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**Mothers of Mexican Origin Within Day-to-Day Parent Involvement:  
Agency & Spanish Language Maintenance**

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**Mothers of Mexican Origin Within Day-to-Day Parent Involvement:**

**Agency & Spanish Language Maintenance**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

A La Virgen Milagrosa...

Quien me guía en todo y me llena la vida con milagros.

A mi madre, María Rosa Vázquez...

Quien me guió con su amor, su ejemplo, su valor, y su pasión para la vida.

A todas las madres...

Quienes dan tanto de su ser por el bienestar de sus familias.

¡Gracias!

To the Miraculous Virgen...

Who guides me in everything and fills my life with miracles.

To my mother, María Rosa Vázquez...

Who guided me with her love, her example, her courage, and her passion for life.

To all mothers...

Who give so much of themselves for the wellbeing of their families.

Thank you!

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I would like to thank the mothers, teachers, and Sonoma ISD personnel that I interviewed and observed, for sharing so much of themselves and allowing me to be the recipient of their treasured lived experiences. Their stories touched my heart and mind. They inspired me to explore myself as a person and as a human being. There is a special person that I would also like to acknowledge, my husband Charlie Andrews, whose unconditional love and support were instrumental in my passage through this dissertation process with my sanity still intact. Clarena Larrotta and Kimberley Cuero have been my intellectual companions, my soul sisters, and my friends throughout the doctoral program. I cannot imagine going through it without them. They were my emotional, mental, and spiritual support during the most challenging stages of the doctoral program. I am glad that spirit brought us together Clare and Kim.

Of course, there are many friends, family, and colleagues who helped keep me moving forward during the dissertation process. Thank you for your prayers.

## **Preface**

I have written this dissertation into nine chapters divided into four parts. In Part I, I include the first three chapters that discuss the study. In Chapter 1, I provide an overview of the social practice theory of agency offered by Dorothy Holland and her colleagues (1998) which provides the theoretical lens through which I examined Latina mothers' agency within parent involvement and its implications for Spanish language maintenance. In Chapter 2, I review the literature on parent involvement and Spanish language maintenance to help the reader understand where this study is situated within the research discourses it draws upon. Utilizing Holland, et. al.'s theoretical framework, I can consider "parent involvement" as a figured world with its own actors, rules, etc. and the Spanish language as a cultural resource for some Latina/os who exert agency and cultural innovation to maintain it. Thus, it is important to review how parent involvement and Spanish language maintenance have been "figured" within the research literature. In the third chapter of Part I, I address methodological issues and my own reflections as a Latina researcher working with Latina women.

In Parts II and III, which are data chapters, I describe the findings of this study. In Part II, I build the context of the study by discussing the history of the community of Sonoma in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 5, the Sonoma Independent School District (ISD) context and how Sonoma ISD figures the world of parent involvement. In Part III, I provide in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, the case studies of three Latina mothers: Esther, Laura, and Anna to illustrate how Latina mothers' agency within parent involvement and their views toward Spanish language maintenance are expressed over time in the individual lives of these women. Finally in Part IV, I offer the final chapter that highlights the key

findings across the mothers of Mexican origin and provides the implications of this research.

**Mothers of Mexican Origin Within Day-to-Day Parent Involvement:  
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This study's purpose was to explore the impact of the daily school interactions of mothers of Mexican origin on the Spanish language maintenance of their young children. Using a social practice theory of agency (Holland, et al., 1998), research data was generated from interviews with teachers, administrators, and Latina mothers; supplemented by mothers' journals, anecdotal records of home/school observations, district policies and school's correspondence to participating mothers, local historical records, and the researcher's log. The two research questions guiding the study were: 1) How do these mothers of Mexican origin enact agency within parent involvement

situated in Sonoma's historical race and language context?; and 2) How do their language ideologies and views toward Spanish language maintenance express themselves for these mothers as they interact within parent involvement?

This was a two-year qualitative study using ethnographic methods conducted in a community in South Central Texas. The three case study mothers, all of Mexican origin, participated over a five month period in a series of six to ten-weekly interviews about their daily experiences with parent involvement in the schools. In addition, data collected on the school district's general parent involvement policies and practices provided the backdrop from which to understand the 'parent involvement discourse' of this district and the community/district historical records depicted the school's/community's race and language history as the context for Latina's current involvement in schools.

