Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-Speaking Mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement

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ABSTRACT

Parental involvement has been at the forefront of many studies leading to the conclusion that increased parental involvement improves academic achievement. Despite findings suggesting the benefits of parental involvement, research reveals a lack of parental involvement among Spanish-speaking parents. The overarching objective of this qualitative case study was to explore how Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement.

This qualitative study was comprised of three cases: one Guatemalan mother and two Honduran mothers each with children attending elementary school. My methodology allowed me to explore and depict historical and sociocultural factors that influence how the mothers view their role in their children’s education. I collected data through semi-structured interviews, informal observations, and extensive fieldnotes and I conducted on-going analysis on these data.

Data provide evidence that the mothers in the study hold a different perspective of parental involvement from that of school personnel. Their views stem directly from their own historical and cultural knowledge, which differs from that of middle-class, White Americans. They are involved in their children’s overall education in ways not acknowledged by educators.
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Imagine entering the United States from Honduras, moving into a new home, and enrolling your young daughter in a new, unfamiliar school the next day. As a mother, your emotions run wild as you embark on placing your Spanish-speaking child into the hands of complete strangers. As you enter, you try to make your intentions known. The secretary hands you a stack of paperwork to fill out, all written in English, and asks if you understand. Your wide-eyed look indicates to her that you do not. Quickly, the secretary calls an interpreter to come to the school as soon as possible.

An interpreter arrives forty-five minutes later and begins to explain, in a Mexican dialect quite different from that of Honduras, the documents you need to fill out to enroll your children in the school: a physical form documenting current immunizations, proof of residence, and a birth certificate. For several days, you gather the documents and fill out school forms. You return to the school a few days later, forms in hand, and from this point forward, you entrust your child to English-speaking teachers, administrators, and staff.

As the school year progresses, you receive many papers in English from the school pertaining to parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, school plays, and volunteer opportunities. Not knowing their purpose, or what they say, you set them aside. Since the teachers do not receive any communication back from you, they assume that you do not care about your daughter’s education.

As a teacher in a public elementary school, I have witnessed similar scenarios and have heard frustrated teachers comment that Spanish-speaking parents do not value education, get involved with their children’s education, nor help their children at home. However, I have visited
Spanish-speaking families at home and can bear witness that parents do value education and are involved in their children’s overall education in many ways. Thus, in order to avoid passing judgment, it is prudent to explore how these parents make sense of the construct of parental involvement (Lightfoot, 2004).

**Purpose of Research and Questions**

The overarching objective of this qualitative case study was to explore how Spanish-speaking mothers articulate their role in their children’s education. My research explored the following questions:

- How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?
- How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?
- What funds of knowledge are present in the home?

**Statement of Problem and Significance of the Study**

Parental involvement has been at the forefront of many studies leading to the conclusion that increased parental involvement improves academic achievement (Barnard, 2003; Becher, 1986; Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hara & Burke, 1998; Henderson, 1987; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Jones & Velez, 1997; Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith, & Anderson, 1995). Studies often examine parental involvement from the perspective of school personnel with little regard for the parents’ perspective, particularly parents of lower socioeconomic status (Orozco, 2008). The term parental involvement is a social construct driven by White, middle-class values (Crozier, 2001; Guo, 2006; Lareau, 1987, 1989; Lareau & Benson, 1984; Lightfoot, 2004). Typically, the term includes parents being involved in fund raisers or Parent Teacher organizations (López, 2001). It
is important to examine how Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the term. Social constructionism invites inquiry “into the historical and cultural bases of various forms of world construction” (Gergen, 2003, p. 15). By implementing this type of inquiry and examining how Spanish-speaking mothers construct the meaning of parental involvement we can learn and better appreciate how they make meaning from the term via their own historical and cultural influences. Additionally, examining funds of knowledge adds insight into the strengths and resources the mothers bring with them and to link these in the curriculum (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

There is not one definitive meaning given to parental involvement. For the purpose of this study, I draw from how school personnel in my pilot study defined parental involvement. Their definition included assisting with homework, reading with children, meeting the teacher, and parents and teachers working together as partners in learning. Despite findings suggesting the benefits of parental involvement, research reveals a lack of parental involvement among Hispanic parents (Chavkin, 1993; De Gaetano, 2007; Espinosa, 1995; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Ladkey & Peterson, 2008; Moles, 1993; Olivos, 2004; Quezada, Díaz, & Sánchez, 2003). Many researchers offer suggestions and models to improve home-school relations and increase involvement among Spanish-speakers (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; de Carvalho, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Epstein, 1991, 1995; Ladkey & Peterson, 2008; López, 2001; Peña, 2001).

Much of the research listed above focused on Mexican families; therefore, a need exists to explore how Spanish-speaking mothers from other countries make sense of parental

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1 I use the term Hispanic, which is a social construct, in this paper because it is the current term approved by state and federal governments to label this population. When not referring to public documents or other people’s work, I use the nationality or the term “Spanish-speaking”.
involvement. Mothers are the focus of this study because in my experiences with parental involvement among Spanish-speaking families, mothers, not fathers, attended my conferences and addressed the educational needs of their children in the school. Additionally, when I visited and interviewed Silvia, in her home, she was present, and not the father. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) also found mothers to be more involved in their children’s education. My study sought to add the voices of Spanish-speaking mothers from Guatemala and Honduras living in the United States to the existing research on parental involvement and funds of knowledge.

**Personal Examination of Immigrant Parental Involvement**

The impetus behind my examination of these questions evolved from active engagement with a Honduran family whose children I taught. My first semester in graduate school I enrolled in a course called Crossing the Border through Service-Learning. One requirement for the course was to spend fifty hours with a family in their home and in various family activities. I asked to spend my time with this particular Honduran family because I taught two of their daughters and wanted to get to know them outside of the school and to get a glimpse of their lived experiences. The time I spent with them resulted in our sharing stories, with the eldest daughters interpreting, about family, childhood experiences, school, religion, work, hopes, and dreams. The older girls taught me how to make tortillas and they prepared Honduran dishes for me. I realized that within this family lay a wealth of untapped knowledge and life experiences I had failed to acknowledge functioning as *la maestra* [the teacher], as I was formally called by the mother and father. Looking through the lens of a teacher, I observed a mother who was unable to help her children with schoolwork due to a language barrier. She could not go into the school to volunteer due to work and time constraints, yet she was engaged in other activities that supported learning. These
included reading the Bible in Spanish, cooking, shopping, preparing for family gatherings, and negotiating roles in the family network. Stepping away from my teacher lens and looking through the lens of friendship, I learned about her children’s border crossing, her existing support system comprised of extended family and church members, and her expectations of her children. She was directly involved in her children’s lives and supported their overall educación [education], which encompassed teaching religion, manners, and respect for elders rather than having a presence in the school. My observations prompted an interest in further investigation of her understanding of parental involvement and led to my pilot study.

Pilot Study

Due to my involvement with the family and questions I had concerning how the mother perceives parental involvement, I designed a pilot study to examine this social construct from the perspectives of a Spanish-speaking mother and the school personnel who worked with her children. Specifically, this research project was comprised of a case study that focused on one Honduran mother, Silvia², four teachers, and a principal at the local elementary school that three of her children attended. I chose these participants because of previously established relationships. For two years, I had taught Silvia’s children and during one semester, I spent over fifty hours with the family in their home. Due to my socioeconomic status, which is middle-class, and my Anglo culture I would be considered an outsider; nevertheless I had the opportunity to experience an insider’s view of Silvia and her family’s daily life. With regard to school personnel, I taught English Language Learners (ELL) in the school and worked collaboratively with some of the teachers, which provided me with an insider view of the school setting and teacher practices. I already had an established relationship with all the participants in

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² No actual names were used in this research. The participant chose a pseudonym allowing her to identify herself in the final document.
the school, which afforded me an insider view. Over the course of 16 weeks, I observed and interviewed the mother in her home and interviewed school personnel in the school.

My initial hunches about why school personnel perceive that Spanish-speaking parents demonstrated less involvement included the following: (a) teachers and parents do not define parental involvement in the same way, (b) the parents cannot communicate with teachers in English, and (c) the parents have limited time and transportation to go into the schools due to work schedules. Data analysis supported these hunches.

*Data analysis.* Overall, data revealed a disconnect between how Silvia defined her role in her children’s education and how school personnel defined a mother’s role. Silvia defined parental involvement as (a) sending her children to school and signing tests and homework, (b) giving teachers the primary role in teaching academics, and (c) wanting her children to succeed in school. On the other hand, school personnel stressed (a) active participation, e.g., helping with homework, reading with children, meeting the teacher, and (b) parents and teachers working together as partners in learning - overall, they described a lack of parental involvement among Spanish-speaking parents in general and specifically with Silvia.

*The Honduran concept of parental involvement.* Silvia felt she was involved with her children’s overall education by teaching them how to behave, sending them to school clean and on time, and providing them with a religious education. She implied that in Honduras her responsibilities with school involvement included ensuring that her children arrived at school on time and preparing parties for school events. She stated that she neither attended parent-teacher conferences nor assisted with homework on a regular basis.

*American teachers’ concept of parental involvement.* The school personnel expected her to come to conferences, to have a presence in the school, and to assist her children with
homework. Their responses to my questions provided evidence that their concept of parental involvement drew from their own experiences as students and later as school personnel.

*Comparing and contrasting views of parental involvement.* My analysis of the data led me to conclude that the teachers view Silvia as lacking parental involvement since she does meet their expectations. However, this view holds deficit connotations (Nieto & Bode, 2007) and it is important to note that the institutional meaning of parental involvement can easily lead to this view. This view lacks an understanding of and appreciation for the activities taking place in the home. It does not recognize the funds of knowledge Silvia provides ((Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992, 2005) and ignores any teaching and learning outside the realm of school academics occurring in the home.

After spending over fifty hours with Silvia and her family in myriad activities and interviews, I came to two realizations. First, my initial beliefs of parental involvement did not take into account how Spanish-speaking parents make meaning of this construct. Second, my beliefs ignored funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992, 2005) such as schooling, work, and personal experiences they brought from their native country, which were present in the home.

Throughout this paper, I use the term funds of knowledge to refer to historical and cultural knowledge that helps families navigate through life (Moll et al., 1992, 2005). Time spent with Silvia elicited my strong desire to explore funds of knowledge in the homes of other Spanish-speaking mothers and to examine how they make sense of parental involvement.

*Reframing My Definition of Parental Involvement*

The pilot study helped to transform my view of parental involvement. I recognize that my initial view embraced the idea that all parents held notions similar to my own about the meaning of parental involvement. However, Spanish-speaking parents have their own understanding about
parental involvement, influenced by historical and cultural factors. The parents enter the schools with a wealth of knowledge and strengths to share concerning how they conceptualize parental involvement. Drawing from families’ funds of knowledge and linking that knowledge to the curriculum fosters parental involvement and provides meaningful learning opportunities that can in turn transform teachers’ views on parental involvement (Moll et al. 1992, 2005).

Summary of Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, I presented a scenario describing what many immigrant mothers experience when enrolling a child in school. Time spent with a Honduran family inspired me to examine how the mother and school personnel made sense of parental involvement. My pilot study informed the current research that I describe in this paper. Based on my analysis of the findings and my interpretation, I perceived a need to explore how other Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of parental involvement through interviews and observations of their lived experiences. I designed a qualitative research project using interviews and observations to investigate the lived experiences of three other Spanish-speaking mothers. Rather than perpetuate deficit beliefs that they are uninvolved because they do not value education, lack education, or lack English proficiency, I present a study that examined how they make sense of the construct of parental involvement.

Overview of Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework undergirding my research through a review of literature pertinent to parental involvement. I review legislation, definitions, effects on academic achievement, the involvement and understandings of Spanish-speaking parents, the understandings of teachers, and the obstacles faced by Spanish-speaking parents. I complete the section with an overview of the historical context of Latinos in the United States.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

To present the theoretical underpinnings of my research, I refer to Crotty’s (1998) flowchart, which moves from epistemology to theoretical perspective, then to methodology, and finally to methods. Each element serves to inform the study. By configuring my information into a flowchart, I was able to establish how it was interrelated and worked together as the research progressed.

---

**Epistemology**
- Constructionism

**Theoretical Perspective**
- Funds of Knowledge

**Methodology**
- Qualitative case study using ethnographic methods

**Methods**
- Observation
- Semi-structured interviews

*Figure 1. Flowchart of Research Elements*
I framed this research using ideas drawn from social constructionism (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2003) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992, 2005). I believe that our knowledge is socially constructed and rooted in social contexts influenced by culture and history. The meanings we attach to various social phenomena stem from our knowledge and interactions with others and subsequently bring about our actions. Drawing from Moll et al. (1992, 2005), I believe Spanish-speaking families bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences with them from their home countries. However, when operating under an institutional definition of parental involvement their knowledge and experiences remain ignored.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism grew out of dialogue that questioned values such as reason, scientific truth, and objectivity associated with modernism (Gergen, 2009a). Social constructionist inquiry focuses on elucidating how people describe, understand, and make sense of the world by constructing knowledge or understanding through social interaction (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2003; Gergen, 2009a). Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42, italics in the original). Relationships yield shared understandings, which in turn play out in our daily activities (Berger, 2003). Parental involvement is a social construct created by people interacting in the social context of the world in which they interact. Over time, society has institutionalized a shared meaning associated with parental involvement. Berger and Luckman (1966) suggest that this “occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (p.
For example, in the case of parental involvement, the definition evolved over time as researchers conducted studies to determine what kind of involvement benefits student achievement (Becher, 1986; Epstein, 1991, 1995; Fine, 1993; Goldberg, Rueda, & August, 2006; Henderson, 1987). Subsequently, educators embraced the tenets of the studies and incorporated them into their framework and communication with parents. Over time, the actions associated with parental involvement became habitual and accepted by society, or reified. Disequilibrium occurs when a parent enters the school from another country with different beliefs attached to the meaning of parental involvement, making it vital to examine how immigrant parents construct meaning of the term. Social constructionism offers a framework that facilitates this examination.

The theory of social constructionism reflects an assumed shared knowledge base among interacting persons (Burr, 2003). The knowledge base that we supposedly share amid myriad interactions further reflects our culture, history, and personal experiences; essentially, we can view people as a product of their raising. White, middle-class values shape school and teacher culture (Cushner, McClelland, Safford, 2009). Therefore, since the definition of parental involvement in the United States is framed around dominant White, middle-class values, the expectations for individuals outside that framework must be considered because each person’s understanding of this term will be shaped within the context of historically and culturally influenced social interactions (Crozier, 2001). A study in England that focused on poor and minority groups found that policies for parental involvement assume that all parents have the same needs and experiences as White, middle-class parents (Crozier, 2001). To this, he adds the notion of the good parent that is “. . . constructed on the principles of universalism in the sense that they must be shared by everyone . . .” (p. 333). He continues by suggesting that the good parent knows and follows the rules of the game. These rules stem from teachers’ typically White,
middle-class definitions of involvement. Thus, White, middle-class people socially construct the meaning of parental involvement. In turn, they expect that all parents universally share the same knowledge, needs, and definition. By assuming that we all share the same taken-for-granted knowledge, people who do not belong to or associate with White, middle-class society are considered deficient (Gergen, 2009a). Social constructionism asks that we question this taken-for-granted knowledge of parental involvement and examine how people make sense of it in the context of their own lives (Gergen, 2009a).

When defining a construct such as parental involvement “the definition is implied by the use of some common referent term, which is nevertheless understood (or constructed) differently by different individuals (or constructors)” (Lincoln, 1985, p. 84). Parental involvement is determined, in part, by how parents construct the meaning of this term thereby affecting their involvement or actions in society. Thus, teachers cannot take for granted that Spanish-speaking parents share the same understanding that they, as educators, have. For these parents to demonstrate parental involvement aligned with a teacher’s definition, they must share the same knowledge as the school with regard to the construct of parental involvement (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Dyrness, 2007; Lopez, 2001). If parents do not share this knowledge but are involved in ways not acknowledged by teachers, then teachers may perceive these parents as deficient or not valuing education (Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Exploring how Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement by examining their funds of knowledge provides insight into how they construct knowledge.

Funds of Knowledge

One approach to conceptualizing culture draws from a view whereby researchers explore discourses that construct our realities (González, 2005). It is through interaction with others and
analysis of what they do and what they say about what they do that we can come to learn about their constructed reality. In relation to parental involvement, González (2005) views this term as narrowly defined by schools and centered on a parent’s presence in the school to help the teachers. This does not facilitate a partnership between parents and teachers nor does it draw from the parents’ understanding of parental involvement or their funds of knowledge: “[It] is only through face-to-face interaction and one-to-one encounters with persons, through a mutually respectful dialog, that we can cross the constructions of difference.” (González, 2005, p. 44)

Moll et al.’s (1992, 2005) use of the term funds of knowledge draws from historical and cultural knowledge and skills that assist in their functioning in daily life. The historical and cultural knowledge that Spanish-speaking mothers bring with them influences how they view their role in their children’s education, which in turn affects how their perceived role is played out in daily activities. It is important to draw from a family’s funds of knowledge to nurture relationships between the school and family (Moll et al., 1992, 2005). Through home visits and dialogue, teachers gain knowledge of the family history, daily life, and skills that in turn teachers can weave into the curriculum (Moll et al., 1992, 2005). By accessing these funds of knowledge, they gain insight into their beliefs and practices, ultimately leading to an awareness of why they do what they do.

Family funds of knowledge extend beyond the immediate family and are reciprocal in nature (Browning-Aiken, 2005; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992, 2005; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992.) Vélez-Ibáñez (1988) described the phenomenon he called “clustering” or “extension of families”, which included “networks of exchange” between the immediate family and family or friends outside of the immediate family (p. 35). These relationships provided valuable resources and funds of knowledge that assist in the
navigation of daily activities and in the transmission of knowledge from generation to
generation. Valdés (1996) noted in her research on ten Mexican-origin immigrants the vast and
far-researching social networks found among the families in her study. She found that the family
members drew on “the family’s collective wisdom” to help navigate the uncertainties and
obstacles encountered in life in a new country (p. 94-95). Family members contributed to the
household knowledge based on their own experiences. For example, if someone worked a
construction job, he would serve as a liaison to obtain a position with the company for another
family member. Other assistance came in the form of finding housing, negotiating doctor visits,
enrolling children in school, and myriad other activities. In essence, the family members drew on
one another’s funds of knowledge in order to negotiate lived experiences in their new country. It
is important to note that these networks of support are built on confianza [mutual trust] between
all involved (González et al., 2005). Confianza provides an avenue for lasting relationships based
on reciprocal exchanges of knowledge and services (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1988; Vélez-Ibáñez &
Greenberg, 1992). The families’ cultural and historical knowledge is transmitted from generation
to generation and has impact on their daily life.

Literature Review

The intent of this literature review is to provide a synthesis of literature pertinent to the
construct of parental involvement beginning with an overview of the history of and recent
legislation surrounding parental involvement. This is followed by definitions of parental
involvement and a discussion of what researchers have learned about the effects of parental
involvement on student achievement in general and parental involvement among Spanish-
speaking immigrants, in particular. Next, I discuss how teachers and Spanish-speaking parents
understand and describe parental involvement. I also explore obstacles faced by Spanish-
speaking parents regarding parental involvement. Lastly, I present general information related to the historical context of the Latino presence in the United States.

History of Parental Involvement in the United States

The current view of and legislation regarding parental involvement in the United States has evolved over time. Early in the formation of the United States, parents held the primary role in educating their children (Moles, 1993). Once public schools for all children opened, parents primarily taught moral values and social etiquette, while schools taught academics, thus separating the home from the school (Moles, 1993). Schools became the primary vehicle for educating children with the goal of “. . . trying to unify diverse populations, including many new immigrants. . .” (Moles, 1993, p. 23). By the late 1880s, settlement homes served the purpose of “. . . teaching these new arrivals the dominant culture’s ways as well as health habits, neatness, industry, and nutrition.” (Berger, 1991, p. 211); thus further removing parents from the role as primary educator. In the 1890’s, parent organizations, organized mainly by middle-class mothers, surfaced primarily to build home-school relationships and do fund-raising (Moles, 1993). The federal government became involved in parental involvement during the mid-1960’s (Moles, 1993) and continues to enact legislation regarding a parent’s involvement. The 1970’s experienced increased federal funding and mandates for parental involvement programs and more parents serving on school committees and boards (Berger, 1991).

Current Parental Involvement Legislation

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001) places a great deal of importance on parental involvement in public schools. With regard to Local Educational Agencies (LEA), NCLB (2001) states that in general:
A local educational agency may receive funds under this part only if such agency implements programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents in programs assisted under this part consistent with this section. Such programs, activities, and procedures shall be planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children (§ 1118).

Each LEA must provide a written plan delineating its policy on parental involvement. The policy must involve parents in the development of a plan. The plan must include parent involvement activities geared to increase academic achievement and school performance, yearly evaluation of the plan targeting barriers to parental involvement, and suggestions to revise the plan if needed. This policy includes the following: provisions for amendments that must be made available to the community; annual meetings to discuss parental involvement issues, the curriculum, and any school-based decisions related to a child’s education; parent training to assist in academic achievement; and “. . . full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required . . . in a language such parents understand” (§ 1118, f).

NCLB greatly influences expectations for and understandings of parental involvement among school personnel. However, this rigid policy fails to recognize that experiences with parental involvement vary from place to place as well as from person to person and culture to culture. How an individual constructs meaning of the term parental involvement influences how teachers, administrators, and parents define and carry out this construct.

