birthday tables, talent shows, plays, and class presentations. They especially mentioned how important attending parent teacher conferences were. They also participated at home by having their children do homework and helping when they could. They helped their children learn to speak, read, and write Spanish, and bought computers and books to facilitate English language acquisition. Very importantly, they talked to their children about their expectations and the importance of education (Jeynes,

2005, 2010).

Few participants were able to effect change through negotiating culture. They found the language challenges very difficult to overcome in order to voice their opinions, ask for considerations, join with other parents, and participate in school leadership. Even more troubling, about half of the participants mentioned feeling discriminated against because they were Latinos. They felt that because of the color of their skin, they were not welcome in school leadership such as the PTA and that they were generally not accepted by the White school community. They also recounted acts of racism that their children had endured. One child was told that she could not play with a group because her skin was a different color. Parents felt that part of the motivation for the bullying their children had endured was because they were Latinos, they were English language learners, or that they were from a different county.

My Surprises

The examining of the negotiation of language and culture brought up several themes: Latinos caring about the education of their children; levels of participation in the school discourse; tensions between discourses, children serving as language brokers; heritage language maintenance; social, and cultural capital; hegemony of the English language; and racism. Because of the literature review, I was not surprised when many of these themes emerge in the data. However, some of the data were a surprise to me, sometimes because I did not expect them to be present in a new settlement area, and sometimes because they were either new concepts for me or concepts I did not

completely understand.

One such concept was the complete difference between the schooling of the parents in their countries of origin and the schooling of their children in the U.S. This is mentioned in the literature (Hill & Torres, 2010; Reese & Gallimore, 2000), but the participants in this study described their schooling experiences as being vastly different from those of their children. Another concept was the pattern of language loss in children, with the oldest children maintaining their language and the youngest being the least proficient. I was not familiar with this pattern.

Perhaps the most emotional experience for me was speaking with an 8 year old and his mother who could no longer communicate with each other. Worthy (2006) and Fillmore (2000) have written about this, but for whatever reason, I was not prepared to find this in a new settlement area. It had a surreal feeling to it, as if I were living someone else's research. The other difficulty I have had with that experience is that I have been unable to convey the deep feelings expressed by the mother. The tone of her voice, the look in her eyes, and her body language, were all beyond my descriptive abilities.

Some of the most useful tools that were new to me were the extensions of Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital. The extensions of bonding, bridging, and linking capital (Woolcock, 2001) gave me different lenses to use to focus my observations of the capital displayed by the participants. Through an examination of bridging capital, I was able to discern the almost complete social isolation from the school community the participants exhibited, another surprise for me.

I was unsure of how I was going to report on the school's part of the negotiations.

Linking capital provided me a way to do that. The literature had mentioned outreach efforts by schools (Lopez et al., 2001; Moll et al., 1992; Ramirez, 2003), and they were an important part of the negotiations in my study, but they did not seem to have a comfortable place. The lens of linking capital provided the focus and the place to report those findings. I was surprised at the missed opportunities to link with Spanish-speaking parents in the two preliminary studies (Bickmore, 2007, 2008) and in this study. Actually, I was astonished by the missed opportunities of some educators and humbled by the great examples of caring of others. The example of the school counselor, just a short paragraph reported by Yesenia, was a most pleasant surprise. I find I am always lifted by the extraordinary examples of others.

Last, I did not think that I would find such an incongruity between the perceptions about prejudice. The staff felt that there was no prejudice, while some of the parents told how they felt that they were discriminated against and related experiences of racial incidents involving their children. I was surprised at how many of the parents used the phrase “the color of my skin” or “the color of her skin.” They did not say because I am Peruvian, or Mexican, or Latino, or Hispanic. They seemed to imply that they felt that the prejudice was not a cultural one, but based on the completely illogical difference in skin pigmentation. The way they expressed these feelings during the interviews made the injustice seem palpable. Part of the ignorance to the prejudice could have been a colorblind stance to race (Marx & Larson, 2012) taken by many of the school staff. This also surprised me. Perhaps because of the educational programs that I had attended, or my background in teaching a foreign language, it never occurred to me that many, instead

of a few, of the educators in my own geographical area subscribed to this way of thinking. Had the participants said that the school was aware of the problems and was working on them, or had the school staff said the same about themselves, I would have felt better about the situation. Unfortunately, being colorblind leaves many good educators simply blind to the prejudice around them.

For all that I have learned I will forever be grateful to the participants in this study, the Spanish-speaking parents and the school staff. They have taught me more than I ever thought possible. While other types of research are highly valued and needed, I would never have found the richness of experience in a different research design and am grateful for having had this opportunity.

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