During these mothers' interactions, they encountered a school 'discourse' founded on a white, middle class perspective of parent involvement that promoted deficit views of immigrant Latinas/os. Both U.S. born and immigrant mothers' utilized their social and cultural resources to exert agency in their parent involvement efforts to maintain their children on the path they determined necessary for their success and at times to mediate the dominant discourse faced in schools. These efforts included the use of *consejos*, *experiencias de la vida*, and *el buen ejemplo*. The level of active support for bilingualism shown by the leadership on a school campus impacted Latina mothers' views toward the maintenance of Spanish for their children. Implications of these findings for policymakers and educators are offered.

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**PART I**

**THE STUDY**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As children enter school, so do their parents. They are learners themselves, developing alongside their children, and undergoing transitions with them. Parents interact within schools and respond to what they find there based on the historical, social and cultural factors that impact them at a given moment in time. Schools, as all social institutions, function as society's socialization agents within which collective ideas of what is a good education and how a good parent should be involved in their children's schooling are prescribed and reinforced. Rather than recognize the resources children who are culturally and linguistically diverse and their families bring to schools, many U.S. schools perpetuate the hegemony of English (Shannon, 1995; Gramsci, 1971) and the view that those who do not meet mainstream ideals are deficient or "at risk" in some way (Valencia, 1997). These deficit views and the school practices that reinforce them can challenge culturally and linguistically diverse parents' beliefs about themselves, their involvement in schools, and the efforts needed to help their children succeed.

Like all parents, mothers of Mexican origin<sup>1</sup> come with a range of experiences and personal histories. In addition, they bring their unique cultural and linguistic orientations based on their existence in the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1999), a space beyond geographic borders, where being of Mexican origin within an American context is negotiated. When mothers of Mexican origin enter the world of school parent

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term Mexican origin to refer to those who trace their ancestry to Mexico. This includes those who have just recently arrived from Mexico and those who were born in the U.S. and whose families have lived here for multiple generations.

involvement, they, as their children, are confronted with the mainstream dominant discourse perpetuated by schools about the hegemony of English and the valuing of white, middle class definitions of parent involvement such as those discussed by Epstein (1995). In the process, a negotiation through interaction within the school context begins. During these interactions within school parent involvement, subtle shifts in identity and values can occur over time that may lead to changes in what mothers of Mexican origin reinforce as important for their children's education and future success, including the role of Spanish. By better understanding the day-to-day parent involvement of mothers of Mexican origin within a context-rich description of the key social, cultural, and historical factors within the community in which they live, I have gained insight into how the sociocultural factors of school and community impact the value mothers of Mexican origin place on their children gaining or retaining Spanish.

To best address the complexity of issues and factors involved in Spanish language maintenance, I draw from traditions in demography, sociology, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and education. Based on a qualitative perspective that is influenced by elements of interpretivist and Latina/o family research approaches, I conducted this two year study using ethnographic methods that included naturalistic individual interviews conducted over five months with mothers of Mexican origin. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with Bilingual/ESL teachers who having over twenty years experience in the Sonoma school district, served as oral historians of the district's key events on issues related to Latina/os and the use of Spanish in the schools. I supplemented this information with home and school observations, and reviews of school and community historical documents.

## ***BACKGROUND***

Empiezo en el idioma que mi bisabuela y mi madre me motivaron a aprender. De esta manera, les comunico mi posición como una mujer de origen mexicano que ha mantenido con orgullo y trabajo su idioma, español, como una parte integral de quien soy como persona. Aunque a veces mi idioma se esconde de mí y yo de él, nos seguimos encontrando.

I begin in the language that my great-grandmother and my mother motivated me to learn. In this way, I communicate to you my position as a woman of Mexican origin who has with pride and great effort maintained her language, Spanish, as an integral part of who I am as a person. Even though at times my language hides from me or me from it, we continue to find each other.

I am one of more than 35.3 million Latina/os in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). As a bilingual individual, I have a close attachment to this field of study. I have lived in communities in Texas where bilingualism was nurtured and supported and in communities where bilingualism was valued in the workplace, but not in schools. I have Latina/o friends who are not bilingual. I also have many other Latina/o friends and family members who are bilingual, but have not developed biliteracy. I sought to better understand the complex sociocultural factors that are known to impact bilingualism.