Defining Parental Involvement

Educational settings delineate specific activities qualifying as parental involvement. “Within educational discourse, parent involvement is generally understood in terms of specific
practices such as bake sales, fundraisers, PTA/PTO, and ‘back-to-school’ nights” (López, 2001, p. 416). López continues by stating that parental involvement is a scripted role and in order to be involved in these particular activities, parents need to have knowledge of them. School personnel and parents of the dominant culture typically share this knowledge (e.g., PTA, parent teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities). Lightfoot (2004) described the term parental involvement as “socially loaded” and “. . . laden with power implications” (p. 92). She added that such implications lead to a deficit characterization of immigrant parents. Scribner and Scribner (2001) remind us that, “Parent involvement encompasses a multitude of complex phenomena. Differences in the family structure, culture, ethnic background, social class, age and gender represent only a few of the factors affecting interpretations of or generalizations about the nature of parent involvement” (p. 36). Spanish-speaking parents who have had no prior contact with U.S. schools may not share this knowledge and may have differing views on the meaning of parental involvement (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Hyslop, 2000; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Valdés, 1996).

Informal and formal parental involvement. Over the years, researchers have attempted to define types of parental involvement. Two basic types include formal and informal involvement (De Gaetano, 2007). Formal involvement consists of parental engagement in activities in the classroom or school, such as teaching a group of children, going on field trips, or being involved in school-based management. Informal involvement consists of the help parents give their children at home and includes activities such as discussing the importance of school, reading stories, or helping with homework (De Gaetano, 2007).

Epstein’s framework for parental involvement. After conducting many studies, Epstein (1995) designed a framework for parental involvement suggesting six levels: parenting,
communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parenting involves meeting the basic needs of a child. Communicating involves contact with teachers whether in person, or via phone calls or written notes. Volunteering includes parents working in the school on designated tasks. Learning at home encompasses school personnel teaching parents how they can assist with schoolwork. Decision-making involves the parents in school committees and school-based decisions. The highest level of involvement is collaboration with the community, which includes the community, the parents and the school working together to meet the needs of the children (Epstein, 1995).

*Integrating cultural variations.* Another body of research exists in support of the need to examine and expand the more traditional definitions of parental involvement to reflect cultural variations (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; de Carvalho, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Ladkey & Peterson, 2008; López, 2001; Peña, 2001). Overall, this literature stresses the importance of integrating the Spanish-speaking families’ cultures and funds of knowledge with that of the school to design parental involvement strategies. It is not sufficient to teach immigrant families the way of U.S. schools. It is necessary to draw from their cultural backgrounds and knowledge to support their involvement. To increase parental involvement, a collaborative understanding of what this term means to parents and teachers must be developed and upheld while simultaneously respecting one another’s strengths and weaknesses (Peña, 2001). Spanish-speaking parents are involved in their own ways, such as teaching the value of education and hard work, which schools should recognize as valid involvement (López, 2001). Teachers need to learn about the background experiences and cultures of their students and families (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).
Zarate’s (2007) findings illustrate that stakeholders hold differing ideas about what constitutes parental involvement. Differences between Latino parents’ and school personnel’s definitions of parental involvement exist. Specifically, Spanish-speaking parents emphasize participation in the children’s lives with a focus on moral education and upbringing more frequently than academic involvement. Life participation includes communication with the child, knowing the child’s friends, providing encouragement, establishing trust with the child, and teaching morals. Academic involvement includes signing homework, attending conferences, asking about homework, and going to the library, although these activities often prove difficult due to language barriers (Zarate, 2007).

On the other hand, Zarate’s (2007) study indicates that school personnel specify four areas as indicators of parental involvement: school leadership, administrative support, parenting, and academic support. Examples of school leadership include PTA membership, advocacy for students, and participation on school committees. Administrative support includes attending school events, preparing food for events, and fundraising. Advocacy includes emotional support, child attendance at school, monitoring behavior, and authoritative parenting. Academic support includes assistance with homework, checking report cards, classroom observations, and providing tutoring if needed (Zarate, 2007).

To summarize, Spanish-speaking parents stress close familial relationships and the overall moral upbringing of a child as the primary role in their children’s education. On the contrary, school personnel stress visible involvement in the school, communication with school personnel, and assistance with homework and test preparation as indicators of appropriate parental involvement. Variations in the meaning of parental involvement demonstrate the
importance of respecting the home culture and native language of diverse families while working together to bridge the differences.

Research on Parental Involvement

For decades, researchers have studied the role of parental involvement in children’s academic achievement (Becher, 1986; Christenson et al., 1992; Epstein, 1991, 1995; Fine, 1993; Goldberg, Rueda, & August, 2006; Hara & Burke, 1998; Henderson, 1987; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Jones & Velez, 1997; Singh et al., 1995). Findings indicate a direct correlation between positive student achievement and increased parental involvement (Barnard, 2003; Becher, 1986; Christenson et al., 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hara & Burke, 1998; Henderson, 1987; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Jones & Velez, 1997; Singh et al., 1995). A report from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (1998) states, “Discussions on how to improve the quality of education in America have focused attention on the roles of family and community, and research supports the belief that high-quality education cannot be successfully accomplished without the active involvement of parents” (p. 1). In essence, if parents are involved in their children’s lives and education, students will perform better academically. However, this brings to the forefront the importance of how people define parental involvement and what activities promote academic achievement.

Through careful examination in an attempt to define parental involvement, researchers (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; de Carvalho, 2001; De Gaetano, 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Epstein, 1991, 1995; Ladkey & Peterson, 2008; López, 2001; Peña, 2001) have portrayed specific types of involvement and have articulated factors to consider when constructing a definition. Nevertheless, there is no “one-size-fits-all” prototype for successful parental involvement practices. Several researchers (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1991, 1994, 2001; Delgado-
Gaitan & Ruiz, 1992; Dyrness, 2007; Olivos, 2006; Orozco, 2008; Osterling & Garza, 2004; Scribner et al., 1999; Sheldon, 2003) have implemented and studied programs specifically designed to increase Latino parental involvement, research that goes beyond the scope of this project. However, each program comes with its own benefits and limitations.

In summary, there are various understandings of the social construct of parental involvement, based on historical and cultural background. When defining parental involvement, it is prudent that teachers remain cognizant of the complex nature of the interpretation of its meaning and consider myriad differences that may exist (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Valdés, 1996).

**Parental Involvement of Spanish-Speakers**

Further examination of parental involvement indicates that schools report low rates of involvement among Spanish-speaking parents (Chavkin, 1993; De Gaetano, 2007; Espinosa, 1995; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Ladkey & Peterson, 2008; Moles, 1993; Olivos, 2004; Quezada et al., 2003) and Spanish-speaking students are more likely to experience underachievement (Carger, 1997; Laird, Kienzl, DeBell, & Chapman, 2007; Reese, 2002; Romo & Falbo, 1996). However, prior to concluding that Spanish-speaking parents are not involved, it is prudent to consider how people define parental involvement. If the construct of parental involvement is simply defined as visible involvement in the school (e.g., PTA meetings, volunteering in school), then these parents may demonstrate little, if any, involvement. However, we can alter our perception of Spanish-speaking parents’ involvement by including invisible involvement (e.g., talking with children, going to church, reading the Bible) in the definition.

López (2001) researched how Spanish-speaking parents negotiated the concept of parental involvement. He wrote about the Padilla family who were considered to be uninvolved
by the school’s standards. However, López perceived the Padilla family’s involvement from a different perspective. In particular, the children received consejos [advice] from their parents on a regular basis. These consejos came in the form of the children experiencing, first-hand, hard work in the fields alongside their parents and messages about the importance of hard work and a good education. Although the Padilla family was not involved according to standard school expectations, the parents provided important life lessons and support. In addition, they consistently stressed the value of education. This leads to an examination of Spanish-speaking parents’ understandings of the construct of parental involvement.

**Spanish-Speaking Parent Understandings of Parental Involvement**

Spanish-speaking parents may hold a different set of beliefs about what constitutes parental involvement (Carger, 1996, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Nicolau and Ramos, 1990; Ramirez, 2003; Trumbull et al., 2001; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Zarate, 2007). Delgado-Gaitan (2004) found that Spanish-speaking parents do value education despite limited English spoken in the home and varying levels of education among the parents. The parents support their children’s education in their own way, which may not reflect the school’s expectations of parental involvement. She found that in Spanish-speaking households, stringent goals and objectives for achievement are highly valued. Further, she noted that learning occurs in Spanish-speaking homes in the form of demonstrating appropriate behavior, using proper manners, obeying elders, negotiating, communicating needs and wants, and engaging in other daily activities.

Carger (1997) observed a “. . . social and emotional support system separate from school goals or objectives” (p. 41). In her research, she learned that the Spanish term “. . . bien educado [well-mannered] connotes a wider sense of being well-bred, mannerly, clean, respectful,
responsible, loved and loving” (p. 41, italics added). Villenas (2002) noted the importance of understanding and defining the Spanish-speaking value of “una buena educación” [a good education] (p. 23), which refers to the moral upbringing of children. She found that Spanish-speaking parents place great value on instilling values of respeto [respect] and buen comportamiento [good conduct] (pp. 23-26). With regard to respeto, parents expect children to show great respect for their elders, to be honest, and to value God, family, and school. Buen comportamiento, she states:

[I]s intertwined with respect in terms of comporting oneself with dignity in a manner that brings respect to the family and community. It includes a hard-work ethic; obedience; cleanliness; comportment in the roles of daughter, son, spouse, father or mother; and the curbing of selfish liberties. (p. 24)

In essence, being well educated is more than academics. The parents support their children’s education in ways that may not reflect the school’s expectations of parental involvement.

Trumbull, et al. (2001) state that immigrant Latino parents “may believe academic instruction should be restricted to school and can be done better by the teacher” (p. 19) and that “la maestra es la segunda mamá [the teacher is the child’s second mother]” (p. 20). In the same vein, Olivos (2006) found that Spanish-speaking parents view the teacher as a “co-equal with parents in the education of their children” (p. 57). These views indicate that the parents feel they should not interfere with academics taught at school, the teacher is competent to do that part, but they should work together to educate the child holistically. Through their research, Lareau and Benson (1984) posited that differences in home/school relationships among working-class and middle-class families had less to do with the value placed on education than with cultural and social differences and with how schools dealt with these differences. For example, a Honduran
mother may strongly value education for her child yet, because she holds a high regard for teachers and their professional wisdom, she rarely contacts or questions the teacher about school matters because it is not acceptable in her culture to do so (Trumbull, et al., 2001).

Nicolau and Ramos (1990) also found that Spanish-speaking parents care about education; however, cultural differences in defining the parent’s role are cause for misinterpretation by educators. One difference is that Spanish-speaking parents feel their role is to “instill respect and proper behavior” and the school’s job is “to instill knowledge” (p. 13). They found that Spanish-speaking parents perceive teachers as being professionals who know what is best for their children whereas they, the parents, are responsible for teaching their children to behave and be respectful of teachers in school. Some parents articulated that they felt discriminated against by school personnel. Overall, they did not experience a welcoming school environment.

In sum, research indicates that Spanish-speaking parents do value education but have differing views as to their role regarding parental involvement. Culturally, they feel it is the school’s job to educate their children. They have a high regard for the teachers and their professional knowledge, and do not feel in a position to question the teachers with regard to academics.

Teachers’ Understandings of Parental Involvement

Amid high-stakes testing and federal mandates to increase parental communication and involvement (NCLB, 2001), the perceived lack of parental involvement among Spanish-speaking parents can lead to teachers having negative feelings toward them. Traditionally, teachers have viewed the “role of families and parents as preparing for (particularly in preschool and elementary school), supporting, and reinforcing academic work on a daily basis, especially when
students present difficulties” (de Carvalho, 2001, p. 97). She adds that teachers expect parents to take part in social activities such as sports, class parties, and school fund-raising. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) defined educators’ expectations of parental involvement to include communication with the school and assisting with schoolwork in the home. Research related to educational outcomes and parental involvement has examined variables that include home supervision, educational aspirations, parent contact with the school, parent volunteering in the school, and parent attendance at school functions (Fan & Chen, 2001). These are all important indicators of expectations for parental involvement.

Teachers often assume that if parents are not involved and/or visible in the school setting, they are not interested in the child’s education (Casanova, 1996; Inger, 1992; Jones & Velez, 1997; Ramirez, 2003; Rodriguez-Brown, 2009). Olivos (2006) articulated that when working as a bilingual teacher he initially felt that bicultural parents did not come to the school because they lacked value for or interest in their children’s education. He believed that the parents were not educated and did not fully comprehend the importance they played in the education of their children. His views changed after engaging with “low-income Latino parents and [his] school district’s resistance to their active participation” and realizing that they were interested in their children’s education and becoming active participants (p. 3). He also states that teachers blame the parents’ lack of education and English proficiency, disinterest, and overall incompetence on student failure. Nicolau and Ramos (1990) found that some teachers perceive Spanish-speaking parents as being different and unable to fit into the school culture, as not caring about education, as being clannish, and as being unwilling to learn English.

These statements lead to questions about how educators understand the construct of parental involvement. Scribner et al. (1999) found “Of primary concern to school staff was
student achievement” (p. 44). Stressing student achievement may lead to the assumption that the teachers’ focus will be on how the parent can help their children with schoolwork to increase academic performance.

Nieto and Bode (2008) stress the importance of understanding that “cultural and economic differences also influence family involvement” (p. 145). They indicate that parents from diverse backgrounds value education and hold high-expectations for the academic achievement of their children; however, they may encounter difficulties with homework and school activities scheduled during the school day. Teachers should recognize differing cultural values.

Overall, teachers tend to value parental involvement that will assist the students in meeting the goals of the teachers, e.g., passing state-mandated tests or completing homework assignments. This view lacks appreciation for and inclusion of the cultural values held by people from diverse backgrounds.

**Obstacles to Parental Involvement**

conclude that Spanish-speaking parents often felt alienated by schools because of the negative treatment they received.

Many teachers in public schools in the United States expect parents to assist their children with homework and to take an active role in their education (de Carvalho, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Zarate, 2007). This role can include studying with children, calling out spelling words, or even teaching skills the children do not understand well. Nieto and Bode (2008) stress that teachers need to understand cultural differences and expectations for parental involvement. If teachers bring these factors into discussions and policy-making, obstacles may not seem so insurmountable.

Parents may not be aware of the expectations for parental involvement. They may also not have the social networks necessary to gain access to the school’s expectations. Grant and Wong (2004) state:

\[\ldots\textit{Social networks}, \text{or the set of social relationships and linkages one person has with other individuals, are formed within the social context in which families live. Social context may be an important factor related to the role that parents take in their children’s education (p. 17).}\]

Overall, many of the perceived barriers are due to cultural misunderstandings on the part of Spanish-speaking parents and school personnel.

The Latino Presence in the United States

In the section above, I discussed literature relevant to parental involvement, in general, and related to teachers’ and Spanish-speaking parents’ perceptions, in particular. This study examines parental involvement as perceived by Guatemalan and Honduran mothers. Since
mothers from these two countries inform my study, it is prudent to present the historical context as it relates to the presence of Guatemalan and Honduran immigrants in the United States.

**Historical Context**

Hispanic people from Mexico, Central America, and South America lived in the United States long before the current waves of immigration. Many immigrants today even trace their ancestry to families that lived in places like Texas, California, and Puerto Rico before these lands became part of the U.S. An unprecedented wave of migration from Spanish-speaking lands has been underway since the 1960’s, and it has gained considerable momentum since the early 1990’s.” (Suro, 2007, p. 12-13)

As of July 1, 2006, 44.3 million Hispanics or 14.8% of the total population of the United States list themselves as Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This report also states that “Hispanics accounted for one-half of the nation’s growth” between 2000 and 2006 indicating three times the growth rate of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006, p. 11). It is projected that by 2050 there will be 102.6 million Hispanics living in the United States accounting for 24.4% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

The 2008 Census Bureau projects that 531,396 Hispanics, or 6.84%, comprise the total population of Virginia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Sixty percent of Hispanic immigrants, roughly 318,000, in Virginia are United States citizens; the remaining forty percent, roughly 212,000, are non-citizen immigrants with or without legal presence (Cai, 2008).

Guatemalan immigrants. The U.S. Census (2007) indicates that approximately 860,000 Guatemalan immigrants reside in the United States. Guatemala was in a state of conflict during

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3 I use the term Hispanic in this section because it is the term utilized in the literature from which I obtained this information. I prefer and use Latina, Spanish-speaking mother, Honduran mother, or Guatemalan mother when referring to participants in my study.
most of the latter part of the twentieth century causing many people to leave their homes in an attempt to escape political strife and economic hardship (Menjivar, 2002). Between 1950 and 1970, most Guatemalan immigrants were middle-class activists or politicians. In the 1970’s and 1980’s, between 500,000 and one million indigenous people fled villages controlled by the military to enter the United States and Mexico (Hong, 2008). After 1980, many indigenous people fled and more than 300,000 entered and resided in the United States without documentation (Hong, 2008). Although many were trying to escape persecution by guerilla armies, the United States, Mexico, and other countries in Central America on the receiving end of fleeing Guatemalans did not recognize them as refugees (Garcia, 2006). Each country determined the status of those who entered the country and “. . . [M]ost governments preferred to view. . . Guatemalans living among their populations as economic migrants because it freed them from any responsibility” (Garcia, 2006, p. 33). Thus, the United States considers Guatemalans to be economic migrants and does not recognize them as political refugees.

Over half the Guatemalan people are descendents of indigenous Mayan peoples or mestizo (mixed Spanish and indigenous); the remainder of the population is comprised of minorities of African, Chinese, and Arab descent, and a small number of Caucasian elite (Hong, n.d.). The official language is Spanish although there are over twenty languages and many dialects also spoken. (Hong, n.d., p. 2).

“Guatemala has one of the most unequal income distributions in the hemisphere. The wealthiest 10% of the population receives almost one-half of all income; the top 20% receives two-thirds of all income” (U. S. Department of State, 2009). This leaves 32% of the population living on less than $2 a day and 13.5% living on less than $1 a day (U. S. Department of State, 2009).
The education system in Guatemala faces severe problems. Schools lack funding, adequate materials, and trained teachers (“Education System”, n.d.). In recent decades, many schools in Guatemala closed because of violence or poverty leaving many with little or no formal education (Hong, n.d.). “[T]he average schooling of the adult population is 5.4 years and just 1.9 years for the indigenous population” (World Bank, 2006). Illiteracy in Guatemala is among the worst in the hemisphere (U. S. Department of State, 2009).

**Honduran immigrants.** The U.S. Census (2007) indicates there are approximately 496,837 Honduran immigrants living in the United States. Although Hondurans have migrated to the United States for over a century, significantly larger numbers began immigrating in the late 1990’s after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch (Schmalzbauer, 2008). Hurricane Mitch had devastating effects on Honduras and its people, which led to tens of thousands of people leaving Honduras in search of jobs in the United States so that they could earn money to send home to family in Honduras (Tilley-Lubbs, 2003). Initially, they were granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) due to displacement from a natural disaster, allowing them to travel back to Honduras with special permission and to obtain work visas from the U.S. government. However, they have been required to reapply for this status each year with their only hope for permanent residency being through amnesty (Schmalzbauer, 2008). Information from United States Citizen and Immigration Services (2010) indicates that the TPS status for Hondurans expires July 5, 2010 (USCIS, 2010).

The population of Honduras is 90% mestizo, people of mixed ancestry (often Spanish and Indian), and “small minorities of European, African, Asian, Arab, and indigenous Indian descent” (U. S. Department of State, 2009). Spanish is the predominant language although
indigenous languages and Garifuna, a black Caribe language, are also spoken (U. S. Department of State, 2009).

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere (U. S. Department of State, 2009). Families live in abject poverty. Many women

. . . earn $40 to $120 a month working in a factory, cleaning houses, or providing child care. A hut with no bathroom or kitchen rents for nearly $30 a month. In rural areas of Honduras, some people live under a piece of tarp; they have no chairs or table and eat sitting on a dirt floor. (Nazario, 2007)

World Bank (2009) estimates that fifty-nine percent of the Honduran population lives below the poverty line and 36.2% live below the extreme poverty line.

In terms of education, parents often pull their children out of school as young as eight years old in order to work and provide money for the family (Nazario, 2007). Parents often do not have money to buy new uniforms, school supplies, or lunch for their children (Nazario, 2007). Approximately 20% of the population remains illiterate (U. S. Department of State, 2009).

Summary of Chapter 2

Constructionism provides a vital venue to explore how Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of parental involvement. The meaning individuals place on the term parental involvement will differ depending on how they construct their knowledge in reference to this term. In turn, historical, cultural, and personal experiences will influence their construction of knowledge. Funds of knowledge focus on the need to access a family’s knowledge base whereby we learn about their beliefs and practices and gain insight into how they construct their knowledge. Home visits and interaction with the family members facilitate this process.
Current legislation (NCLB, 2001) dictates that schools provide avenues for parental involvement. Parental involvement programs differ from school to school because of variations in definition but research indicates that increasing parental involvement can lead to higher academic achievement. However, overall, Spanish-speaking parents do not demonstrate high levels of parental involvement as defined by White, middle-class teachers.

Spanish-speaking parents show little visible parental involvement. However, if schools expand their definition they can note “invisible” involvement including consejos and the teaching of moral behavior. Research points toward blatant differences between how Spanish-speaking parents and teachers understand the construct of parental involvement. Many parents feel it is the school’s responsibility to teach academics and the parent’s responsibility to teach morals. On the other hand, many teachers expect parents to be involved in the school and at home with homework. Obstacles include, but are not limited to, expectations, language proficiency, time constraints, and school atmosphere.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

In Chapter 3, I provide a description of my research design, methodology, and limitations to the study. I portray the setting and participants and include the historical and socioeconomic context of the three mothers. I describe my data collection process, my interviews, and my observations followed by an explanation of my data analysis. I complete this chapter with a discussion of my stance as a researcher stance, reflexivity, ethics, and trustworthiness. In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed summary of my research findings upon completion of within-case analysis. In Chapter 5, I summarize findings from my cross-case analysis. In Chapter 6, I provide a summary of the study and implications for educators and for future research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The overarching objective of this qualitative case study was to explore how Spanish-speaking mothers articulate their role in their children’s education. The following questions guided the research:

- How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?
- How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?
- What funds of knowledge are present in the home?

I framed the research design and methodology around my theoretical framework drawing from social constructionism and funds of knowledge.

Qualitative Research Design

The key philosophical assumption . . . upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

As a qualitative researcher, I am “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6, italics in the original). Knowledge is an active process in which:

We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience.

Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to this construction. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197).
I sought to understand how three mothers construct knowledge of parental involvement through the lenses of their historical and sociocultural perspectives. Therefore, I “stress[ed] the socially constructed nature of reality” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). I considered how they understand the construct of parental involvement and, from their point of view, how this plays out in their lived experiences.

Methods associated with qualitative research allowed me to study parental involvement in depth and detail. In particular, I relied on observations, detailed fieldnotes, memos, and semi-structured, audio-taped, transcribed and translated interviews. Although I entered the field with specific questions, I relied on emergent design as my strategy as it allowed for “adapting inquiry as understanding deepen[ed] and/or situations change[d]. . .” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). During the interviews, I asked additional questions to clarify responses or to add depth to the initial question.

Case Study

Qualitative case studies are common in the field of education and have “. . . illuminated educational practice for nearly thirty years” (Merriam, 1998, p. 26). Case study aims at “understanding a bounded system” (Mayan, 2009) and is not so much a choice of method but a choice of what the researcher plans to study (Stake, 2005). Below I describe both my case and the methodology associated with my research.

The case as a bounded system. A case is a bounded unit that one can “fence in” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27) or “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded group” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). The center, or heart, of my research, which is the phenomenon of how Spanish-speaking immigrant mothers articulate their role in their children’s education represents the case, or bounded unit (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Embedded in the center are three Spanish-
speaking mothers: one from Guatemala, Susana, and two from Honduras, Rosa and Lucero, all with children in elementary school (Figure 3). The mothers represent three individual single units that I analyzed independently using within-case analysis. In addition, I examined and analyzed data from the three mothers as a single unit using cross-case analysis.

Figure 2. Visual Depiction of the Case.

Methods in case studies. Although there are no specific methods to which a researcher must adhere when conducting case study research, the researcher is typically “interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 28-29). Since my goal was to provide a holistic description of how three Spanish-speaking mothers make
sense of their role in their children’s education, I chose a case study approach using ethnographic methods.

Case studies are descriptive. Case study results in a rich description of what was studied (Merriam, 1998). As I prepared my study, I did so with the understanding that I sought to uncover and thus provide a rich description of the participants’ lived experiences and social construction of knowledge, including the participants’ actual words, verbatim, to provide the reader with a sense of being there in the moment. The translations of the transcripts remain true to the register, tone, and syntax the participants used in answering the questions in Spanish.

Limitations

One limitation in this study was the language barrier between the mothers and me. Although an interpreter was present to interpret questions and responses during the audiotaped interviews, it was not the same as if I had been able to communicate directly with the mothers, which could change meanings. Interpretation may have lead to meanings getting lost in translation (Davies, 2008), if the interpreter summarized the participant’s words (Patton, 2002) or if the words had different cultural meanings, leading to the inability to directly translate them (Patton, 2002). Additionally, people who are educated and translate do not always capture the tone and register of the speakers whose social class and educational level may be significantly different. Lastly, all interviews were conducted in the homes of the mothers with children present or in close proximity, which resulted in background noise. As I listened to the tapes, I often had to replay them several times to accurately capture the interpreter’s words. In some instances, I had to leave blank spaces in my transcription to indicate that the words were unintelligible.
Context

In this section, I present a detailed context of this study. The setting I describe contains current information related to the county and the elementary school. Next, I present a summary table of information about each mother obtained when they shared personal information with me (see Appendix A). Last, I present detailed information about the historical and socioeconomic contexts of the mothers and their native countries.

Setting of the Study

This study took place in southwestern Virginia. Specifically, the mothers live in the Northern part of Beckham County, a large county spread out over 251 square miles and surrounded by mountains and valleys. The Census Bureau estimates that in Beckham County 1,834 or 2.02% of the population is Hispanic (2008). Although I could not locate exact numbers for Guatemalan or Honduran immigrants in Beckham County, I did find an estimate of 713, or 38% of the people under the category “Other Hispanic or Latino” (U. S. Census Bureau, 2007).

The county. Beckham County is comprised primarily of urban areas, some of which border Beckham City, as well as rural areas and suburbs that add diversity to the schools serving the different areas. Depending on the location in the county, housing prices can range from under $100,000 to $1 million or more.

The variety of housing in Beckham County mirrors the diversity of its residents. Single-family homes situated in older, more modest neighborhoods contrast with single-family homes located in newer, exclusive neighborhoods. These homes represent only a portion of the residential make-up of the area that also is comprised of patio homes, apartments, government subsidized apartments, and mobile home parks.

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4 From personal experience and knowledge of school populations in the area, I know that there are immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries.
Beckham County Public Schools. Total enrollment in all the schools in Beckham County is approximately 15,000 students. Hispanics comprise 1.8% of the school population, roughly 330 students, a percentage and number consistent with the total Hispanic population in Beckham County. Over the past ten years, the Limited English Proficient (LEP)\(^5\) population has steadily increased. Currently, there are 332 identified ELL\(^6\) students who speak 37 different languages. Of the 332 ELL students, roughly one third, or 111 speak Spanish.

Northbend Elementary School\(^7\) (NES) is located in the northern section of Beckham County. Built in 1938, NES received funding in 1999 to update the school with new classrooms, bathrooms, library, and gymnasium. Approximately 460 students attend the school. Of the total school population, 44%, or 202 students, receive free or reduced lunch. ELLs comprise seven percent, or 32 students, of the school population and Hispanics represent 9%, or 42 students. This number is higher than the overall Spanish-speaking population in Beckham County indicating that Hispanics seek housing in this area. Of the thirty-two students identified as ELL, twenty-two are from Spanish-speaking countries (e.g., Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, and Honduras). The remaining students are from Vietnam, India, and Cambodia.

The ELL program at the elementary level in Beckham County consists of primarily small group instruction. In most scenarios, the ELL teacher pulls ELL students out of the content area classroom to provide intense English language instruction across all content areas. The responsibility of the ELL teacher is to help the ELL student acquire the language necessary to be successful in the content area classroom. One full-time and one part-time ELL teacher provide

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\(^3\) Limited English Proficient (LEP) is the current term approved by state and federal governments to label students for whom English is not a first language. Personally, I find this term to have deficit notions and prefer English Language Learners.

\(^6\) ELL refers to the student and to the program in Beckham County

\(^7\) This is not the actual name of the school or county in order to preserve anonymity.
instruction for all ELL students at NES. Students in grades K-5 receive 30 – 60 minutes of
English language instruction each day.

When ELL students enroll in the school, interpreters are necessary to assist in filling out
paperwork since many school forms are only available in English. Presently, the school district
has translated the enrollment form and the Free and Reduced Lunch Form into Spanish. Teachers
need interpreters for parent conferences and other communication they initiate with the parents.

My ELL classroom is approximately 10’ by 10’. On entering the room, there is a wall
lined with mismatched bookshelves, the smaller ones stacked on top of larger ones and mounted
to the wall. Next to the shelves are two student desks and a large filing cabinet. A window,
which leaks cold air during the winter months, looks out on the playground. Lined against the
third wall are three more file cabinets, the teacher’s desk, and another student desk. The fourth
wall is equipped with a white board. There are two more student desks in the middle of the
classroom. Depending on the number of students I am working with at any given time, I can
move the strategically placed desks to accommodate the number of students. Although quite
small by content area classroom standards, my classroom is fully equipped with textbooks,
storybooks, games, art supplies, desks, and a laptop computer. The room provides a sense of
security within its walls as ELL students come and go throughout the day.

Mothers Participating in the Study

Consistent with the literature indicating that mothers tend to be more involved in their
children’s education (Grohnick & Slowiaczek, 1994), I experience the same phenomenon as an
ELL teacher at NES. I selected the mothers in this study through purposeful sampling, “based on
the assumption that I wanted “. . . to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore [had to]
select a sample from which the most [could] be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). I chose
Spanish-speaking mothers because their children comprise the largest percentage of my ELL students at Northbend Elementary School. Learning how they make sense of parental involvement and funds of knowledge in the home, could enhance home-school connections at NES. I entered the field with the understanding that I would encounter obstacles, yet I believed I could overcome obstacles such as scheduling interviews and observations around work schedules and a language barrier between the mothers and me.

The three mothers included in this study are first-generation immigrants from Guatemala and Honduras. I chose these particular mothers because I teach their children and because they all come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, which allowed me to narrow my focus. Prior to designing the study, I had met each mother on at least one occasion during a parent-teacher conference or school event. I viewed their participation as a chance to gain insight into their lived experiences and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2005), which might in turn help teachers and schools to better serve the needs of Spanish-speaking children and their parents. I chose to include mothers from these countries because much previous and current research focuses on Mexican immigrants (Carger, 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 1988, 1990, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan & Treuba, 1991; Rodriguez-Brown, Li & Albom, 1999; Valdez, 1996, Villenas, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). This study adds the voices of a Honduran and Guatemalan women to the present literature base. Below I provide specific background about each mother in this study obtained from the pre-interview data. A more detailed description of the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural context for each mother follows the table.
Table 1. Summary Description of Mothers in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
<th>Year moved to Beckham County</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susana</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>6(^8)</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>No formal education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Completed through 6(^{th}) grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucero</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Graduated from high school Entered but did not graduate from bilingual secretary school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Susana

Historical context. Susana was born in a small village called Catarina. Shortly after her birth, she and her family moved to Tacaná, a larger town, in a mountainous region not far from the Mexico-Guatemala border. She described the town as being very pretty with dirt roads and many churches. Her father worked as a farmer on a small plot of land behind their home. Like many children in her village, Susana never attended school. Her parents did not provide her with an education because they did not make enough money to send all of their children to school. They felt her brothers would benefit more from receiving an education because Susana could get married and have a husband to take care of her. Therefore, her mother taught her to cook, clean, farm, and care for her younger siblings. Susana left Guatemala in search of a better life. She said that if she had remained in Guatemala she would never have had anything and she did not want to live in poverty like her parents.

\(^8\) Susana has three grown children from a previous relationship and three school-age children with her current husband. For the purpose of this study, I refer to the latter three children who are my ELL students.
**Socioeconomic context.** Susana grew up in a family of thirteen children all living in a small house with no electricity or running water. She cooked food grown and raised by her parents in fields adjacent to their home using an outdoor oven fueled by a wood fire. She and her sisters walked thirty minutes to a local river each week and spent all day washing the family’s laundry. Repeatedly, she talked about how poor she was growing up. Presently, Susana works five hours a day, five or six days a week at a bakery. She said that she is happy to do her part to provide a little financial support for her family. Mario, her husband, works in construction. They live with their three children in a ranch style house that they purchased.

**Cultural context.** Susana described the importance her parents and the many other families in her village placed on educating boys. From her perspective, boys needed an education with the hope of getting a job, whereas future husbands would take care of her daughters. Her parents expected her to marry and start her own family, thus following the footsteps of her mother. Her parents expected all of the girls in the family to help with household chores, including preparing tamales to sell at the local market. Helping to provide an income for the family was an inclusive endeavor involving all members of the family. Susana’s current beliefs about education are in direct opposition to those of her parents. She wants both her daughters and her son to receive an education. Susana and her family place great importance on their Christian faith and attend church two to three times a week.

**Rosa**

**Historical context.** Rosa was born and raised in La Esperanza, the capital city in the department, or state, of Intibucá, Honduras. La Esperanza is a small village surrounded by mountains and forests, intermingled with dirt roads, and dotted with adobe buildings. Rosa attended school through sixth grade after which time she had to quit because the secondary
school was too far from her house. Her elementary school was small, with only about twenty children grouped in multi-age classrooms. During her schooling, she only had two different teachers. Among the children in her town who attended school, most only went through sixth grade and many did not even complete that much schooling. Families expected children to work and add to the family finances. Rosa met her husband when he returned from the United States to visit his sister, for whom she worked. Mario had been living in the United States for over thirty years and is considerably older than Rosa. They married and for the next ten years lived apart, he in the United States and she in Honduras. He returned to Honduras several times a year and again each time she gave birth. Once Mario had the necessary paperwork for Rosa and their three children, they moved to the U.S. to reunite with him.

*Socioeconomic context.* Rosa also talked about being poor growing up. Her house was small and all six children slept on the floor in one bedroom. The house did not have electricity or running water, so the women cooked by the fire and went to a reservoir to get fresh water in jugs they carried back and forth. Her father farmed and grew the food that they ate each day. Presently, Rosa works full-time as a seamstress for a local company. Her husband Carlos is co-owner of a local Chinese restaurant. They live in a rented sparsely furnished two-bedroom apartment with their three young children.

*Cultural context.* Rosa described her family as close-knit. As the eldest, she was responsible for attending to her younger siblings while at home. She took her sisters to the market, helped them dress, and fixed their hair. She had household responsibilities and after she finished sixth grade, she worked to help with the family’s finances. She lived at home with her family until she married. Rosa and her children attended church while living in Honduras, but they no longer attend church due to Carlos’ work schedule.
Lucero

**Historical context.** Lucero was born in Tocoa, the main city in the department, or state, of Colón, Honduras, where she lived on the outskirts of the main city. Lucero graduated from secondary school. She stated that her school was quite large with approximately one hundred students per class and three teachers per grade. First and second grade classes had more children than third through sixth grades. Many students became frustrated and dropped out of school after second grade to work on farms.

**Socioeconomic context.** Lucero’s family was poor, similar to the majority of families in Tocoa. Her parents raised animals and planted crops for food. They sold extra meat and produce in local markets. She lived in a small house with no electricity or running water, and shared a room with her siblings. When not in school, she and her siblings helped their parents with work around the house and on the farm. Now, Lucero and her husband, Roberto, live with their two young children in a rented two-bedroom fully furnished basement apartment.

**Cultural context.** Lucero and her family were also close-knit. After school, the children helped their parents with farming and housework and the older siblings cared for the younger ones. These behaviors carry over to her life in the United States. She has extended family in Beckham County on whom she relies for childcare. They regularly get together for parties and church events. She relies heavily on her church and she attends every Sunday.

**Data Collection**

When conducting case study research, data collection “... is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). Data were collected from September 2009 through December 2009. I gathered data through informal observations, extensive fieldnotes, and semi-structured...
and interpreted/translated interviews. Below I present a chart depicting data collected to answer each of my research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Collection of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do mothers from four Spanish-speaking families make sense of the construct of parental involvement?</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What funds of knowledge are present in the home?</td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Data Collected to Answer Research Questions

Gaining Consent from Participants

Once I gained IRB approval, I contacted the mothers, via an interpreter\(^9\) named Laurie, to ask if they were willing to participate in my study. Initially I had planned to include one Honduran, one Guatemalan, and one Cuban mother in the study. However, after repeated frustrated attempts to set up meetings with the Cuban mother, I decided to ask a Honduran mother of one of my students to participate. Prior to contacting the mothers, I met with Laurie to explain the purpose of the study, to discuss my questions, and my expectations for her as an interpreter. Initial contact to ask each mother if she was interested in participating occurred via telephone.

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\(^9\) The interpreter for the interviews is a colleague from the school in which I work. She grew up in Colombia and Venezuela and is bilingual. I felt the mothers would be more at ease with another teacher whom some had met at the school rather than a complete stranger serving to interpret.
Once the mothers agreed to participate, Laurie and I went to their homes to explain the study in depth and to get signatures for the Informed Consent forms (see Appendices B-E). I specifically stated that I wanted their views on their roles in their children’s education and was interested in their lived experiences. I wanted them to know how much I value their experiences and thoughts. I presented all explanations in both English and Spanish. I stressed to each mother that her participation or non-participation in this study would in no way affect my relationship with her children as their ELL teacher. I read the English consent forms aloud as Laurie interpreted in Spanish. I answered any questions or concerns and then we signed the forms. Next, I explained the study to the children in English giving them the opportunity to ask Laurie questions, and obtained their consent to come into their home to observe. Lastly, I obtained verbal consent from the children to come into their home and observe. After completing the consent forms, I proceeded with the pre-interview questions while Laurie interpreted (see Appendix A). Prior to leaving, I asked each mother to choose a pseudonym to preserve anonymity and secured a time to meet for the first interview.

Informal Observations

Observations provided me with the opportunity to tap into funds of knowledge present in the homes of the mothers (Moll et al., 2005). I had the opportunity to see what the mothers and other family members did in their home and it gave them the opportunity to talk to me about what they did (González, 2005). Merriam (1998) stresses that observations allow the researcher to notice routine things, “triangulate emerging themes,” and provide a context for the study (p. 96). Immediately after each observation, I wrote a detailed, rich description about the experience so as not to lose valuable data (Merriam, 1998). Observing the mothers in their homes allowed me to visit informally without a written agenda and to gain insight into how they spend their time
with other family members. Each observation provided insight into how the mothers interacted with their children and vice versa, as well as how they structure activities with one another and extended family. My visits gave them the opportunity to ask me any questions, typically with an older child interpreting, related to papers their children brought home from school. By spending time with them, I was able to describe and gain meaning from a portion of their lived experiences, activities, interactions, and conversations in the natural context of their own homes.

Fieldnotes

Immediately after each interview and observation, I wrote detailed fieldnotes. My fieldnotes served as “. . . the raw data from which a study’s findings eventually emerge” (Merriam, 1998, p. 104). They included a description of the setting, participants, activities, and notes referencing dialogues (Merriam, 1998, p. 106). Fieldnotes served to “describe [my] . . . reflections, feelings, ideas, moments of confusion, hunches, interpretations, and so on” (Mayan, 2009, p. 77). Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) state, “Writing fieldnote descriptions, then, is not so much a matter of passively copying down “facts” about “what happened.” Rather, such writing involves active processes of interpretation and sense-making. . . ” (p. 8). Thus, the description of what I observed also included initial interpretations and feelings of events, signaling the on-going nature of analysis allowing me to “acknowledge [my] . . . own subjectivity and values, and reflect on them in a systematic and disciplined way” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 27). Writing detailed fieldnotes allowed for reflexivity as I attempted to bracket my own beliefs and perceptions. “Reflexivity involves the recognition that an account of reality does not simply mirror reality but rather creates or constitutes as real in the first place whatever it describes” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 213). Fieldnotes provided a place where I could record “. . . mistakes, and successes” (Mayan, 2009, p. 78). Reflexivity proved
helpful during the analysis stage as I searched for meaning derived from the mothers’ voices not from my own experiences or beliefs.

Memos

Memos recorded my process of on-going analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and assisted in the development of themes that surfaced during fieldwork and analysis. In-process memos, written after typing fieldnotes and transcribing interviews, prompted future questions I needed to address during later interviews and observations (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). These memos served to preserve my initial feelings about collected data and provided an outlet whereby I could reflect on my initial interpretations of those data. During the coding process, I wrote initial memos to identify emerging themes and later wrote analytic asides to refine these themes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Memoing throughout the data collection and analysis provided an avenue through which I could reflect on my initial observations and note areas that needed further examination. Memoing also presented a venue to remain reflexive as I examined and noted my own perceptions of the mothers’ words during the writing process. (For an example of a memo, see Appendix F). Memoing began at the onset of my analysis as I sought to make connections in and across data (Mayan, 2009).

Conducting the Semi-Structured Interviews

Because I had a specific focus for this study but wished to allow the mothers’ “emergent worldview” to surface, I chose semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). This interview format assumes the participants “. . . define the world in unique ways” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). I sought to capture the voices of mothers from non-mainstream groups, the often discounted or marginalized voices in much of the literature on parental involvement (Auerbach, 2002).
I followed an interview guide that “… lists questions or issues to be explored in the course of an interview” so as “… to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). The interview guide allowed me to ask questions that reveal how each participant makes meaning of parental involvement while simultaneously offering flexibility to explore other avenues of conversation pertaining to the central topic (Patton, 2002). I followed a pre-determined interview protocol (see Appendix G) and prepared a list of questions (see Appendix H) to which I referred during the interview process.

I conducted two audio-taped interviews totaling approximately three hours with each mother in her home. Laurie accompanied me to interpret for each interview. As I asked questions in English, Laurie interpreted them to the mother in Spanish, after which she interpreted the mother’s reply to me in English. Within twenty-four hours, I transcribed the English portions of the interview verbatim in order to capture the words of the participants and to ensure accuracy while they were in my mind (Seidman, 2006). A native Spanish-speaker transcribed the Spanish portion of each interview and translated the text into English.

The first interview served to establish a relationship and to inquire about each mother’s life in her native country and her experience with schooling. This gave me insight into her prior experiences with education and family life. The second interview served to gain insight into each mother’s sense of her role in her children’s education. I inquired about how she makes meaning of her role in her children’s education and how her prior experiences shape the meaning that she gives to the term. During interviews, I found myself asking deeper questions after getting a response from the mother to gain more insight into her answer or to refine the meaning of her response. I periodically recapped what she said to me during interviews in order to assist with
capturing the essence of her words (Seidman, 2006). I encouraged the mothers to elaborate and add any additional information that they deemed important to the questions and my stated purpose. At the second interview, I summarized the first interview to ensure accuracy. In addition to these two interviews, I contacted the mothers via telephone, with my interpreter, for member-checking (Creswell, 2003) where I briefly shared my emergent findings and asked if they wanted to expand on any information. Susana willingly expanded on information and offered robust stories. Rosa and Lucero did not feel the need to add any information.

I wrote detailed fieldnotes and memos to fully capture what took place during the interview and to facilitate meaning-making. This served to enhance memory and aided in making connections in the data. These fieldnotes and memos proved to be important to maintaining reflexivity during on-going analysis.

*Interviews with Susana.* Susana, her husband, two daughters, and son were present during both interviews. The interviews took place in her living room. Laurie and I sat in a dimly lit room on a long, sagging, plaid couch in front of which I placed the tape recorder on a small, rectangular table. Susana and her husband sat on folding chairs brought in from the kitchen. The children remained seated and quiet on a smaller plaid couch in the living room while we conducted the interview. Although present, they did not contribute information to the interview. Susana was talkative and laughed heartily while recounting stories of her childhood and her dreams for her children.