My work in early childhood education and as an educator for Latina/o parents exposed me largely to mothers in the process of making decisions about their children's education. What I noticed was that as their children entered public school they were faced with strong influences and critical choices about the role of Spanish for their children in school. A key part of that decision was determining whether to enroll their children in bilingual education or 'regular education' conducted in English. I heard mothers' hopes and fears for their children's education. They spoke of wanting a better life and better opportunities for their children. For some that ultimately meant

encouraging their children to speak only English and for others it meant holding firmly to Spanish as they encouraged their children to learn both languages. I became curious about this intersection between mothers and schools and the resulting choices voiced by mothers about Spanish for their children.

I am an American of Mexican origin living in South Central Texas. In my family, my “American-ness” and my “Mexican-ness” are defined both by generational status and my English and Spanish proficiency. I am defined both by the most recent generation that arrived from México (after the Mexican Revolution and corresponding economic collapse of 1910) and the oldest generation to arrive from Spain and marry Mexican residents in what is now Texas (back in the 1790’s), as well as how fully I have developed my English and maintained my Spanish. Which of these facts I choose to highlight to others, depends on whether I am trying to make a case for my “American-ness” or my “Mexican-ness.” Today, perhaps, I am making a case for both. I understand that creating this dichotomy is considered problematic in some academic circles due to it being seen as essentializing my identities; but for me it reflects a reality of two primary dialogues that co-exist within me through which all other dialogues get filtered. This has led me to what is referred to as the ‘third space’ (Gutiérrez, K. et. al., 1999), where an opportunity for new forms opens up when seemingly opposite or contradictory elements meet and interact. Within this ‘third space’, I have had ongoing opportunities to re-negotiate my identities which are ultimately expressed in response to this dichotomy in many different ways. It is here that I find myself acting on and simultaneously resisting the voices of my mother, my great-grandmother, and other females in my family who continue to influence my ideas of who I am, what’s important, and how I should relate to

the events in my life. My memories include: the whispered words of wisdom from my great-grandmother that emphasized never forgetting “proper” Spanish, as she refused to learn English and later expressed her regret at not having made the attempt; the use of Spanish in addition to English by my mother even when in environments where she was the sole Spanish speaker; the financial sacrifices made by my mother (a single parent) to take me and my siblings on yearly trips to México even if we had to go without utilities for a while; and the time we spent with family on those trips that reinforced not just the Spanish language but the intangible glory and pride of being able to speak it in addition to English.

These experiences have led me to recognize the incredible impact that mothers in families have, particularly my mother who has had and continues to have influence on my identity and the value I place on English and Spanish. These experiences have also made me very aware that mothers don’t enter schools in a vacuum, but rather bring their past experiences and histories into the schools. Every moment that they respond and interact within the dominant discourse present in schools, they draw on those past experiences and their present resources to make meaning of who they are and what’s important. I sought to better understand how this happens and what it means for the maintenance of Spanish in children of Mexican origin.

In the following section I will provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings that I utilized to help frame this research. I will then review the rationale, purpose and research questions that guided this study.

## ***THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK***

Sociocultural theory espouses that a proper understanding of a phenomenon such as language maintenance has to take into account broad social, cultural, and historic trends (Wertsch, 1991; Warschauer, 1997). This means there are larger cultural themes and purposes that give meaning to the isolated actions of individuals. In the case of young Latina/o children, their likelihood of developing Spanish is partially dependent on the actions of their mothers. In turn, the actions of their mothers are influenced by the larger context of the community in which they reside, the school their children attend, their access and use of capital (Diamond, 2001), and other sociocultural factors. In attempting to make sense of the data from my pilot study with one mother of Mexican origin, I found myself drawn to the work of Holland and her colleagues (1998). Their work forms the basis for the theoretical framework that undergirds this study.