*Interviews with Rosa.* The interviews with Rosa took place in her apartment in a small sitting area. There were no lights on in the room; the only light we had was that which came through the partially closed blinds on the windows and sliding glass door. Laurie and I sat on a black leather loveseat and Rosa sat opposite us on a larger black leather couch with her daughter.
I strategically placed the tape recorder on the floor between us. Rosa’s son remained in the room during the interviews, sitting in a chair across from Rosa. At the beginning of the first interview, Rosa indicated that she was nervous about the tape recorder. I explained that if she wanted me to turn it off at any time she should tell me and I would honor her request. After a few questions, I asked if she was comfortable with the taping and she indicated that she was so we continued with the audio-taped interview.

*Interviews with Lucero.* The interviews with Lucero took place in her living room in the basement of the home she and her husband rent. The lights in this room were off but lighting from the kitchen alleviated the darkness. I sat next to her on the couch while she held and intermittently fed her two-month-old son. I placed the tape recorder on the couch in between us. Laurie sat on a couch across from us. Lucero’s daughter spent some time during the interview in her room watching television but she came out on numerous occasions to ask me to play with her. Lucero talked the least of all three mothers. She was engaged in answering the interview questions; however, she preferred to show us the schoolwork her daughter brought home and to ask us how she could help her daughter.

**Data Analysis**

To analyze data, I used the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis was on-going (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and began after my first meeting to gain consent. On returning home from the initial meeting, I immediately typed a summary of what took place during the meeting and began the process of coding data relevant to my research questions (Foss & Waters, 2003). I continued this process of coding after each transcription of the English portions of interviews and typing field notes from observations. During the coding of
each piece of raw data, I compared data from all sources. “These comparisons [led] to tentative
categories that [were] then compared to each other and to other instances” (Merriam, 1998, p. 159) in subsequent interviews and observations. Merriam (1998), states that the collection and analysis of data occur simultaneously. As “hunches” emerged, I refined my questions. This held true during the interview process as well as during my transcription of interviews and the typing of fieldnotes after observations. At times during an interview, I found myself formulating and asking more questions in search of further elaboration on a topic from the mother. After finishing and transcribing each interview, I prepared additional questions to refine “hunches” that emerged from the typed data. I compared what I heard in the interviews to what I saw during my observations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After completing the coding, I sorted the coded data into categories using a table I created in Microsoft Word (Mayan, 2009). I proceeded through multiple iterations of data analysis (Mayan, 2009) until categories became saturated and well-defined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the process of data collection and analysis, I found myself rereading literature and locating new literature in order to refine my categories, to confirm my findings, and to add insight into my analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). From the categories, I developed themes, which in turn led to my findings (Mayan, 2009). What follows is a description of how I managed my data and of my within-case and of my cross-case analysis.

Data Management

During the course of interviews and observations, I collected large amounts of data. Merriam (1998) suggests that prior to beginning in-depth analysis “. . . all the information about the case should be brought together. . . ” (p. 194). She notes that Yin (1994) refers to this organization as “the case study data base” [italics in original] and Patton (1990) refers to it as “the case record” (p. 194, italics in original). This organization assisted me in “. . . locat[ing]
specific data during intensive analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194). I created file folders for each mother into which I placed all interviews, observation notes, fieldnotes, and summaries I had written. Since I began my initial process of coding data after typing it, I devised a color-coded system in which I highlighted text pertinent to each question in a particular color. This allowed me easy access to text relevant to each question and I did not have to go back ad infinitum to find the relevant text for each question.

**Within-Case Analysis**

I began with within-case analysis to ensure that “each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194). I followed the procedure described below separately for Susana, Rosa, and Lucero. Categories were tentative as I waited for the Spanish transcription with the English translation to arrive. Once I received the translations, I read the English portions of each interview and coded categories in the margins. I noted that Laurie had synthesized and put some of the interpreted responses into her own words during our interviews. In comparing the two transcriptions, I sensed that the Spanish transcription, which included the mothers’ exact words, offered a more robust conversation between the mothers and me than the interpreted interview transcription.

After I transcribed the English portions of the interviews and typed fieldnotes, I openly coded these documents using phrasal descriptions such as, “never went to school”, “parents worked to give boys an education”, “struggled in school”, and “stressed importance of school”. I derived codes directly from the interviews and observations, not from pre-determined categories. Although descriptive codes “entail little interpretation” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57), these codes allowed me to refine questions for subsequent interviews. Some of the initial codes included “prepare children for learning”, “mother’s responsibility”, “communication”, “school
experience in native country”, and “survival”. I did several iterations of the coding process, reread all of my data, and refined these codes.

Once comfortable with my coding, I searched for categories and sub-categories within the codes. I reread interview transcripts and observation fieldnotes and listened to the audiotapes again to immerse myself in the data. I noted categories on a separate sheet of paper and linked them to numbered lines on all of my transcripts and fieldnotes. For example, categories for Susana included prepare children for learning, teach responsibility, and foster communication. This process of defining categories was recursive. I found that each time I reread the coded interviews and observation fieldnotes, new insights emerged, which resulted in refining categories and collapsing some into others. Final categories for Susana included childrearing, family support, and educational roles. When I felt I had thoroughly analyzed the interviews and fieldnotes and had effectively defined my categories, I searched for sub-categories, such as raising respectful children for childrearing. Again, I organized the subcategories under each category and linked them to numbered lines on all of my transcripts and fieldnotes.

Next, I began the process of forming themes. Mayan (2009) describes theming as “. . . the process of determining the thread(s) that integrate and anchor all of the categories” (p. 97). I returned to my data and categories and looked for relationships between categories (Mayan, 2009). Initially, final themes for Susana included sacrifice, survival, and the value of education. As I reexamined data relevant to these themes, I became aware of the deficit notion attached to the first two: sacrifice and survival. I understood these themes to be laden with my own middle-class values and perceptions. When I returned to the data, the mothers did not mention immigration as a sacrifice. I reread my memos and reexamined the data with a fresh mind. After going through this analytic process again, I noted that the mothers’ early life experiences had
great impact on how they perceive their role in their children’s education. The data revealed that they place great importance on educación (moral and behavioral aspects of education), family networking, and childrearing. Examples of final themes for Susana include providing a moral education and fostering confianza.

Below I present Figure 4, an abbreviated version of Susana’s data, which denotes some of the stages of my analysis.

Question 1: How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Codes</th>
<th>All categories that emerged</th>
<th>Second Iteration of Categories</th>
<th>Resulting Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Confianza</td>
<td>Prepare children for learning</td>
<td>Childrearing</td>
<td>Una Buena Educación: Providing a Moral education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust teachers</td>
<td>• Confianza</td>
<td>• Raising responsible, well-mannered children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bien educado</td>
<td>• Bien educado</td>
<td>• Raising respectful, trustworthy, and honest children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respeto</td>
<td>• Respeto</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking Assistance Within the Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible children</td>
<td>Teach responsibility</td>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>• Siblings assist one another with homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Siblings help with homework</td>
<td>• Responsible children</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mother makes sure children do homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Siblings help one another with homework</td>
<td>Educational Roles</td>
<td>Separating her role from that of the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mother makes sure children do homework</td>
<td>• Trust teachers</td>
<td>• Trust teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foster communication</td>
<td>• Teacher teaches academics</td>
<td>• Teacher teaches academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication with children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teach children through love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consejos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sacrifice – life in Guatemala for life in US</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Analysis of Susana’s Data for Research Question 1
Cross-case analysis

After I analyzed each individual case, I began cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). I attempted to see “processes and outcomes that occur[ed] across [three] cases, to understand how they [were] qualified by local conditions, and thus develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172). I sought themes that were present in all three cases. Again, I incorporated the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I revisited the interview transcripts and observation fieldnotes. I examined codes I wrote in the margins and compared final categories among the three mothers. I sought data that cut across the cases, as well as data particular to each individual case, such as the concept of bien educado, which surfaced for Susana and Rosa, but not for Lucero.

Researcher’s Stance

... [R]esearchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress (Peshkin, 1988, p. 7).

Using the reflexive nature of qualitative inquiry and social constructionism (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Burr, 2003; Patton, 2002), I now explain how I make sense of parental involvement by describing my own background and current involvement with my children. As stated above, I attempted to remain reflexive throughout the data collection and analysis. I read my personal notes and realized that there are three subjective I’s that invariably shaped my analysis (Peshkin, 1988): (1) the teacher I; (2) the mother I; and (3) the doctoral student I.

ELL teacher I. As an ELL teacher for the past fifteen years, I have seen parental involvement in children’s education move to the forefront of legislation. This mandate required
me to promote parental involvement. I do feel it is important for parents to be involved with the school and teachers. However, the definition of parental involvement that I hold as a teacher comes from the dominant, White, middle-class discourse congruent with the school system. Prior to conducting the study, I had few experiences with Spanish-speaking parents. Initially, I assumed that they did not place great value on education. Over the course of several years, Beckham County required ELL teachers to meet with parents to devise an educational plan for each ELL student. I initiated these meetings and found that mothers attended most of the meetings. With an interpreter present, I explained the child’s level of English proficiency and the amount of time I would work with the child on language development. I also took time to inquire about the mother’s work schedule and family dynamics in the home. I allowed the mother to provide me with any information that might help me teach her child. What I realized was how much the mothers of my ELL students do value education. Their lack of presence in the school was not a result of not valuing education; rather, it resulted from busy work schedules, a lack of English proficiency, and a difference in perception of the role of a parent.

Mother I. As a mother of twin boys, age 11, and a younger boy, age 8, I want to know what my children are doing in school. When I have time, I go into their school to volunteer. Their school does not assign homework every night, but I do try to read to them because I feel it gives us one-on-one time together. I also know it is my right to question teachers and curriculum and to determine how they are providing the best education for my children. I have not needed to do this because I am fortunate to have the opportunity to place them in a private school that upholds my philosophy about education. Therefore, my parent role includes providing my children with learning opportunities outside the school setting, including library and science
museum visits, hiking, music lessons, and recreational sports. My role goes beyond what the school teaches and enhances the overall development of my children.

*Doctoral Student I.* When I began my doctoral program I found I had much less time to spend reading and exploring with my children. My course work, research and writing consumes much of my time. I realized that the doctoral student I and the teacher I were at odds with one another. As a teacher, I was expecting the parents of my ELL students to do homework with their children each night and to be involved with the school, yet I was not doing this with my own children. It was really eye opening for me. By reflecting on this, I gained a new perspective of what the parents of my ELL students go through every day.

By acknowledging the three subjective I’s discussed above, I situate myself in the research and provide a glimpse of the beliefs that underscore my epistemology and ontology regarding parental involvement. As a qualitative researcher, I believe it is my obligation to state up front who I am in order to acknowledge bias.

*An outsider.* As the interviews and observations with the mothers progressed, I realized my position as an outsider. What I learned from time spent with them affected me in two different ways. First, I gained an appreciation for their life stories and the struggles each mother encountered and continues to encounter. Secondly, I realized I was critiquing what they did or did not do with their children. When this occurred, I wrote my feelings so that I would remain aware of how they might influence my analysis. My goal was to prevent my personal feelings from interfering with my representation of the women. By writing my thoughts during the research process, I attempted to acknowledge my preconceived ideas.
Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity was an important component of data collection and analysis of interviews and observations. My background, beliefs, and values influenced my interpretation of data. To maintain reflexivity during the data collection I jotted personal notes about my own thoughts and feelings during interviews and observations and typed these notes up when I returned home. In one memo, referring to the concept of *bien educado* [well-mannered], I wrote:

So as I am interviewing and coding the participant’s words I realize that I am still assuming that the mothers are actually making sense of the term “parental involvement” when in fact, these words do not seem to exist within the school culture in their native country. I realized that I had to stop thinking from a White, middle-class, teacher’s point of view. What do their words mean when they talk about making sure their children are well-mannered? This is involvement in their child’s life. Our schools expect parents to volunteer in the classroom and do what the teacher deems important. What about what the parents feel is important? (12/22/09)

The notes I wrote caused me to stop and reflect on my own thinking. I needed to step back and reflect on how I perceive events and the mothers’ words and take a fresh look from their vantage point. I referred to these notes frequently during the analysis phase to maintain reflexivity.

Ethics

To ensure confidentiality, I used pseudonym codes for participant representation in all written evidence of the interview process. I stored all data in a locked file cabinet in my home to which only I had access. These data will remain there for a minimum of three years, after which time I intend to destroy all audiotapes.
Since I have become acquainted with all participants as their children’s ELL teacher, I felt a responsibility to assure them that their interviews would not affect their children. Issues of power and class may have arisen because I am their children’s ELL teacher, a respected position within the Latino community (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Quezada, Díaz, & Sánchez, 2003).

To alleviate any potential emotional distress that could arise in the course of the interview process, I followed the procedures below:

- Informed the participant that she could choose to decline to answer any question in the interview protocol.
- Informed the participant that she could choose to end the interview at any time.

Trustworthiness

I kept in mind that “Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality” (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). I based my research on data collected through observations and interviews with three mothers. In order to enhance internal validity, I relied on triangulation, member checks, and acknowledging my preconceived ideas. Triangulation took the form of multiple sources of data: observations, fieldnotes, and interviews. To member check for each interview, I discussed emergent categories with each mother. Before beginning the second interview, I recapped the main points of the previous interview to ensure accuracy and that I captured the essence of her words. Once interviews were completed, Laurie and I briefly discussed initial findings with each mother. A bilingual translator transcribed the Spanish portions of the interviews and then translated them into English, for accurate representation of each mother’s words.
Summary of Chapter 3

In this chapter I described the rationale behind my choice of a qualitative case study using ethnographic methods for data collection and analysis. I also provided information about the setting and the three mothers who participated in this study. I explained the process I followed to collect and manage data. Next, I described the procedures I followed to analyze the data, including how I coded and categorized data and how I created salient themes for within and cross-case analysis. Lastly, I described how I ensured researcher reflexivity, expressed my stance as a researcher, and discussed how I upheld ethical considerations and maintained validity during the research. In the following chapter I plan to present results from the within-case analysis.
Chapter 4: Within-Case Study Analysis

Introduction

As Laurie, my interpreter, and I turned the corner to Susana’s house, we noticed the enlarged driveway filled with eight cars and trucks parked in two straight rows, four vehicles per row, in front of the house. As soon as I parked, another car pulled into the driveway. An adult got out with two young children, took them into the house, and left alone. On her small front porch, Susana sat on a white plastic chair waiting for Laurie and me to arrive. She greeted us with a smile and welcomed us into her living room. There was no visible sign of anyone other than Susana and her three children in the house, but we heard male voices in the basement. Susana motioned for us to sit on the couch before she sat down on a small folding chair. There were two large plaid couches, a TV, a soccer trophy, a shelf with two small dolls and Thanksgiving knickknacks, and Native American pictures adorning the walls. The walls were a muted orange and dark red drapes covered the windows. No lights were on. The only natural light came from the front door, which remained open during our visit. Soon after we were seated, her three children came and sat with us on the couch.

The children excitedly asked us why we were visiting and began telling us about school activities. I asked Manuel, Susana’s son, a question, but he did not respond. Susana immediately told him to answer la maestra [the teacher]. As we continued chatting, Susana sat on the edge of her chair smiling and with her hands folded in her lap. She did not ask the children to leave. They remained a part of our discussion as Laurie and I explained the study and gained Susana’s consent to participate. I thanked Susana for her willingness to participate in my study and she said,

Estoy muy contenta de tenerlas aquí y compartir y poder hablar de los niños y así les agarro más confianza a ustedes y las veo como una familia.

[I’m very happy to have you here to share and talk about the children. That way I can trust you more and I can see you all as family.]
In subsequent interviews, I learned that Laurie and I were the first teachers to visit her home and to show such a great interest in her children and in her life.

This vignette offers a glimpse of my first visit with Susana and illustrates the importance of *confianza* [mutual trust] that weaves through many aspects of her life. The single act of allowing Laurie and me to go to her home to invite her to participate in a research study signaled the beginning of a relationship that included *confianza*. Initial meetings with Rosa and Lucero followed in a similar fashion and I sensed the same *confianza* developing in my relationship with them.

In this chapter, I report what I discovered from data collected through interviews and observations with three Spanish-speaking mothers, Susana, Rosa, and Lucero. As stated earlier, I asked mothers to participate since research indicates that mothers, not fathers, are often more involved in their children’s education (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). The overarching objective of this qualitative case study was to explore how three Spanish-speaking mothers articulate their role in their children’s education. The following research questions guided my study:

- How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?
- How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?
- What funds of knowledge are present in the home?

As I analyzed the data in relation to the above questions, I kept this objective in mind. I searched for excerpts that demonstrated how the three mothers in this study conceptualized and made sense of the term parental involvement. I extracted data that signified each mother’s knowledge regarding the concept of parental involvement, e.g., their role in their children’s education. I then examined their prior experiences with school and their own mothers’
involvement in the education to connect prior experiences with the knowledge they presently hold and describe. Lastly, I examined the families’ funds of knowledge by investigating how they navigate routine experiences with school and with daily life in an English-speaking country when they only speak Spanish. To do so, I examined how they make sense of homework that their children bring home, of forms that come home from the school, and of bills that come to their homes each month. I also looked for instances of collective efforts through family networks to make sense of their daily lived experiences (Moll et. al., 1992, 2005; Vélez-Ibáñez, 1988; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Below I present a chart of my findings from the three research questions for each of the three mothers followed by an in-depth discussion of each theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Susana</th>
<th>Rosa</th>
<th>Lucero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?</td>
<td><em>Una Buena Educación:</em> Providing a Moral Education</td>
<td>Providing Access to an Education</td>
<td>Persevering to Provide Educational Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking Assistance within the Family</td>
<td>Childrearing: <em>Bien Educado</em> [Well-Mannered]</td>
<td>Relying on the Teacher for Academic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separating Her Role from That of the Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?</td>
<td>Remaining Resilient Despite Hardships</td>
<td>Demonstrating Determination</td>
<td>Demonstrating Determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Framing Her Role from the Social Construction of a Mother’s Role in Guatemala</td>
<td>Framing Her Role from the Social Construction of a Mother’s Role in Honduras</td>
<td>Framing Her Role from the Social Construction of a Mother’s Role in Honduras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What funds of knowledge are present in the home?</td>
<td>Relying on Networks of Exchange</td>
<td>Relying on Networks of Exchange</td>
<td>Relying on Networks of Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiating with the English-speaking World</td>
<td>Negotiating with the English-speaking World</td>
<td>Drawing on Literacy in Spanish to Negotiate with the English-Speaking World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Overview of Findings for Within-Case Analysis*
In order to discuss the findings, it is necessary to recall the definition of five Spanish terms and phrases that were vital to my analysis: *una buena educación*, *bien educado(s)*, *respeto*, *consejos*, and *confianza*. *Una buena educación* literally means good education, but whereas good education in English most often refers to schooling, or an academic education, in Spanish, the term encompasses the moral upbringing of children and includes teaching values of *respeto* [respect] and good conduct (Villenas, 2002) as well as emphasizing learning proper manners and moral behavior (Valdés, 1996).

Similarly, the translation for *bien educado* is well-mannered, as opposed to “well-educated”, which would be the literal translation. However, the difference between the literal translation and the Spanish meaning again focuses on the difference between schooling and academic education and the character values children learn outside school. *Bien educado* encompasses good behavior, cleanliness, respect, and responsibility (Carger, 1997).

*Respeto* or respect, is a highly valued trait among Latino families and children are expected to be respectful towards parents, elders, and teachers (Villenas, 2002). One example of a child demonstrating *respeto* would be that the child does not interrupt an adult conversation (Valdés, 1996). The term *consejos* translates to advice. The key component of teaching through *consejos* is the fact that it is a “verbal teaching activity” whereby parents teach their children through “. . . homilies designed to influence behaviors and attitudes” (Valdés, 1996, p. 125). *Consejos* are also communicated through stories with a moral at the end (Valdés, 1996).

*Confianza* translates to mutual trust and is a vital component of relationships in Latino families (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1988). Through reciprocal activities, family members and friends gain *confianza* and can rely upon one another in times of need.
Making Sense of Parental Involvement

To address the first research question, I examined each mother’s understanding of the construct of parental involvement. As interviews progressed, I realized that they do not share knowledge of the term “parental involvement” with their children’s teachers as defined in the social context of the school (Gergen, 2003). Data provided evidence that they describe their role in their children’s overall education. Their description of their roles does not include visibility in the school; it is influenced by cultural and historical factors and their own personal experiences (Gergen, 2003). This resonates with previous research (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Hyslop, 2000; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Valdés, 1996) that indicates that although Spanish-speaking may not have a presence in the school, they are involved in their children’s education in ways not acknowledged by the school. In addition, Susana, Rosa, and Lucero do not have a shared knowledge base of the construct of parental involvement (Burr, 2003). Below I present my findings for each mother. I begin with Susana, followed by Rosa, and lastly Lucero. I follow this format throughout this chapter.

Susana

The salient themes that emerged from Susana’s data were: (1) *una buena educación*: providing a moral education, (2) seeking assistance within the family, and (3) separating her role from that of the teacher.

*Una Buena Educación: Providing a Moral Education*

Susana perceives her primary role as raising her children to be well-mannered, respectful, and responsible, resonant with Carger’s (1997) definition of *bien educado*, which translates to well-educated but includes both moral and academic education or Villenas’ (2002) “*una buena educación*” [a good education] (p. 23), which stresses moral education. Overall, these terms
encompass far more than just an academic education. They include respect, responsibility, truthfulness, and trust (Browning-Aiken, 2005; Carger, 1997; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002). Susana prescribes to the tenets of bien educado and una buena educación, although she never used these terms in interviews. She provides a moral education to her children by talking with them and offering consejos [advice] (López, 2001).

_Raising well-mannered and responsible children._ Susana views her role in her children’s education as teaching them proper behavior. She stated, “El trabajo que yo quiero para ellos es que sean educaditos y luego aquí en la casa que estudien. . .” [The work I want for them is to be well-behaved and then here at home for them to study. . . ] She expects the proper behavior that she teaches in the home to transfer to the school setting. She stated, “Yo creo que el comportamiento está bien porque como ellos se portan aquí creo que se portan allá porque vienen bien felices.” [I think their behavior is good because the way they behave here at home I think is the way they behave at school. They come home happy.] Based on her children’s happy demeanor when they return home from school and the fact that teachers do not call her with behavior concerns, she trusts that they behaved in school.

She provides una buena educación through love and teaches them “Siempre con una sonrisa y con cariño porque si usted les dice, no lo hacen, se encierran y ya.” [Always with a smile and love because if you tell them, they don’t do it and they shut themselves off and that’s that.]. Her comment above demonstrates insight into how she believes her children will react if forced to do something and was influenced by her upbringing in Guatemala. She commented that she did not have open communication with her own parents and if she did begin to discuss a problem, they reacted violently. She, in turn, shut herself off from her parents, which she does not want her own children to do with her. Observations in her home revealed the loving nature
she afforded her children as she asked them to put their shoes in the proper place or to discuss events from their school day.

During my visits with the family, I learned that Susana instills a sense of responsibility in her children by assigning them household chores. The children are responsible for their own personal care and cleanliness and tidying their rooms. She senses the need to distribute chores that are appropriate for their age and adds more as they become responsible and capable of doing more (Valdés, 1996).

*Raising respectful, trustworthy, and honest children.* Susana teaches her children to respect teachers and adults. Valdés (1996) noted in her research that mothers expect their children to remain quiet and not interrupt their conversations or activities until they had finished. As I reflected on our interviews, I realized that her children were often in the room with us and that they never interrupted our conversations and did not speak until an adult spoke to them. This behavior resonates with Valdés’ (1996) findings and demonstrates *respeto* [respect], a highly valued trait, on the part of the children and on the part of Susana. Manuel came home upset one day because his teacher took away his good behavior card. Susana listened as her son explained his side of the story, thus respecting his right to explain his interpretation of the day’s events. Although she sided with the teacher, which demonstrates *respeto* for the teacher, she took time to explain why his teacher reprimanded his behavior. Her son’s honesty segued into an opportunity for her to offer *consejos* about proper behavior in school.

*Yo le digo que eso no se hace. Le digo que a lo mejor la maestra vio mal, algo que no estaba correcto y por eso le quitó la carta y porque es un castigo que tienen en la escuela según me lo han explicado a mí en las conferencias, entonces por eso yo a ellos les pregunto y entonces si uno me dice “me quitaron mi carta”, entonces yo sé que ese día se no se portó bien.*
[I tell him that one must not do that. I tell him that maybe the teacher saw something that was not right and that is why the card was taken away from him and that is a punishment as they have explained to me in parent-teacher conferences. That is why I ask them and if one of them tells me “they took my card away” then I know that day he or she did not behave.]

Susana, also, offers consejos to explain to her children that they must behave and do well in school or they will end up with a job like hers, which is something she stated she does not want for her children (López, 2001). In addition to consejos and in an attempt to raise trustworthy children, she teaches her children con confianza [with trust]. She stated,

Yo les digo a ellos que si hay algo que pasa en la escuela o donde sea, en la casa o donde sea que no tengan miedo en decírmelo porque yo no les voy a pegar si ellos me lo dicen. Al contrario yo les voy a atender y voy a ver porque está pasando aquello. Eso es muy bueno porque así los niños aprenden de sus problemas. Hablo mucho con ellos. Les explico que soy su madre y su amiga y que confien.

[I tell them that if something happens at school or anywhere else, they don’t have to be scared of telling me because I’m not going to hit them if they tell me. On the contrary, I’m going to take care of them and I’m going to see why it’s happening. That’s very good because they learn from their problems. I talk to them a lot. I explain that I’m their mother and their friend and that they can trust me.]

She offers her trust to them and expects trust, honesty, and open communication from them in return. Confianza is a prized value in her culture and she works diligently to transmit this value to her children.

Seeking Assistance within the Family

Susana indicated that she is unable to assist her children with homework in part because she cannot understand English, but also because she did not attend school, which impedes her overall understanding of the academic content taught to her children in school (Delgado-Gaitan & Ruiz, 1992; Finders & Lewis, 1994). She expects and relies on Jessica, the eldest, to help Manuel and Sarah with their homework.
Jessica la mayor me muestra lo que traen y ella es la que les ayuda más. Más me ayuda ella [Jessica] porque yo no entiendo mucho. Yo le digo entonces mira a tus hermanitos y cuando ellos terminen yo se los revise.

[Jessica, the oldest, shows me what they bring and she is the one that helps them the most. She helps me the most (Jessica) because I don’t understand a lot. I tell her to look after your little brothers and when they finish I look it over.]

By providing the moral education to her children, Susana instills responsibility and respect for elders in her children and Jessica willingly takes on this role. The relationship she has cultivated with her eldest allows her to rely on her daughter to assist her siblings with homework and resonates with literature that describes how older children are trusted and expected to teach younger children (Tenery, 2005; Valdés, 1996).

An important component of parental involvement at NES requires parents to sign their children’s Assignment Book each night. Over the years, Susana has come to understand this expectation for each of her children. Although she cannot help her children with homework, she does sign the Assignment Book each night after Jessica helps them complete their homework. By raising honest and trustworthy children, Susana can rely on and trust her eldest daughter who she to assist the younger children with homework each night. As a result, she feels comfortable signing the Assignment Book. The fact that she signs this book demonstrates her willingness to assume some of the school’s expectations of a parent’s responsibility (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

Separating Her Role from That of the Teacher

Susana separates her role as a mother from the teacher’s role in the overall education of her children. Previous literature indicates this is common among Spanish-speaking families (Nicolau & Ramos, 1990; Trumbull, et al., 2001) and her view denotes how she constructs knowledge of her role in her children’s education. Data provided evidence that her role takes place in the home, not in the school (Carger, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Nicolau & Ramos,
She is comfortable with this separation of roles and does not actively seek to change her involvement in or relationship with the school.

Above all, Susana wants her children to receive an academic education and she places this academic responsibility in the hands of the teachers. Similar to what Trumbull, et al. (2001) discovered, she believes the teachers are best suited for teaching academics and she has great respect for them in this role. This resonates with “la maestra es la segunda mamá [the teacher is the second mother]” (Trumball, et al., 2001, p. 20). The teacher is responsible for her children’s academic education and serves as a second mother within the context of the school. Her view demonstrates her respect for and trust in the teachers to provide her children with the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in school. Susana expressed that she has minimal contact with the school because of the language barrier and her work schedule (Finders & Lewis, 1994). However, if the secretary or nurse calls and needs her to pick up a sick child, she immediately goes to the school. Either she or her husband tries to attend Back-to-School Night and parent-teacher conferences, work schedules permitting.

The teacher’s role is to love her children and to help them be successful in school. She stated:

> . . . me gusta en el sentido de que se preocupa porque necesito saber cuando mi hija no quiere superarse. . . me he dado cuenta que los niños se están superando en inglés y por eso entiendo que los maestros sí tienen el interés en educarlos porque los niños están aprendiendo bastante, superándose y por eso yo me siento muy contenta.

> [. . . I like the feeling that she [the teacher] worries because I need to know when my daughter doesn’t want to do her best… I have realized that the children are doing better in English and that’s why I understand that the teachers are interested in educating them because the kids are learning a lot, doing their best, and that’s why I feel very happy.]

At one point during the school year, Susana’s youngest daughter was having difficulty with reading. At a parent-teacher conference, the teacher indicated that she qualified for extra services
and instruction in reading. Susana agreed to the extra services, signed the needed paperwork, and her daughter received extra reading instruction. Susana trusted and respected the teacher’s recommendation and perceived this as an indication of the teacher’s interest in educating her. In the home, Susana gauges her children’s learning by monitoring graded papers and report cards they bring home and by their use of English. In opposition with the school’s expectation that parents help with homework, Susana stated,

"Este, más platicar con ellos, preguntarles como le fue en la escuela, como los trataron, que maestro los combatió en el día y ya elos cuando los niños se sienten contentos, feliz con una risita, uno ya sabe que les fue bien."

[Well, I just talk with them. To ask them how was school, how were they treated, what teachers did they have problems with. And when I see them happy with a little smile on their faces I know they had a good day.]

Susana communicates with her children in order to find out how their day went in school. If they come home smiling, she seems content to know that they had a good day. In this context, her role does not include academics; however, she is available to her children to provide emotional support and to offer consejos during their conversation as needed (López, 2001). She provides for and supports their overall moral educación (Villenas, 2002).

Summary

In summary, Susana separates her role in her children’s education from the teacher’s role. She is responsible for the moral upbringing of her children (Carger, 1996, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Nicolau and Ramos, 1990; Ramirez, 2003; Trumbull et al., 2001; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Zarate, 2007). She teaches them to be well-mannered, responsible, respectful, trustworthy and honest and expects this behavior to carry over to the school. Carger (1997) “. . . discovered an important social and emotional support system separate from school goals or objectives” (p.
41). This is evident in Susana’s data in that she provides familial support and ensures open lines of communication to discuss any issues with her children. Teachers are responsible for teaching academics and helping them learn English. In addition, she expects them to love and care about the well-being of her children. The cultural value of *bien educado* influences how Susana constructs knowledge of and perceives her role in her children’s education. Burr (2003) refers to “. . . toolkits available to speakers in the construction of their accounts” (p. 167) or a “repertoire” (p. 60) to describe events. Susana’s repeated references to the importance of raising well-mannered, respectful, honest, and trustworthy children indicates these ideas are vital components of the meaning she gives to her role leading me to infer that these terms are a part of her cultural knowledge.

Rosa

With regard to the concept of parental involvement, the salient themes that emerged from Rosa’s data include: (1) providing access to an education, (2) childrearing: *bien educado* and (3) relying on the teacher for academic education.

*Providing Access to an Education*

Rosa immigrated to the United States “*Para que ellos aprendan a estudiar.*” [So they learn to study.] Prior to their move, she and the children lived in their own home in Honduras. Mario lived and worked in the United States and sent money to Honduras to support Rosa and their children. When their eldest son turned nine, Rosa and Mario decided to apply for immigration papers so Rosa and the children could join him in Beckham County. Moving away from her extended family and house in Honduras was a difficult decision but it “. . . was the first step in bringing the family together after years of absence and periodic visits” (Valdés, 1996, p. 59) and she felt that her children would receive a better education in the United States. This
demonstrates her strong conviction of the importance of providing her children access to education.

Additionally, while living in Honduras, Rosa and her husband paid for and sent Juan, their eldest son, to an English-speaking private school similar to schools in the U. S. They chose this particular school because they wanted Juan to receive an education comparable to what he would receive when they moved to the United States. Although private school caused financial strain, Rosa and Mario agreed that sending their son to this school was in his best interest from an educational standpoint. They trusted that this education would prepare him better for his future education in the United States. They relied on Mario’s earnings in the United States to pay for Juan’s education.

Childrearing: Bien Educado

Rosa’s primary role consists of raising children who are bien educado. In effect, her role takes place in her home.

Bien educado. The concept of bien educado permeated most of the conversations I had with Rosa, both during our interviews and during the home visits. She referred to her wish that her children are educado and explained that she expects the following from her children, “Que sean niños educados, respetuosos, que no mientan, que sean responsables.” [For the children to be moral, respectful, that they not lie, and that they are responsible.] This resonates with what research with Mexican immigrants found (Carger, 1997; Valdés; 1996; Villenas, 2002). Carger (1997) discovered that Alma, the mother in her study, often stated that she wanted her son to be bien educado, which included “. . . academic, social, cultural, and religious aspirations for him” (p. 143). Valdés (1996) noted that the families in her research expected an educación for their children, which included learning respeto through consejos. Villenas (2002) reported that parents
embraced the tenets of respeto and buen comportamiento with regard to raising their children. This demonstrates the value Latino families place on a child’s overall educación, which represents far more than just academics. Rosa repeatedly referred to her role in assuring that her children are well-mannered and well brought up. It is an integral part of her role in her children’s overall education. For her, bien educado includes responsibility, good behavior, and respect.

Responsibility. Rosa gives her children responsibilities that are appropriate for their age level (Valdés, 1996). Examples include, “Que no tiren papeles y recojan los papeles, que limpien la mesa, que pongan la ropa sucia en la canasta. A la más joven hay que recordarle todavía pero él lo hace.” [That they not throw papers and that they pick up papers, clear the table and put the dirty clothes in the basket. I still have to remind my youngest but he [Juan] does it.] Teaching responsibility carried over into homework. Juan is responsible for completing his homework soon after he returns from school. “Cuando él [Juan] llega a casa, come primero. Yo le pregunto ¿traes tarea? Y entonces él las hace.” [When he [Juan] comes home, he eats first. I ask him “Do you have any homework?” And, then he does it.] Some evenings, he reads to his younger sisters in English and explains what he reads to them in Spanish. Rosa stated that she asks Juan to help his sisters with reading, learning numbers, and learning the alphabet. This resonates with Valdés’ (1996) findings that parents in her study expected the older children to help teach the younger siblings.

Teaching responsibility was also evident when the children played a board game. On a visit one afternoon, I brought an animal matching game for the girls to play. They set up the game and played for a short while, but stopped before matching all of the animals. Rosa gently asked the girls to finish what they had started. This demonstrates her attempt to keep the girls
focused on a task. When they finished playing, she reminded them to put the game away, yet another example of teaching responsibility.

Behavior. To sum up her role in her children’s education Rosa stated, “Bueno uno como padre, deseo que mis hijos hasta grande sean educados y que no den problemas en la escuela ni en el hogar. Nosotros les aconsejamos que ya grandes puedan hacer su decisión.” [Well, as a parent until they’re grown up I want them to be well-mannered so that they have no problems in school or at home. We advise them that once they are big they can make their own decisions.] Again, she speaks of raising well-mannered children who, in turn, will be well-mannered adults who are prepared to make their own decisions, a notion similar to other research (Carger, 1997; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002). She indicated that if she does not receive negative reports from school, she assumes they are doing well. While visiting at her home or entertaining them at mine, I noted how well-behaved all three children were. They politely asked if they could play with toys and when Rosa spoke to them, they immediately stopped what they were doing and listened. In particular, when Rosa and I tried to communicate, I had my Spanish-English dictionary and she would often ask Juan to translate for her. This required him to stop playing and come into the room where we were sitting. He never ignored her request and willingly stopped his game to come and translate for his mother. This demonstrates the respeto he shows his mother when she asks him to do something.

Relying on the Teacher for Academic Education

Rosa feels that it is the teacher’s responsibility to teach her children and to inform her of problems in the classroom (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006; Valdés, 1996). “Lo que a mí me gustaría es que si hay un problema con él por ejemplo que no entienda algo ‘mire su hijo no entiende esto’, me gustaría que me lo dijeran.” [What I would like is that if there is a problem with him
[my son] for example that he does not understand something “Look your son does not understand this” I would like them to tell me.] She said that in order to understand a teacher’s concerns, she would need an interpreter, but she indicated, “Que me hablara en español o que alguien me lo tradujera o pueden hablarme a él [hijo] y él me lo dice a mí. [That they would talk to me in Spanish or that someone would translate or they can talk to him [son] and he tells me.] This demonstrates the confidence she has in her son to relay information and that she does not feel the need to speak directly with the teacher (thus minimizing her involvement in the school).

At our first interview, Rosa mentioned her desire to go to the school and see the work her children are doing as a way of connecting with the school and teachers (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Quirocho & Daoud, 2006). Initially, she was unable to go because she did not have access to a car. Now she is unable to visit because she has a full-time job at a local sewing factory. In this same conversation, she noted that the language barrier is difficult for her, “Bueno el problema es el idioma y es muy difícil. No sé como explicarlo.” [Well, the problem is the language and it is very difficult. I don’t know how to explain it.] Other research (Quezada, Díaz, & Sánchez, 2003) indicated that transportation, language, and work schedules prevent Latino parents from coming into their children’s school, which is consistent with this finding.

Cuando ellos me llaman es difícil porque no sé distinguir y Juan cuando está, él responde el teléfono y me dice lo que pasa. No conozco a la gente de la escuela. Ustedes son los únicos que conozco.

[When they call me it’s difficult because I don’t know how to make it out and when Juan is here, he answers the phone and he tells me what’s going on. I don’t know the people at the school. You all are the only ones I know.]

Overall, Rosa places academic teaching on the teacher and trusts the teacher to do her job. She does not appear concerned that she does not have a presence the school. At this time, given her current work hours, it would be impossible for her to come even for a conference.
Summary

In summary, education plays a crucial role in what Rosa wants for her children. She moved to the United States to provide them with a good education. Similar to other Latino families (Carger, 1996, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Nicolau and Ramos, 1990; Ramirez, 2003; Trumbull et al., 2001; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Zarate, 2007), Rosa views her primary role as providing a moral education for her children. She teaches them to be respectful, responsible, and trustworthy. She helps with schoolwork if she can; however, she leaves the bulk of academics to the teachers. She does rely on her son for translation and cultural interpretation and appears to feel comfortable that he takes on this role.

Lucero

The salient themes that emerged from the data include: (1) persevering to provide educational opportunities and (2) reinforcing academics in the home.

Persevering to Provide Educational Opportunities

Lucero’s primary role is to ensure that her daughter has access to education. With the help of a babysitter she took the initiative to enroll her daughter in pre-school to provide her with an early start to learn English. Unfortunately, mid-year the school realized that the babysitter lived in the school district, not Lucero, so she had to take her out of the program. Still, the fact that she attempted to provide her with a pre-school experience demonstrates her value in an early start to education. She insists that her daughter attend school every day even on the days that Yulissa fights her because she is too tired to wake up and does not want to go to school. She indicated that one of the main reasons she remains in the United States is to provide her children with an education. In her words, “Tenís que ir a la escuela le digo porque, tiene que aprender, inglés, tiene que asegurarse y cómo va a aprender entonces si no va a la escuela.” [I tell her you
have to go to school, because you have to learn English. She has to make sure and how is she going to learn if she doesn’t go to school?] In essence, learning English and getting an education are key components to her daughter having a future (Valdés, 1996). When asked what job she would wish for her children she did not respond, she shrugged her shoulders, indicating that she did not have a preference. Her view is similar to what Valdés (1996) found in her research with Mexican families. Although the parents in her research did not necessarily understand the job market, per se, they did understand the importance of learning English.

Lucero stresses the importance of education to Yulissa each day. On entering their small basement apartment, directly in front of the door, I noticed a hook where she hangs her backpack. She designated a special place for the backpack so it will not be misplaced or forgotten. Under the hook stands a small stool so that her daughter can reach her backpack. Each day after school, Lucero asks her daughter about her homework. She explained

*Sí yo la pongo hacer. Es que la maestra le da un puntito de como lo haga y le deja la muestra ahí y viene la muestra yo le digo que lo haga así como está en la muestra y la ponga aquí en un papel y yo después le digo que lo haga en la tarea.*

[Yes, I get her to do it. The thing is that the teacher gives her a point for doing it and she shows her how and she (her daughter) brings an example home and I tell her to do it like the example and I put it here on paper and then I tell her to do it for her homework.]

She emphasized the importance of making sure that her daughter does her homework each evening. Each time I visited, she immediately got Yulissa’s backpack, took out papers from school, and asked me to explain assignments and other papers. She is adamant that her daughter complete her homework and be successful in school. Lucero views education as the path to a better life for her children (Valdés, 1996).
Reinforcing Academics at Home

Lucero separates her role from the teacher’s role in her children’s education. She does not believe her presence in the school is a necessary part of her role as a mother. However, she understands that she is responsible for helping her daughter with homework.

Lucero’s role. Although Lucero does not envision her role to be that of the teacher who introduces academic concepts, she does feel she needs to reinforce at home what her daughter learns in school. She stated,

_Eso es lo que tengo que hacer, ayudarles a ellos porque no hagan lo mismo que cuando estaba en la escuela, que no tenia ayuda. Digo yo este, es importante que los papás estén pendientes de los hijos, que tienen que ayudarles porque ellos solos no pueden hacerlo._

[That’s what I have to do, help them so they don’t do like I did when I was in school, because I didn’t have help. I say this because it’s important that the parents pay attention to the kids. They have to help them because they can’t do it alone.]

To help her learn to count, she used hair barrettes, rather than buttons as suggested by the teacher, because she did not have buttons. She made do with what she could find in the house and practiced counting in English with Yulissa. Each time I visited her she immediately showed me papers from the school and asked what they meant and what she was supposed to do. During one visit, she asked me to explain an assessment Yulissa brought home from school. I explained the assessment, which listed the letters and words her daughter knows and those that she needs to practice. I realized that Lucero had difficulty understanding the assessment because she does not know the sounds of letters in English nor does she know the words representing letter sounds that the teacher sent home. This leads to difficulty helping her daughter with beginning reading skills, which she clearly wants to do. I demonstrated the sounds each letter makes in English and made sure that she knew the meaning of the words the teacher had sent home. While doing this she told me how to say the English words in Spanish, which provided an opportunity for reciprocal
learning (Moll, et al., 2005). She requested that I ask the teacher to send notes and explanations home in Spanish so that she could help Yulissa with homework (Quiocio & Daoud, 2006). She revealed that she understands that the teacher only has a certain amount of time during the school day to cover information and that some of the responsibility falls on her to do her part as a mother. These findings do not resonate with previous literature (Carger, 1996, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Trumbull et al., 2001; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002), which found that the parents’ role was comprised mainly of providing the overall moral education of children. Lucero’s willingness to help with homework may stem from the fact that she struggled with school and she does not want this experience for her daughter.

Her involvement does not include a presence in the school. When I asked her if she communicated at all with the teacher, she replied,

_Cuando le mandan a decir que vaya a la escuela porque quiere ver la maestra como va en la clase o algo así. Pero a veces me mandan papeles que quieren que yo, pero yo no he ido, digo yo para que voy a ir, yo no voy a entender._

[When they ask me to go to the school because the teachers wants me to see how she’s doing in class or something like that. But sometimes they send papers asking me to go, but I haven’t gone and I ask myself why should I go when I don’t understand.]

The language barrier presents an obstacle, so she does not go to talk to the teacher (Finders & Lewis, 1994). I pressed a bit more by asking if she would be more inclined to visit and have a presence in school if school personnel spoke Spanish. She indicated that it would not make a difference and that she is happy with the way things are. She stressed that she would let the teacher provide the education in the school and that she would help with homework in the home. This demonstrates that she envisions a separation between the school and the home (Arias & Campbell, 2008). She also stressed that she respects the teacher and trusts that she is providing her daughter with an education and that she assists her as needed.
Teacher’s role. Lucero places academic teaching in the hands of the teacher (Arias & Campbell, 2008). In addition, she expects the teacher to pay careful attention to her daughter’s development. She commented, “También ellos tienen que estar pendientes de lo que hacen. Como va en el desarrollo de ella.” [Also they have to pay attention to what they do. How she’s developing.] She views the teacher as a trained professional responsible for teaching academic content and tracking her daughter’s academic growth. Lucero is aware of how her daughter is developing and expects the teacher to monitor her development as well. This demonstrates deep insight into her expectations that the teacher pay attention to how her daughter is developing skills throughout the school year.

Lucero does not envision volunteering in the classroom to assist the teacher as a role that she should take on. Her presence in the school does not factor into her perception of parental involvement or a mother’s role. The teacher’s responsibility also includes sending work home with an explanation of what Lucero should do to help her daughter. She indicated that she needs the information sent home in Spanish so that she can read the directions, but as of this time, that has not happened.

Summary

In summary, education plays an important role in Lucero’s dreams for her children’s future and she stresses its importance to her daughter (Carger, 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan & Ruiz, 1992; Valdés, 1996). Her role takes place in the home, not in the school. She is comfortable helping with homework and expects to take on this role. However, she does not feel the need to interact with the teacher or come into the school. This indicates a definite separation of her role, which takes place in the home, with that of the teacher, which takes place in the school. This is in direct opposition to a teacher’s expectations of parental
involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; López, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001). The data suggest a sense of *confianza* afforded to the teacher with regard to her daughter’s education (de Carvalho, 2001).

*How Lived Experiences Shape the Meaning of Parental Involvement*

In the previous section, data demonstrated that Susana, Rosa, and Lucero perceive that their role in their children’s education takes place in the home, not in the school. They do not recognize the construct of parental involvement as defined in U.S. schools; however, they articulated their role in their children’s education. In this section, I provide findings for my second research question:

- How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?

**Susana**

The salient themes to emerge from Susana’s data include: (1) remaining resilient despite hardships and (2) framing her role from the social construction of a mother’s role in Guatemala.

*Remaining Resilient Despite Hardships*

Living in poverty, working to support the family, and not receiving a formal education were prominent features in Susana’s early life. These aspects greatly influenced who she is today and informed how she views her role in her children’s education.

*Growing up poor.* Susana, the eldest daughter, grew up in a large family with twelve siblings. Her father was a farmer and she described growing up poor. As a young girl, she cooked, cleaned, and did the family’s laundry. She explained that early in the morning she and a sister would walk thirty minutes to the river with baskets of dirty clothes on their heads. They would then spend all day washing clothes and walk back home in the evening. She did not want this life for her own children because she described it as a hard life. She wanted her own children to have an education and find a better job than she has. She stated emphatically:
Porque por ejemplo yo no quiero eso para mis hijos porque yo trabajé pues muy duro pero no quiero que ellos trabajen igual. . . Mejorar, por ejemplo que estudien y ya grande pues que tengan un buen trabajo, mejor que yo.

[Because for example I don’t want that for my children because I worked very hard but I don’t want them to work like that . . . It’s better, for example, for them to study and then when they’re older, well they can have a good job, better than mine.]

Her life in Guatemala consisted of hard work so she understands this concept and does not want her children to experience the same. Similar to the family in López’s (2001) study, she wants to avoid this aspect of life for her own children.

Susana’s early experiences significantly influenced her desire to provide an education for her own children. Realizing that if she stayed in Guatemala she would not have as many job opportunities, Susana searched for a way out. She said, “Pues, allá con mis padres, eran tan pobres y como que ellos ya no podían hacer nada. Yo nunca lo iba a tener.” [Well, my parents were so poor and they couldn’t do anything, I was never going to have anything either.] This precipitated her first move to the United States. She wanted a different life for herself. She felt that if she stayed in Guatemala she would never make much money and would not have a home or financial security. She was determined not to live out her life as her parents had lived theirs.

**Formal schooling.** Susana articulated that she never received formal schooling while growing up in Guatemala. Her parents worked hard and paid for two younger brothers and one younger sister to attend school. Susana did not go to school because, as the eldest child, her parents needed her to help support the family financially and to help with chores (Valdés, 1996). She prepared and sold tamales at a local market each weekend. She stated:

*Ellos decían que la mujer se casaba y el esposo las mantenía. Entonces por eso a uno no le daba el estudio porque decía que nada más se iban a casar con uno para nada.*
They (my parents) said that a woman would get married and her husband would keep her. Then that is why they didn’t want me to study because they said I wouldn’t do anything but get married so it would all be for nothing.]

This demonstrates that historically and culturally, it was not necessary for a girl to get an education because she could get married and rely on her husband. The girls’ roles were to clean, cook, and take care of the family. Literature indicates that in Guatemala, it is common for children not to receive a formal education (World Bank, 2006), and like many Guatemalans, Susana never learned to read (U. S. Department of State, 2009).

To ensure that her children received an education, Susana gave up her business and house in Guatemala, and returned to the United States because she knew they could receive a free education here. Her actions exemplify the strong value she places on education, as well as her determination to provide her children with a life different from her own. Her comments indicate that she is doing what she feels is in the best interest of her children (Orozco, 2008). Orozco (2008) found that parents who did not go to school “often feel vulnerable on their jobs and in their lives in the United States” which she felt may lead to their desire for their own children to be successful (p. 28). Susana’s stories provide a correlation between what Orozco (2008) found and what she told me in interviews.

Framing Her Role from the Social Construction of a Mother’s Role in Guatemala

Family plays a prominent role in Susana’s life and in her views on education. In many Latino families, both immediate and extended family members work together to raise the children (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). Overall, Latino families can be described as collective or interdependent (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004, Valdés, 1996). The family members work together to support one another and draw on one another’s strengths to complete tasks. This concept was evident when I learned how Jessica, her eldest daughter living at home, assumes the
responsibility of helping the younger children with their homework each night. Susana, her parents and sisters worked collectively to provide the needed money to send her brothers to school. Since no one else in the family received formal schooling, the siblings relied on each other to help with school assignments. She stated:

_Cuando los niños llegaban de la escuela y tenían tareas, unos a otros se ayudaban porque mi papá y mi mamá no sabían leer. Los hermanos se ayudaban. Así se fueron ayudando._

[When the kids got home from school and had homework, they helped each other because my mom and my dad didn’t know how to read. The brothers helped each other. That’s how they helped each other.]

The experience of watching her brothers help one another with homework informs Susana’s current actions with regard to her children’s homework. Susana relies on Jessica to help her younger siblings with homework just as her siblings relied on each other. Like her mother, she asks the teachers for extra support if Jessica cannot assist. She actively seeks assistance with the two younger children’s homework from her eldest daughter or teachers. She draws from shared knowledge among her family in Guatemala with respect to homework assistance, leading me to postulate that this is a social construction of a mother’s role in Guatemala (Gergen, 2003, 2009a). Susana explained that her mother had minimal contact with the teachers in her brothers’ school and rarely contacted them unless they needed extra assistance with homework. Schools in Guatemala did contact the parents unless there was a behavior problem and did not expect parents to have a visible presence in the school. This informs how Susana constructs meaning of her role and why she separates her role from that of the teacher. A mother’s role takes place in the home, a teacher’s role takes place in the school.
Summary

Susana grew up poor and did not receive formal schooling because she worked to help the family financially. Susana realized that if she remained in Guatemala, she would continue to live a life of poverty. This realization proved to be the initial impetus behind her first adventure to the United States in search of a better paying job. She later returned to the United States to provide her children with the education she was unable to provide had they remained in Guatemala due to financial constraints. Susana’s prior experiences greatly influence how she views her role in her children’s education. Her mother did not have a significant role in her siblings’ education, other than providing access to formal schooling and sought assistance with homework from teachers or expected her sons to help one another. Her mother’s actions inform how she perceives her role in her own children’s education. Despite experiences of living in poverty, not receiving formal schooling, and experiencing hard work Susana remained resilient and is determined to provide an education and more options for her own children.

Rosa

The salient themes to emerge from Rosa’s data include: (1) demonstrating determination (2) framing her role from the social construction of a mother’s role in Honduras.

Demonstrating Determination

Rosa grew up in poverty in a rural area in Honduras. Her father worked as a farmer and harvested corn. He worked long hours to raise food for the family to eat. Her mother raised the children, cooked, cleaned, and helped with the corn harvest. She, her parents, and five siblings lived in a small house constructed with small sticks, plywood, cardboard boxes, and mud to cover holes. The whole family slept on two mattresses on the floor on one side of the house. A sheet separated the sleeping area from the kitchen area. They had no running water or electricity.
Her mother cooked on an open fire and retrieved water from a nearby lake. She indicated that the majority of families in her village lived in similar conditions.

Rosa attended a primary school that went through sixth grade. She had to quit because the secondary school was located in a larger city, which was too far for her to walk to and she had no other transportation (Valdés, 1996). She indicated that although there was always extra work to do on the farm or in the house, her parents still insisted that she attend the small primary school in her village through sixth grade. Many Honduran children do not attend school past second grade, if at all (Nazario, 2007). Rosa’s parents defied these statistics by sending her to primary school, demonstrating that they value education. Rosa kept that value with her, which in turn has influenced her determination to send her children to school.

Framing Her Role from the Social Construction of a Mother’s Role in Honduras

Rosa’s mother did not have an active role in her school in Honduras. The school expected parents to get their children to school, plan social functions for the school, and provide simple maintenance services as needed (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). She described the contact her mother had with the school by stating,

Los padres se reunían por ejemplo para ver como celebrar el día de la madre, para eso tenían reunión todos los padres para ponersse de acuerdo que iban a hacer para el día de la madre o para ver la graduación de los niños, para eso.

[For example, the parents got together to see how to celebrate Mother’s Day, that’s why all the parents met—to agree on what they were going to do on Mother’s Day or to see their kids’ graduation.]

She conveyed that schools did not expect parents to go into the school because they were too busy working. This was taken-for-granted knowledge in Honduras (Gergen, 2009a). Her mother would meet with other mothers to plan and prepare food for school celebrations. At home she said, “Yo le hacía preguntas cuando yo no entendía, ella me decía como era o cuando tenía que
I asked her [mother] questions when I didn’t understand, she told me how it was or when I had to study the multiplication tables, she asked me.] This parallels what Sylvia, the other Honduran mother in my pilot study, told me. Sylvia explained that she helped her own children memorize their multiplication tables.

Rosa’s school in Honduras did not expect active parent participation in the school or nightly assistance with homework. This is in direct contrast to what U.S. schools expect of parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Quiacho & Daoud, 2006; Zarate, 2007). Hondurans do not share the same definition of a parent’s role in children’s academic education with American educators (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2003). The knowledge they share derives from a common understanding that parents are busy working so there are no expectations of visible involvement in the school or of reading to their children every night. It is the school’s responsibility to provide an academic education for the children and parents allow schools to do this con confianza [with mutual trust].

This shared knowledge informs how Rosa views her role in her children’s education. She is busy working all day and does not feel the need to have a presence in the school. She will help her children with homework if she can, but relies on the teacher’s to provide the academic education.

Summary

In summary, although Rosa attended school through sixth grade, she also began working at a young age and understood the meaning of hard work. Those early experiences influenced the value she now places on education, which carries over into the lives of her children. Her mother did not have a visible role in the school, but she did help Rosa learn her multiplication tables. In turn, Rosa does not have a visible role at NES, but she does insist that Juan complete his homework each evening. Rosa’s early experiences shaped the views that she demonstrates in her children’s education. She draws from a shared understanding of a mother’s role in Honduran
culture to make sense of her role in her children’s education (Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998). Thus, she does not share the taken-for-granted meaning of a mother’s role with the teachers in her children’s school (Gergen, 2009a).

Lucero

The salient themes to emerge from Lucero’s data include: (1) demonstrating determination and (2) framing her role from the social construction of a mother’s role in Honduras.

_Demonstrating Determination_

Education held a high place of importance in Lucero’s family. Although many of the children in her village did not attend school, her parents insisted that she and her siblings all attend school. Many families needed their children to help work on the farm; however, Lucero’s parents took care of the majority of farm and housework thus enabling them to go to school. This demonstrates that her parents valued education, which in turn is a value Lucero holds (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Valdés, 1996). She explained that when she and her siblings returned home at the end of the day they would immediately go help with the work on the farm. She stated “... le ayudábamos a mi papá, como él tenía vacas, a veces a apartarlas o también ayudarme a mi mamá a moler maíz en los molinos.” [. . . We helped my dad since he had cows, sometimes to separate them, or also to help my mom grind corn with the grinder].

In her beginning years in school, Lucero did not complete her homework; however, after failing second grade twice she enlisted the help of her older sister. She explained, “A veces le decía a mi hermana cuando no quería seguir repitiendo el segundo grado que yo quería pasar. Por eso yo le decía a mi hermana que me ayudara y ella me ayudaba. Ella es mayor que mí.” [Sometimes I told my sister when I didn’t want to continue repeating the second grade that I
wanted to pass. That is why I told my sister to help me and she helped me.] Her sister guided her through the schoolwork, which assisted her in moving on to third grade. This early struggle gave her the determination to finish high school. Although Lucero began course work at a bilingual secretarial school, it was not without great struggle. She recounted with shame the fact that she never learned English and did not successfully complete the program. She is determined that her daughter does not struggle in school, which is why she is so willing to help with homework and teach her academics in the home.

_Framing Her Role from the Social Construction of a Mother’s Role in Honduras_

Lucero asked her sister for help with homework because her parents were too busy working and were not able to help. Her mother worked all day taking care of the cattle, making cheese, cleaning the house, and doing laundry. She said that her mother did everything and did not have time to teach her or help with homework. She explained that the school did not expect parents to come into the school or assist with homework because the teachers knew that the parents had to work. She did explain that the school invited parents to come to school meetings but that her parents did not attend. She said, “No, no iban. No les quedaba tiempo porque estaban trabajando. No iban.” [No, they didn’t go. They didn’t have time because they were working. They didn’t go.] Her school in Honduras had entirely different expectations for parents from the schools in the United States. These expectations influence how Lucero perceives her role in her daughter’s education, a perception that does not include active participation in the school. This is in direct contrast to what American educators expect, which in turn can lead to deficit notions of Lucero (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Valdés, 1996).
Summary

In summary, Lucero struggled in school in her early years and does not want her daughter to experience the same. She was determined to finish school, which she did with the assistance of her older sister. She draws on her own experience, which leads to her determination that her children receive an education and her willingness to help with homework. Her mother had little, if any, involvement in her education. Lucero understood that her mother worked all day and did not have time to go into the school nor help with homework. These experiences shaped the manner in which she views her role in her children’s education. Despite her struggles in school, Lucero remains determined to ensure that her daughter does encounter the same struggles.

Funds of Knowledge

In this section, I provide findings for my third question:

- What funds of knowledge are present in the home?

Overall, Susana, Rosa, and Lucero rely on a network of family members and friends to help them navigate daily-lived experiences in Beckham County. The people in this network provide funds of knowledge necessary to negotiate meaning. I begin with funds of knowledge that I discovered in Susana’s family, followed by funds of knowledge in Rosa and Lucero’s family.

Susana

The overarching theme to emerge from Susana’s data was relying on networks of exchange. Sub-themes included reciprocity based on confianza, educación, and negotiating with the English-speaking world.
Relying on Networks of Exchange

Reciprocity. Susana has a network based on reciprocal relationships that is comprised of family and friends. The familial network provides a vital source of funds of knowledge to assist in navigating daily experiences and communication with the school. Moll and Greenberg (1990), drawing from Vélez-Ibáñez’s (1988) research on Mexicans living on the border, stated succinctly that the family network helps to “. . . form social contexts for the transmission of knowledge, skills, and information, as well as cultural values and norms” (p. 321, italics in original). Familial exchanges of funds of knowledge assist immigrant families with daily life and help to ensure the transmission of cultural knowledge to the younger generation. All six of Susana’s children as well as several extended family members live in Beckham County. Her three oldest children live and work outside of Susana’s home and have their own families; however, they provide a support system for one another. This familial support includes childcare, meal preparation, car and home maintenance, and financial assistance. Children and adults care for the younger children and they help support one another financially if needed as well as send money to Guatemala to help family members who still live there.

In addition to family members, a network of friends also provided support and added to the family’s funds of knowledge. When Susana enrolled her children in school, a friend who spoke both Spanish and English drove her to the school and helped her fill out the forms. Susana calls on this friend when she has any questions related to school that her family cannot answer. Each time I visited Susana at her home, she introduced me to at least four people who stopped by either to drop children off at her house, provide assistance with car maintenance, have a bite to eat, or to watch television with her husband in the basement. She explained that they were close friends with whom they worked. She and the other families in this network share in providing
childcare, home maintenance and home improvement projects. Since Susana’s husband works in construction, he helps to provide construction materials and equipment for home improvement projects and others provide the labor. Susana works in a local bakery. She found out about the job from a friend who then recommended Susana to the supervisor. Should either Susana or her husband lose their job they have a combined knowledge of farming, cooking, selling food, working in a store, and car and home maintenance. They could use these skills in addition to their vast network of family and friends to secure another job (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Each member of Susana’s social network adds to the family funds of knowledge. Reciprocity serves as the foundation for this exchange of services and knowledge (González, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendón, Gonzales, et al., 2005). These “. . . reciprocal practices establish serious obligations based on the assumption of confianza, which is reestablished or confirmed with each exchange, and they lead to the development of long-term relationships” (González et al., 2005, italics added).

Educación. Susana and her family attend a Spanish-speaking church, which provides an important source of knowledge. She indicated that they are devoted Christians and have developed a sense of family within the church they attend. Since Susana is unable to read, she indicated that the church is responsible for teaching her children the values and morals from the Bible. This is similar to what Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) found in their study of Mexican families. One family in their study credited religion in their home with their "kids' turning out right" (p. 320). Susana’s older daughter, who is learning to read Spanish, teaches a Sunday school group and all family members are active within the church. The church offers a sense of belonging both in the family and in the broader sense of a Spanish-speaking community (Tenery, 2005). The members of the church gather weekly and learn lessons from the Bible all in
the context of a Spanish-speaking community whose members hold similar values and morals that they share and celebrate on a regular basis. The Church provides Susana’s children with a link to reading the Bible, which is something she cannot do.

*Negotiating with the English-speaking world.* There are varying levels of English proficiency and Spanish literacy among people in Susana’s family and social network. This being the case, Susana indicated that she relies on people for various types of assistance with regard to negotiating meaning in daily tasks. She calls on all three of her children living at home to translate paperwork that comes home from the school. Her eldest daughter who does not live in the home assists with doctor visits and translating. Among the various visitors, I noted that I could converse with some of them in English and they interpreted for those who could not. The fact that she can rely on others to help her navigate English conversations and documents or forms written in English provides her with valuable guidance and support. Her reliance on her children ties in with the trust and responsibility she instills in them on a daily basis and demonstrates a strong cultural value. In addition to bilingualism, her children spent part of their lives in Guatemala; thus, they bring valuable knowledge about life in another country. Although they now reside in the U.S., Susana transmits cultural knowledge to her children through *consejos*, activities in the Church, and communication with family still in Guatemala on a regular basis, thus adding to their biculturalism (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Friends and family members who are bilingual provide essential funds of knowledge that facilitate life in an English-speaking country.
Rosa

Two themes emerged from Rosa’s data including: (1) relying on networks of exchange and (2) negotiating with the English-speaking world.

Relying on Networks of Exchange

Although none of Rosa’s extended family lives in Beckham County, she, her children, and her husband are close and offer one another support. They communicate openly about everything, from school to finances. They help one another navigate through daily life. For example, Rosa passes the telephone to her son if the school calls and she relies on him to tell her what is going on. When Rosa and her children first moved to Beckham County, they lived with her sister-in-law, who has since moved with her family to another state, until they found an apartment. Her sister-in-law helped them with clothing and food and came to Northbend Elementary School to enroll Rosa’s two children. Their assistance helped Rosa become acquainted with her new surroundings and navigate the school enrollment policy. She indicated that they continue to have regular contact via telephone with her in-laws and that they continue to be a source of information and assistance.

Outside of her immediate family, Rosa has a close relationship with a Honduran family with whom her husband owns a restaurant. They share responsibilities in the restaurant, assist one another with transportation needs, and celebrate holidays together (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). This particular family also provided Rosa with information about the preschool program offered at NES, in which they enrolled their daughter the year before. Had she not received this information, she might never have been aware of this opportunity for her youngest daughter. Another friend helped her locate an employment agency and fill out a job application, which eventually led to her current position at a local sewing factory. One afternoon,
Rosa asked a friend at work, who speaks a little English, to call me to ask if I could pick her up from work and take her home. Mario was unable to pick her up due to work constraints so I was able to assist with her transportation needs. Her interactions with family and friends demonstrate a varied social network of exchange that provide support and assistance in meeting her needs (Browning-Aiken, 2005).

Mario, Rosa’s husband, is co-owner a local Chinese restaurant. Rosa and the children go there in the evenings and on weekends to help in the restaurant. Rosa assists with the cooking and cleaning and Juan helps by setting the tables, cleaning, and adding food to the buffet. This exemplifies how the family works together to support a family business. The children learn the business as they collectively work to make it successful. Rosa and Mario are transmitting knowledge of running a business and the value of work (Browning-Aiken, 2005). Rosa’s work at a local sewing factory supports the family finances and provides a financial safety net during slower times in the restaurant business. Her working full-time demonstrates the importance of all adult members in a family contributing to the family’s financial needs (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005.)

**Negotiating with the English-Speaking World**

Although Rosa does not speak English, her husband is able to communicate in basic conversations, as are Juan and María, her two children in school. Rosa relies on Juan, who acts as an intermediary between the teachers and her, to translate papers and interpret messages from school (Valdés, 1996). In our conversations, she appeared comfortable having her son interpret and translate for her; she did not indicate frustration. From this, I infer that the role her son takes on as interpreter and translator is culturally understood and taken-for-granted (Gergen, 2003,
In the context of the school, her son provides a valuable source of knowledge in that he serves to bridge the language barrier between his mother and school personnel.

Knowledge of both languages is important to Rosa and she does not want her children to lose proficiency in Spanish. She sees bilingualism as an important component of who they are and of their heritage and of a link to their family in Honduras (Tenery, 2005). Her children spent their formative years in Honduras and bring with them many experiences and lessons that differ from their new life in the U. S. Rosa continues to transmit the cultural knowledge of Honduras to her children, which is evident in how she raises them to be respectful, honest, and well-behaved (Browning-Aiken, 2005). Her children will integrate the two cultures as they grow up. This adds a new dimension to their background and knowledge of language.

Lucero

Two salient themes emerged from Lucero’s data. These themes include: (1) relying on networks of exchange and (2) drawing on literacy in Spanish to negotiate with the English-speaking world.

Relying on Networks of Exchange

Lucero has a large extended family living in and around Beckham County. They get together regularly to celebrate birthdays, holidays, and to go to church. They help one another with childcare, preparing food, fixing cars, repairing household appliances, and navigating daily life (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Lucero and her family exchange services and exchange “reciprocal practices” congruent with a broad range of funds of knowledge (González, et al., 2005, p. 92.) Lucero relies on an aunt for childcare while she works. Her aunt does not work outside of the home and offers childcare to several other family members. This service ensures that mothers do not have to look outside of the familial network, which would result in
desconocidos [strangers] taking care of their children (Valdés, 1996). This also ensures that the family funds of knowledge will be transmitted to the children via the aunt.

In her social network, Lucero became acquainted with a Honduran woman who is a healer. One day when I visited, I inquired about the red bracelet her baby was wearing on his wrist. She told me that he had been sick but she was unable to get medical help when she took him to the hospital. A family member introduced her to the healer, who in turn she gave the baby the bracelet to wear. Lucero stated that the bracelet cleared up his illness. In addition to the bracelet, Lucero gave him tea brewed with anise seeds, which she said cleared up his stomach ache. Valdés (1996) noted in her research that parents often treated childhood illnesses such as a stomachache or a sore throat with home remedies. This action indicates a transmission of cultural funds of knowledge handed down from generation to generation (Valdés, 1996).

Rosa works in a bakery and decorates cakes. She began working there with no prior experience and learned how decorate cakes on the job. She bakes and decorates cakes for many of the families’ special occasions. In her family network, she is able to provide this service, a form of reciprocity (González, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendón, Gonzales, et al., 2005). In addition, she can teach her skills to others in the family. This may prove to be a valuable skill should anyone lose a job and need to seek employment in the future (Browning-Aiken, 2005; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992).

*Drawing on Literacy in Spanish to Negotiate with the English-Speaking World*

Lucero keeps abreast of current news through Spanish satellite television. She watches the local news and CNN. During one visit to her home, I told her about a crib recall since I knew she had a young baby and she told me that she saw it on television and already sent away for the kit to fix the problem. One week, the school sent home a notice about the H1N1 vaccination, in
both English and Spanish. Since Lucero can read Spanish, she was fully aware of the H1N1 vaccine offered at the school and signed her daughter up to receive the vaccination. When I first visited her, she did not plan to go back to work and had inquired about applying for food stamps. She had all of the forms but needed a ride to the Social Services office so we planned a convenient time for me to drive her. When I arrived at her home she had decided she needed to return to work, which left her ineligible. She gave this information and the forms to another family member so that she could apply for food stamps. Because she is able to read Spanish, she can navigate social systems that provide information in both Spanish and English to the community. She provides a vital link to her extended family because of her literacy in Spanish. They know they can have confianza in her to disseminate information. This demonstrates the reciprocity of family funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005).

Lucero relies on her background knowledge of schooling from her experiences in Honduras to navigate the school system in the U.S. Her prior knowledge of and experiences in school give her an awareness of basic concepts taught in Kindergarten as well as an understanding of how to help her daughter with homework. Her background knowledge allows her to formulate specific questions related to school. Whether her questions are relevant to the U. S. school system or not is determined by the nature of the question. Since she has extensive contact with other family members who have school-aged children, they provide her with information pertinent to school policies.

Summary

Through “face-to-face interactions” and “mutually respectful dialogue (González, 2005) Susana, Rosa, and Lucero described myriad experiences, social networks, and knowledge. From their early experiences with schooling, working on the farm and in the home, and immigrating to
the United States they became who they are today. These experiences helped to shape their beliefs and aspirations for their children. They rely on family, both immediate and extended, to navigate a variety of social systems to accommodate their needs in the United States. They also rely on confianza in their social network, which leads to social interdependence (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) as they share their funds of knowledge and assist one another. Their children and English-proficient friends and family provide a link to the spoken and written English world and they have instilled great trust in them. Of primary importance to Susana, Rosa, and Lucero is the art of raising children who are bien educados and providing them an environment in which to receive an education and become bilingual (Valdés, 1996).
Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I present my cross-case analysis of data from Susana, Rosa, and Lucero. As I carried out the cross-case analysis, I examined and compared the themes from my within-case analysis, searched for commonalities and differences, and then synthesized this information. I discovered determination to be a common descriptive thread that cut through data for all three mothers. They are determined to promote the value of education in their homes, to ensure their children have educational opportunities that they did not have, and to build and foster a social network to facilitate life in the United States. Data from my cross-case analysis provided evidence of three overarching themes. In Figure 6, below, I present these themes as they relate to each research question.

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<th>Research Question</th>
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<td>A mother’s role takes place in the home.</td>
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<td>How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?</td>
<td>Social construction of parental roles in the native country shaped mothers’ current understanding of their roles in their children’s education.</td>
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<td>What funds of knowledge are present in the home?</td>
<td>Reciprocal relationships founded on confianza [mutual trust] provide valuable funds of knowledge.</td>
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Figure 6. Overview of Findings for Cross-Case Analysis
**Question 1: How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?**

To address the first research question I searched for data that provided evidence regarding how the mothers make sense of parental involvement as a social construct (Berger, 2003). In particular, I looked for cultural and historical factors that influenced how they make meaning of the term (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2003). Susana, Rosa, and Lucero do not share knowledge of the term parental involvement with the teachers in the school. Based on data from my pilot study and for the purpose of this study, I defined parental involvement as assisting with homework, reading with children, meeting the teacher, and parents and teachers working together as partners in learning. The construct of parental involvement as defined by educators in American public schools does not exist for Susana, Rosa, and Lucero (López, 2001). Rather than parental involvement, they articulated their perception of their role in their children’s education. Data demonstrated that their role takes place in the home not in the school.

* A Mother’s Role Takes Place in the Home

Data provided evidence that Susana, Rosa, and Lucero believe their role in their children’s education takes place in the home (Carger, 1997; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Nicolau & Ramos, 1991). Previous literature states that educators stress that parental involvement encompasses activities both in the home and in the school (de Carvalho, 2001; Jones & Velez, 1997; Ramirez, 2003; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Zarate, 2007). In fact, teachers perceive a lack of interest and of value in education if parents do not have a presence in the school (Casanova, 1996; Inger, 1992; Jones & Velez, 1997; Ramirez, 2003; Rodriguez-Brown, 2009).

Data from Susana and Rosa revealed that they stressed the importance of raising well-mannered children (Browning-Aiken, 2005; Carger, 1997; Valdés, 1996), which occurs in the
home. They both used the same terms related to *bien educado* [well-mannered] when describing their roles. This demonstrates that they have a similar “repertoire” with regard to a mother’s role in her children’s education (Burr, 2003, p. 60) from which to draw. Data from Lucero demonstrated that she places importance on helping her daughter with her homework, which occurs in the home. This presents a finding unique to Lucero and in direct contrast to Valdés’ (1996) findings. Valdés (1996) found that the mothers in her study did not see themselves as “. . . adjunct schoolteachers” but felt “. . . responsible for the moral upbringing of their children” (p. 165). She also noted that when teachers expect parents to assist with homework, they assume a certain level of education on the part of the parent and that the parent shares the school’s perception of what constitutes knowledge. Susana had no educational experience and Rosa had only attended school through sixth grade; thus, they are not confident with their own academic abilities to offer homework assistance (Delgado-Gaitan & Ruiz, 1992; Finders & Lewis, 1994). Susana’s and Rosa’s role focuses on “una buena educación” [a good education], the moral upbringing of their children, which is not a primary focus of a school’s definition of knowledge. Educators expect parents to teach and reinforce academic knowledge based on the school’s curriculum and expectations. Lucero, on the other hand, graduated from high school and received more education than Susana or Rosa. She feels confident reinforcing what her daughter learns at school, which explains why she feels responsible for reinforcing academics in the home. Her views of her role resonate with Susana’s views.

Although these mothers do not have a strong presence in the school, they demonstrate the value they place on education by ensuring access to education. Susana and Rosa stated that one of the main reasons they immigrated to the United States was to send their children to school (Browning-Aiken, 2005). Lucero explained that the reason she remains in the United States is to
provide her children with an education. Drawing from their personal experiences, they know the limited and costly educational opportunities in their native countries. Therefore, they sought a better, more consistent option (Browning-Aiken, 2005) and one that did not cost money.

Data demonstrated that Susana, Rosa, and Lucero are comfortable with the relationship that they have with teachers and the school. Data from Susana and Rosa did not indicate a desire to be more involved in their children’s academic education or to have a greater presence in the school. Data from Lucero demonstrated that even if teachers in the school spoke Spanish, she did not feel her role included her presence in the school. Their role in their children’s education takes place in the home. This finding adds a unique dimension to this study. Other researchers have found that Spanish-speaking parent’s do want to be involved and present in the school and have implemented programs to increase parent involvement and parent empowerment (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 2004; Olivos, 2006; Orozco, 2008; Quintanar & Warren, 2008).

Ultimately, the mothers’ understanding of parental involvement differs from American teachers’ understanding of parental involvement (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Hyslop, 2000; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Valdés, 1996). This difference leads to a disconnect between the home and the school, which was an important finding in my pilot study. This disconnect often leads educators to conclude that Spanish-speaking mothers do not value education (Casanova, 1996; Inger, 1992; Jones & Velez, 1997; Ramirez, 2003; Rodriguez-Brown, 2009) and that the homes are deficient in some way (Lightfoot, 2004; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Viewing the mothers in this way does not take into account how they construct knowledge of parental involvement and assumes a taken-for-granted shared understanding from a teacher’s point of view (Gergen, 2009a). Rather than allow a misunderstanding of a mother’s role to get in the way of their children’s education, Susana,
Rosa, and Lucero remain determined to send their children to school. Drawing from Lareau & Benson’s (1984) research on cultural capital, Susana, Rosa, and Lucero do not have the same cultural capital or understanding of parental involvement as White, middle-class mothers; therefore, the meaning they give to parental involvement differs, as do their activities.

Summary

Data demonstrated that Susana, Rosa, and Lucero do value education and want their children to be successful in school. They do not perceive their role to take place in the school rather it takes place in the home. Educators expect parental involvement to include a presence in the school (Fan & Chen, 2001; Zarate, 2007). Data revealed a disconnect between Susana’s, Rosa’s, and Lucero’s perception of their role in the school and the perception of educators. Educators want the three mothers to have a presence in the school; however, Susana, Rosa, and Lucero believe their role takes place in the home. They do what they can as far as involvement in their children’s education, but ultimately rely on their cultural knowledge of a mother’s role shaped by their experiences in their native countries as discussed below.

Question 2: How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?

In this section, I summarize the overarching theme that emerged after examining data from Susana’s, Rosa’s, and Lucero’s life experiences. The theme that emerged from the data was that the social construction of parental roles in the native country shaped and informed the meaning the mothers give to their role.

Social Construction of Parental Roles in the Native Country Shaped Current Meaning

Susana, Rosa, and Lucero had varied experiences with schooling. Their educational levels differed. Susana did not attend school, Rosa attended school through sixth grade, and
Lucero graduated from high school and enrolled in bilingual secretarial program but did not complete a degree. Drawing from their own or their sibling’s experiences with school, the mothers expressed that their parents did not have a presence in the schools nor was it expected. For Susana, although she did not attend school herself, she saw how her brothers helped one another with homework or how her mother asked the school for additional assistance. It was outside the boundaries of her mother’s role to help with homework, she could not do it, but by seeking assistance from the school and members of her own family, the boys found help. Susana draws from these experiences and seeks help from teachers in the school and her daughter, Jessica. Rosa’s mother helped her with multiplication facts but did not have a presence in the school except to attend programs, to plan a party, or to help maintain the school. Parents did not enter the school to help with lessons or to volunteer on a regular basis; this type of involvement was not expected. Parents were busy with work and the teachers were responsible for teaching. Lucero received help with homework from her older sister. Her mother never came to the school nor did the school expect her to because she worked all day on the farm.

Data provided evidence that educators in Guatemala and Honduras do not expect parents to have a visible presence in the school. It was not part of the school culture or the social construction of a parent’s role in their children’s education (Gergen, 2003). Teachers had the responsibility to teach academics and parents had the responsibility to raise well-behaved children. For example, in Lucero’s school, teachers understood that her parents were busy working and did not have time to come into the school or help with homework. Thus, teachers did not invite them for regular conferences or expect them to volunteer in the school. Teachers and parents had a shared understanding that if the school did not contact the parents, their children were behaving (Gergen, 2003). Contact from the school occurred when children
misbehaved. This shared knowledge transferred to Susana, Rosa, and Lucero. They do not expect regular contact with the school nor do they feel the need to have a presence in the school. Should a teacher contact them with a behavior concern, they will support the teacher and reprimand their child. They do not initiate contact. On rare occasions, they have come into the school to attend a conference or to attend their child’s PTA program. Overall, Susana and Rosa do not take part in teaching their children the subject matter taught in the school. They derive understanding of the construct of parental involvement from the social construction of their own mother’s role in a child’s education in their native country. On the contrary, Lucero feels teaching her daughter academics and helping with homework is part of her role in the home.

Previous research demonstrated that American educators do expect an active partnership between parents and teachers (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lopéz, 2001). This is not shared knowledge among Spanish-speaking parents; therefore, they may be surprised to learn that they are expected to be active partners in their children’s academic learning and in the school. As previous research has shown, Spanish-speaking parents do not share a common understanding of parental involvement with educators. (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Hyslop, 2000; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999; Valdés, 1996). The lack of a common understanding of parental involvement between the Spanish-speaking mothers in this study and educators, in general, leads to the disconnect evident in data discussed in the first question above.

Examining the history of parental involvement in the United States sheds light on how it has transformed over the past century. The knowledge we now have of parental involvement differs from the shared knowledge in the early twenty century. Over the past decades, people have co-constructed the definition of parental involvement that we now have today (Gergen, 2009b). The shared meaning evolved over time through social interaction (Gergen, 2003).
Teachers cannot expect parents who have moved to the United States from another country to share a common understanding of a parent’s role in their children’s education. They have not had the opportunities to interact with White, middle-class parents and create this shared knowledge.

Summary

Data demonstrated that early experiences in the native country greatly influenced how Susana, Rosa, and Lucero envision their role in their own children’s education. They share knowledge with their own culture and people, which does not necessarily reflect the dominant culture of the United States (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003, Gergen, 2003, 2009a).

Historically, many people do not receive an education in Guatemala (Hong, n.d.; U.S. Department of State, 2009; World Bank, 2006) or Honduras (Merrill, 1995; Nazario, 2007), which is reflected in the high rates of illiteracy (Department of State, 2009). Based on the historical context of education in these two countries, it was not surprising to learn that Susana did not attend school or that Rosa’s education ended after sixth grade. Lucero’s education came as a surprise but it demonstrated the importance that her parents placed on going to school and explains why she is determined that her daughter receive an education. As far as parental involvement in the school, neither Guatemalan nor Honduran schools expected parents to have a visible presence in the school, which represents shared knowledge in the community (Gergen, 2003). The cultural knowledge Susana, Rosa, and Lucero bring with them regarding a mother’s role in her children’s education
Question 3: What funds of knowledge are present in the home?

Funds of Knowledge

For this section, I summarize funds of knowledge present in the homes of Susana, Rosa, and Lucero. In order to understand the meaning they give to their role, defined by U.S. school culture as parental involvement, in their children’s education, I considered household knowledge as it relates to their culture and meaning making. As I analyzed the data, I “... focuse[d] on ‘practice’, that is what it is that people do, and what they say about what they do” (González, 2005, p. 40). Data provided a link between the concept of confianza [mutual trust] and the comprehensive role it plays in their lives (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Susana, Rosa, and Lucero are determined to live in the United States and their resourcefulness and their family funds of knowledge allow them to navigate daily-lived experiences in a new country. The overarching theme that emerged from data was that reciprocity is founded on confianza.

Reciprocal Relationships Founded on Confianza

The mothers in this study all have extended family members either living in Beckham County or within a four-hour drive. Vélez-Ibáñez (1998, as cited in Moll, et al., 2005), found that exchanging resources was a reciprocal activity. Susana, Rosa, and Lucero exchange resources such as providing childcare, finding outside resources available to their children (e.g., WIC\textsuperscript{10}, pre-school), fixing broken equipment (e.g., cars, ovens, leaky windows and doors), and finding work.

The vast and varied funds of knowledge present in Susana’s, Rosa’s, and Lucero’s households provide support based on confianza. Their social network is vital to their negotiation of available services and to their needs in the United States. Many of the people in their social

\textsuperscript{10} WIC is the acronym for Women, Infants and Children, a federally-funded health and nutrition program offered to pregnant women, new mothers, infants, or children under five who meet specified income guidelines.
network moved to the United States from Guatemala, as in Susana’s case, or from Honduras, as in Rosa and Lucero’s case. As Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (2005) state,

“... social exchange between households, clusters of households, and kinship networks not only continues to provide individuals access to historic funds of knowledge, but also provides them the cultural matrix for incorporating new understandings and relationships in a ‘Mexican’ way” (p. 65).

Data provided evidence that most of the people in Susana’s, Rosa’s, and Lucero’s social networks come from their native country and funds of knowledge present in their homes acknowledge their historical and cultural background. Overall, they do not socialize with White, middle-class families; thus, they have minimal exposure to funds of knowledge present in middle-class American homes or American schools. Therefore, they interpret and make sense of their experiences in the United States and a mother’s role in her children’s education through their own cultural lens.

Susana, Rosa, and Lucero expressed the importance of their children learning English (Valdés, 1996). Susana provides videos and computer games in English for her children to support listening skills and vocabulary development. She also makes time to listen to them read aloud in English when she is not working in the evening. Rosa sent her son to an English-speaking private school prior to moving to the United States, which is where he acquired much of his English proficiency. Lucero provides videos in English and opportunities for her daughter to spend time with cousins who primarily speak English with one another.

Since the mothers only speak Spanish with their children, they are raising bilingual children. In addition to this, they expressed that they maintain contact with grandparents in Guatemala and Honduras via telephone, which provides the children with another opportunity to
communicate in and retain their native language (Tenery, 2005). Their children’s bilingualism provides a vital source of knowledge, thus adding to the family’s funds of knowledge (Moll, et al. 1992, 5005) because the children can act as interpreters and translators when the parents need to fill out forms or talk with school personnel (Valdés, 1996). Since none of the mothers speak or comprehend English, they are able to rely on their children to assist them in their daily-lived experiences in an English-speaking culture. The fact that they have worked so hard to raise trustworthy, honest children provides them with a sense of security in their belief that their children will be honest in their interpretations and translations. In a sense, their children are their link to the English-speaking world outside. They have found a way to navigate the language barrier - they can rely on their children to help them.

Since the children are bilingual, they provide vital funds of knowledge and a link to the English-speaking world. The children remain proficient in Spanish, their native language, which solidifies their relationship with their native country. However, since they are also becoming proficient in English and the mothers have instilled a strong sense of confianza in them, they are entrusted with the task of relaying messages from the school, translating other sources of written communication, and interpreting.

Summary

Despite the difference in how the mothers made sense of their role in their children’s education as compared to what the teachers expect each mother had abundant funds of knowledge in the home. They all had an extensive social network including family members and friends to assist them with navigating the school culture and daily experiences. They draw from this social network to make sense of their daily life. Family and friends support one another by providing childcare, sharing meals and celebrations, servicing cars, remodeling, and fixing small
appliances. This correlates with Moll, et al.’s (1992, 2005) definition of funds of knowledge. If educators regard the families’ knowledge as a strength, this serves to counteract deficit notions (González, 2005).
Chapter 6: Summary and Implications

*Go to the people. Learn from them, live with them. Love them. Start with what they know.*

*Build on what they have . . .* (Lao Tsu, 604 B.C.E., cited in Igoa, 1995, p. 70)

The above quote captures the essence of my theoretical framework grounded in theory from social constructionism (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2003) and funds of knowledge (Browning-Aiken, 2005; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992, 2005; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Parental involvement is a social construct that has evolved over time through dialogue and interaction in the United States. Susana, Rosa, and Lucero’s perception of their parental role in their children’s education is also a social construct shaped by social, historical, and cultural influences. As such, my theoretical framework provided an appropriate venue through which to conduct this study. As I collected and analyzed data I sought to discover how the mothers made sense of parental involvement and how they relied on funds of knowledge in the home to help them to negotiate meaning in the United States.

The overarching objective of this qualitative case study was to explore how Spanish-speaking mothers articulate their role in their children’s education. My research explored the following questions:

- How do three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of the construct of parental involvement?
- How do their life experiences shape the meaning they give to parental involvement?
- What funds of knowledge are present in the home?
Through this study, I sought to add the voices of Guatemalan and Honduran mothers to an existing body of research that focuses on Mexican parents (Carger, 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; López, 2001; Peña, 2001; Valdés, 1996). In this chapter, I present a summary of my study and implications for educators and for future research.

**Summary of the Study**

Essentially this idea for this current study began with a pilot study that I conducted in 2008. The pilot study explored perceptions of parental involvement from the perspectives of one Honduran mother, Silvia, and the school personnel who worked with her children. Based on data from this study I discovered a disconnect in the perceptions of parental involvement between Silvia and school personnel.

As I read more literature related to Latino parental involvement, I found that educators often do not regard the families of ELL students in terms of their strengths but rather in terms of what the families lack in relation to their own expectations of parental involvement (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Orozco, 2008). Perceiving parents in this way leads to viewing differences as deficiencies in need of correction so they can fit into mainstream society (Dyrness, 2007; Valdés, 1996; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Viewing Spanish-speaking parents as lacking the proper knowledge leads teachers to feel they need to teach them, in alignment with White, middle-class values, how to be parents (Lightfoot, 2004).

I narrowed the focus of this study to include only the voices of Spanish-speaking mothers from a similar socioeconomic background and chose not to include educators. Overall, I discovered that the mothers perceived that their role takes place in the home and that prior experiences in their native countries shaped this perception. The mother’s perception of their role taking place in the home contrasts with educators’ expectations that parents have a presence in
the school, which creates a cultural disconnect. I discovered a vast and varied network of family members and friends who provide reciprocal relationships and funds of knowledge. What I discovered in this study can ultimately help to inform educators about the cultural meanings Latina mothers give to their role in their children’s education. My hope is that the information presented in this study can assist in bridging the differences in the meaning Latina mothers and American educators give to a parent’s role.

Implications for Educators

No Child Left Behind (2001) stipulates that schools and parents work together to design a policy on parental involvement in order to receive federal funding under this section of the act. Parental involvement demonstrates increased academic performance in students (Barnard, 2003; Becher, 1986; Christenson et al., 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hara & Burke, 1998; Henderson, 1987; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Jones & Velez, 1997; Singh et al., 1995). However, schools report low rates of involvement among Spanish-speaking parents (Chavkin, 1993; De Gaetano, 2007; Espinosa, 1995; Finders & Lewis, 1994; Ladkey & Peterson, 2008; Moles, 1993; Olivos, 2004; Quezada et al., 2003). Thus, it is crucial that teachers look beyond their definition of the term and incorporate how Spanish-speaking mothers define their role in their children’s education (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

This examination of differences serves to broaden understandings between teachers and Spanish-speaking mothers. Prior to taking on this task, I encourage teachers to explore the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that shape the mothers’ perceptions of their role. It is not enough to attempt to fill them with White, middle-class knowledge of what constitutes a good parent and parental involvement (Lightfoot, 2004). Of particular importance, teachers should visit the homes of Spanish-speaking parents to gain a better understanding of their lives
and of funds of knowledge present in the home (González, 2005; González, et al., 2005; González, N., Moll, L., Tenery, M. F., Rivera, A., Rendón, P., Gonzales, R., et al., 2005; Moll, L., & Greenberg, J., 1990; Moll, et al., 1992, 2005). Parents bring their own cultural knowledge and understanding of parenting, which educators should acknowledge. Educators should remain reflexive and, similar to ethnographers, bracket, or set aside, their preconceived notions of what constitutes parental involvement (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Then they can examine Spanish-speaking mothers’ perceptions of a mother’s role and what they already do in their homes and bridge their findings in the context of the school. Teachers should not view the difference in the meaning they give to their role as a deficiency. They should draw from this meaning and incorporate the mothers’ strengths and cultural values into how they communicate with them.

The meaning Spanish-speaking mothers derive from parental involvement is shaped by their history and culture. Their funds of knowledge influence how they interact with their children, family members, society, and schools. If teachers work to gain an understanding of how Spanish-speaking mothers perceive their role in their children’s education, they can draw on and incorporate the mothers’ strengths into their interactions with them. This action can bridge differences in expectations and perceptions, which transforms different perspectives and shared knowledge into just that, a difference as opposed to a deficiency.

I return to the original quote with which I began this study:

*Hay tantísimas fronteras que dividen a la gente,*  
*pero por cada frontera existe también un puente.*

Gina Valdés

*There are so many borders that divide people,*  
*but for each border there also exists a bridge.*

Translated by Chris Carger (cited 1996, p. 150)
So many issues separate immigrant families from American society. Not only are we divided by language, social status, and cultural norms, we are also divided by how we make sense of our world. The socially constructed definition educators adhere to regarding what counts as parental involvement excludes many immigrants from the schools their children attend. If parents and teachers have open dialogue about how they perceive their role in their children’s education, we may one day construct a bridge to diminish the borders dividing us from each other. Through social interaction we could make sense of the world around us; in turn, through social interaction we can learn how others make sense of their worlds (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003, Gergen, 2003, 2009a).

Implications for Future Research

This study provides vital information with regard to how three Spanish-speaking mothers from Guatemala and Honduras perceive their role in their children’s education. It demonstrates the differences between their perception and that of teachers, offers insight into historical and cultural factors that influence their perception, and illustrates the vast funds of knowledge present in the home. This study provided evidence of a cultural disconnect between how Spanish-speaking mothers and American teachers view parental involvement. Further research is necessary to examine how parents and teachers can negotiate this cultural disconnect. How can teachers respect the cultural aspect of Spanish-speaking parents’ construction of parental involvement while also respecting literature that demonstrates a correlation between parental involvement as defined by school personnel and increased academic performance?

Since this study focused on Spanish-speaking mothers from a similar socioeconomic background, further research needs to be conducted to determine whether Spanish-speaking mothers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds also exhibit a cultural disconnect from school
personnel in the United States in their construction of parental involvement. Lareau (1989) conducted a study with parents in a White, working-class school and parents in a White, middle-class school, a similar study among Spanish-speaking parents would provide an interesting comparison. There is a gap in literature comparing people from different social classes and racial groups (Laureau, 2008). A future study could be to examine perceptions of parental involvement among ELL parents originating from different countries (e.g., Vietnam and Mexico) and different social classes. Lastly, a study examining Spanish-speaking fathers’ perceptions of their role in their children’s education would add a new dimension to the available research on parental involvement.

Personal Reflection

This study provided vital information about how three Spanish-speaking mothers make sense of their role in their children’s education. Of primary importance to me is the fact that data demonstrated that they do not share a common understanding of the term with American educators. This does not signify a deficiency in the mothers or in the home, rather it signifies a difference in perception and construction of what a mother’s role is in her children’s education. Susana, Rosa, and Lucero draw from experiences and shared knowledge in their native country to make sense of their roles and they bring this knowledge with them as they try to navigate life in a new country.

As their children’s teacher, I cannot assume they share my knowledge of parental involvement nor can I assume that they want to be involved in ways that the school deems appropriate. As I begin a new academic school year with their children, I will continue to visit their homes in an attempt to broaden my understanding of their cultural knowledge and the funds of knowledge in their homes. The mothers and I have sown the initial seeds of a relationship
based on *confianza* [mutual trust] and I will continue to nurture this relationship by fostering communication that is reciprocal (Moll, 2005).
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Appendix A

Pre-interview Personal Information

Name: __________________________

Where were you born (city and country)?

When were you born?

Did you live in a city or rural area?

When did you move to Beckham County?

Why did you move to the United States?

What is your native language?

Until what age and/or grade did you attend school?
Appendix B

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

IRB Study #_____________________

Title of Study: Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-Speaking mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement

Investigators: Dr. Gresilda Tilley-Lubbs (glubbs@vt.edu) (540) 231-8495; Stephanie Sebolt (ssebolt@vt.edu) (540) 375-2930

I am inviting you to participate in my research project. The purpose of this study is to identify how you describe your role in your children’s education.

If you choose to be in this study, you will be one of three participants.

Procedures
This study will take place from September, 2009 through February, 2010. I will interview you three times for approximately 1 hour each time. There may be follow-up interviews in the future. I would like to audio-record our interview so I can remember every detail. Also, I would like to ask your permission to have an interpreter present to better understand each other. I will only use the tape to transcribe the interview, and the tape will be destroyed as soon as possible. For the final report I would like you to choose a nickname in order to stay anonymous. I will use this name in all the paperwork. In this way no one will know about whom we are talking.

I also ask that you allow me to spend a minimum of three hours, at your convenience, observing you and your family within your home or at community events.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate, I will ask questions about life in your country and how you see your role in your children’s education. I will use information from this study to write a report, possibly to be used as materials for presentation at conferences and/or for publication.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any explanation or prejudice. The information collected, any records and reports written up until the point of your withdrawal will be turned over to you.

Your children, my ELL students, will in no way be affected by whether or not you choose to take part in this study.
**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

There are no direct benefits to you. However, by sharing your thoughts, you are allowing educators like me to better understand your role in your children’s education. I personally believe that it is important to share this information which may not be widely known or appreciated.

**What are the possible risks involved from being in this study?**

There should be minimum risks for you participating in this project. You have the right to answer or decline any question if you would like. If you would like to stop the interview or tape recording at any time, you are free to do so. I would like you to ask me when you do not understand a question or the objective of a question. If you feel a question is too personal, you do not have to answer it. If you choose not to answer or participate in the interview or the study, it will not affect your life in any way.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

You will NOT be identified in any report or publication about this study. Your real name will not be used. Instead, you and any other person and place names will be given pseudonyms. I will do everything possible to keep things confidential. However, I have to explain to you that sometimes, despite all my efforts, your identity can be compromised. For that reason, after finishing the study all audiotaped wills be destroyed.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at (540) 231-4606. Information may also be obtained by visiting their website at www.irb.vt.edu

**Freedom to Withdraw**
You are free to leave from participating in this study at any time. In this case, I will only ask you to inform me that you do not want to participate in this study anymore. By signing this consent form you are verifying that you have read and understood the Informed Consent, and the terms and conditions of this project. You are also saying that I answered any questions you might have had about the project and your participation. Finally, you accept that you are a voluntary participant; you have consented to let me use any information I obtained in the final paper and in any oral or written presentations, so long as your anonymity is protected. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw without any problem at any time.

**Participant’s Agreement:**
I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

________________________  ____________________
Signature of Research Participant  Date

________________________
Printed Name of Research Participant

________________________  ____________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date

________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent
Appendix C

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Parental Permission for Parent Participation in Observations

IRB Study #09-696

Title of Study: Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-Speaking mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement

Investigators: Dr. Gresilda Tilley-Lubbs (glubbs@vt.edu) (540) 231-8495; Stephanie Sebolt (ssebolt@vt.edu) (540) 375-2930

Purpose

I am inviting you to participate in my research project. The purpose of this study is to identify how you describe your role in your children’s education.

If you choose to be in this study, you will be one of three participants.

Procedures

This study will take place from September, 2009 through March, 2010. I would like to interview you three times for approximately 1 hour each time. There may be follow-up interviews in the future. I would like to audio-record our interview so I can remember every detail. Also, I would like to ask your permission to have an interpreter present to better understand each other. I will only use the tape to transcribe the interview. For the final report I would like you to choose a nickname in order to stay anonymous. I will use this name in all the paperwork. In this way no one will know about whom we are talking.

I also ask that you allow me to spend a minimum of three hours, at your convenience, observing you and your family within your home or at community events.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate, I will ask questions about life in your country and how you see your role in your children’s education. I will use information from this study to write a report, possibly to be used as materials for presentation at conferences and/or for publication.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any explanation or prejudice. The information collected, any records and reports written up until the point of your withdrawal will be turned over to you.

Your children, my ELL students, will in no way be affected by whether or not you choose to take part in this study.
What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
There are no direct benefits to you. However, by sharing your thoughts, you are allowing educators like me to better understand your role in your children’s education. I personally believe that it is important to share this information which may not be widely known or appreciated.

What are the possible risks involved from being in this study?
There should be minimum risks for you participating in this project. You have the right to answer or decline any question if you would like. If you would like to stop the interview or tape recording at any time, you are free to do so. I would like you to ask me when you do not understand a question or the objective of a question. If you feel a question is too personal, you do not have to answer it. If you choose not to answer or participate in the interview or the study, it will not affect your life in any way.

How will your privacy be protected?
You will NOT be identified in any report or publication about this study. Your real name will not be used. Instead, you and any other person and place names will be given pseudonyms. I will do everything possible to keep things confidential. However, I have to explain to you that sometimes, despite all my efforts, your identity can be compromised. For that reason, after finishing the study all audiotapes will be destroyed.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at (540) 231-4606. Information may also be obtained by visiting their website at www.irb.vt.edu

Freedom to Withdraw
You are free to leave from participating in this study at any time. In this case, I will only ask you to inform me that you do not want to participate in this study anymore. By signing this consent
form you are verifying that you understood the Informed Consent and your responsibilities. You are also saying that I answered any questions you might have had about the project and your participation. Finally, you accept that you are a voluntary participant; you have consented to let me use any information I obtained in the final paper and in any oral or written presentations, so long as your anonymity is protected. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw without any problem at any time.

**Participant’s Agreement:**
I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that Stephanie Sebolt will observe in my home for 1 – ½ hours two times during this study. I understand that she will collect data from these observations to use in her write up of the study. I understand that if at any time I feel uncomfortable during an observation, I may stop the observation.

____________________________________  __________________
Name of Mother                              Date

____________________________________
Signature of Mother

____________________________________  __________________
Name of Father                              Date

____________________________________
Signature of Father

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone (540) 231-4991; email moored@vt.edu; address: Office of Research Compliance, 2000 Kent Drive, Suite 2000 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24060
Appendix D

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Parental Permission for Child/Children Participation in Observations

IRB Study #09-696

Title of Study: Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-Speaking mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement

Investigators: Dr. Gresilda Tilley-Lubbs (glubbs@vt.edu) (540) 231-8495; Stephanie Sebolt (ssebolt@vt.edu) (540) 375-2930

Purpose
I am inviting you to participate in my research project. The purpose of this study is to identify how you describe your role in your children’s education.

If you choose to be in this study, you will be one of three participants.

Procedures
This study will take place from September, 2009 through March, 2010. I would like to interview you three times for approximately 1 hour each time. There may be follow-up interviews in the future. I would like to audio-record our interview so I can remember every detail. Also, I would like to ask your permission to have an interpreter present to better understand each other. I will only use the tape to transcribe the interview. For the final report I would like you to choose a nickname in order to stay anonymous. I will use this name in all the paperwork. In this way no one will know about whom we are talking.

I also ask that you allow me to spend a minimum of three hours, at your convenience, observing you and your family within your home or at community events.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate, I will ask questions about life in your country and how you see your role in your children’s education. I will use information from this study to write a report, possibly to be used as materials for presentation at conferences and/or for publication.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any explanation or prejudice. The information collected, any records and reports written up until the point of your withdrawal will be turned over to you.

Your children, my ELL students, will in no way be affected by whether or not you choose to take part in this study.
What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
There are no direct benefits to you. However, by sharing your thoughts, you are allowing educators like me to better understand your role in your children’s education. I personally believe that it is important to share this information which may not be widely known or appreciated.

What are the possible risks involved from being in this study?
There should be minimum risks for you participating in this project. You have the right to answer or decline any question if you would like. If you would like to stop the interview or tape recording at any time, you are free to do so. I would like you to ask me when you do not understand a question or the objective of a question. If you feel a question is too personal, you do not have to answer it. If you choose not to answer or participate in the interview or the study, it will not affect your life in any way.

How will your privacy be protected?
You will NOT be identified in any report or publication about this study. Your real name will not be used. Instead, you and any other person and place names will be given pseudonyms. I will do everything possible to keep things confidential. However, I have to explain to you that sometimes, despite all my efforts, your identity can be compromised. For that reason, after finishing the study all audiotapes will be destroyed.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at (540) 231-4606. Information may also be obtained by visiting their website at www.irb.vt.edu

Freedom to Withdraw
You are free to leave from participating in this study at any time. In this case, I will only ask you to inform me that you do not want to participate in this study anymore. By signing this consent
form you are verifying that you understood the Informed Consent and your responsibilities. You are also saying that I answered any questions you might have had about the project and your participation. Finally, you accept that you are a voluntary participant; you have consented to let me use any information I obtained in the final paper and in any oral or written presentations, so long as your anonymity is protected. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw without any problem at any time.

**Participant’s Agreement:**
I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
I understand that Stephanie Sebolt will observe in my home for 1 – ½ hours two times during this study. I give permission for my child/children to participate in all observations during the study. I understand that she will collect data from these observations to use in her write up of the study. I understand that if at any time I feel uncomfortable during an observation, I may stop the observation.

| _______________________________ | ______________ |
| Name of Mother                  | Date           |
| _______________________________ |
| Signature of Mother             |
| _______________________________ | ______________ |
| Name of Father                  | Date           |
| _______________________________ |
| Signature of Father             |

If I should have any questions about the protection of human research participants regarding this study, I may contact Dr. David Moore, Chair Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, telephone (540) 231-4991; email moored@vt.edu; address: Office of Research Compliance, 2000 Kent Drive, Suite 2000 (0497), Blacksburg, VA 24060
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Child Assent Form

IRB Study #09-696

Title of Study: Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-speaking mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement

Investigators: Gresilda Tilley-Lubbs (glubbs@vt.edu); Stephanie Sebolt (ssebolt@vt.edu) (540) 375-2930

I am working on a paper for college. I want to learn about your mother’s role in your learning and about things that you do at home. I am going to come to your house to visit two times for 1 to 1 ½ hours. I want to spend time with your family. If you do not want to visit with me while I am at your house, I will try to arrange my visits during a time when you are not at home.

Taped verbal assent of Child/Children

_____ Yes

_____ No
Appendix F

Memo #8

Stephanie: Y ahora ¿Cuál es tu trabajo con la educación de tus hijos?

Rosa: Preguntarles acerca de la tareas. Yo no les puedo dar mucho por el inglés pero cuando él me dice mamá quieres ver que palabra es igual a esta y yo averiguo le digo cual es igual.

Stephanie: Te leen ellos en voz alta?

Rosa: A veces él le lee a su hermanitas en voz alta y luego les traduce la historia en español.

Stephanie: ¿Cómo describirías el papel del profesor en la educación de tus hijos?

Rosa: Lo que a mí me gustaría es que si hay un problema con él por ejemplo que no entienda algo “mire su hijo no entiende esto”, me gustaría que me lo dijeran. [hijo] como cuando no entendí la operación matemática de la resta.

Stephanie: Now what do you, how would you describe your role in your kids’ education?

Rosa: Ask them about their homework, sometimes I can, I can’t help very much because of the English, but sometimes I can figure out some words and how they’re similar. And I check their homework.

Stephanie: Do they ever read to you?

Rosa: Sometime he will read to the little sisters out loud in English and translate into Spanish.

Stephanie: How would you describe the teacher’s role. What is the role of the teacher in your kids’ education?

Rosa: I want to know if there is any problem or concern for instance with him, or if he is not understanding something and they say “Listen, your son does not understand this” I would like for them to tell me.

Rosa believes her role is to ask her children about homework. She will help if she can but has difficulty because of the language barrier. Previously she told me that her mother helped her with what she could. She defines her role based on experiences with her mother’s role in her education. She states that the teacher’s role is to let her know if her
son is having difficulties with schoolwork. She says she will help him if she knows about the problem. I wonder how she would do that though since she doesn’t know the English necessary to help her son. I guess if she understood what he needed help on in Spanish she could explain some things to her son in Spanish. But, that means she would have to understand the content he is being taught in class.

She needs a translator if the teacher called her in. Well, then she says just to tell her son and he can tell her what is going on. That’s a LOT of trust to have in one’s 10 year old son. Amazing, how did she teach her son to be so responsible? This is something I need to follow up on. Her son acts as a liaison between the school and her for any type of communication - again this is a lot of responsibility for her son. Utilizing her son’s proficiency in English to inform her of what is happening in the school is an important fund of knowledge. (10/28/09)
Appendix G

Interview Protocol for

Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-Speaking Mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement

Interviewer: _______________________ Interviewee: ___________________________

Time: ________________________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________________

Introductions

Overview of project: I am conducting a qualitative research project entitled "Negotiating Meaning: How Spanish-Speaking Mothers Make Sense of the Construct of Parental Involvement". The purpose of this study is to identify what you feel your role is in your children’s education.

Answer any questions the participant may have.

Begin audio recording

- Test the audio-recording device - have participant count from 1 to 10 in normal voice
- Record the participant’s response and then play it back to ensure quality and that the device is functioning properly
- Inform the participant that the study will begin when start recording

Begin with Interview Questions
Appendix H

Interview Questions

Interview #1

1. Describe to me the town/city/village where you grew up.
2. Tell me about life in the town/city/village where you grew up.
3. Describe the school you went to.
4. Describe your experience with school.
5. Tell me about the role your mother had in your school.
6. Tell me any activities that she did in the school.
7. Tell me any activities she did with you outside of the school.
8. Tell me about your experience moving to the United States.

Interview #2

Review notes from interview #1.

1. Describe your experience enrolling your child in school.
2. Describe your role in your children’s education (in the home, at school).
3. Describe the teacher’s role in your children’s education.
4. Describe activities that you do with your children at home (daily life in your home).
5. What types of things do you teach your children to do? What responsibilities do they have?
6. Describe contact you have with the school.
7. Describe contact you have with their teachers.
8. Describe how you communicate with the school.
9. How do you know what your children are doing in school?
10. How do you know what they have for homework?
11. Describe how they do their homework.
12. Talk to me about difficulties you have communicating with the school.