Holland and colleagues (1998) build upon and move beyond two central approaches –the culturalist and the constructivist- to understand people’s actions and possibilities. In the past, cultural studies have been hindered by the conceptual dilemma of having to choose either a culturalist or constructivist lens through which to conceptualize the person and their actions. The culturalist perspective sees the person as the bearer of cultural events and conditions that have been collectively passed on to them through group cultural norms. These cultural norms are acted upon no matter who they interact with or what situations surround the interactions. From the culturalist perspective, the self is seen as an essentialized self that is set in place through childhood socialization practices that establish core cultural values of a collective cultural group that direct behavior (Holland, et. al. 1998). The constructivist perspective, in contrast, views

the person as an instrument and outcome to social interactions that occur in situations. The person is seen in relation to the social positioning that goes on in social interactions and is motivated to action by concerns about positioning. The self is thus, according to constructivists, defined by the social positions pushed by relations of power and influence among the particular people with whom one interacts. According to Holland et. al. (1998), either of these views is problematic because neither approach places sufficient emphasis on an individual's agency and cultural innovations. To illustrate the distinct explanation offered by these two approaches, Holland, et. al., provides the example of Gyanumaya, a lower caste woman living in Naudada, Nepal.

In Naudada, people of lower caste, seen as pollution to those of higher caste, are usually prohibited from entering the houses or handling the food or cooking for those of higher caste. When one of Holland's colleagues wanted to interview Gyanumaya on the balcony of her second floor home, Gyanumaya scaled the outside of the house rather than go through the kitchen and the first floor of the house of someone deemed by Nepalese to be of higher caste. Culturalists' explanation for Gyanumaya's actions was centered in the cultural significance she had learned from childhood to attribute to caste and pollution. From the constructivist perspective, the explanation for her behavior was attributed to her response to the people of higher caste present at that moment during that social interaction. She was conforming to the social positioning imposed on her by her caste. For Holland and her colleagues (1998), their objective in moving beyond these two positions is clear.

This is our objective here: to respect humans as social and cultural creatures and therefore bounded, yet to recognize the processes whereby human collectives and

individuals often move themselves-led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness... (p. 6-7)

Thus, the particular sociocultural framework described by them explores the person and their actions framed primarily within the works of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Bourdieu to form what may be called a social practice theory of agency that is “specific to practices and activities situated in historically contingent, socially enacted, culturally constructed ‘worlds’” such as the ‘worlds’ of romance, academia, Alcoholics Anonymous, and in this case parent involvement (Holland, et. al., 1998, p.7). Returning to the case of Gyanumaya, Holland et. al.’s theoretical positioning offers an explanation for her actions that is focused on the action itself-her improvisation of scaling the outside of the house. Looking at both culture and subject position while also considering the cultural productions created in the moment, we are able to look at how and for what purpose these artifacts of cultural innovation might be used. Holland et. al (1998), allow us to see the self as not just a product of culture or at the effect of social interactions but also as agents who produce and acquire cultural products that affect change. The following sections will provide an overview of the key elements of Holland, et. al.’s theoretical framework as it relates to this study: agency in figured worlds. Within these discussions, I will highlight the particular contributions of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Bourdieu to Holland et. al’s conceptualizations of these concepts.

### ***Agency in Figured Worlds***

***Agency.*** Agency (the capacity to imagine, create, and respond) occurs, utilizing social and cultural resources, while situated in a particular social position related to others

(positionality) in a particular figured world. It often produces cultural innovations that may serve in the next moment as cultural resources for the next act of agency. Thus, figured worlds provide the context through which people exert agency (Holland, et. al., 1998). Agency occurs within the ‘space of authoring’ discussed by Holland and her colleagues. These ideas stem directly from Bakhtin’s concept of authorship that constructs the person as in dialogue with the world. According to Bakhtin, if we are alive we are engaged in answering what is directed at us. However the form of the answer and response are not predetermined. Agency comes in two forms: a) improvisations within this space of authoring and b) through self directed symbolizations. The first form of agency is in the improvisations that people create when they mediate their positions within particular situations by the cultural resources, or as Vygotsky refers to them-artifacts, that happen to be on hand. As an individual becomes continually involved in a particular figured world, dialogic exchanges create a space for agency through improvisations that allow them to (re)author the figured world within which they find themselves as well as their status within it. As Holland, et. al. (1998) state: “A figured world is formed and re-formed” (p.53). Agency through these improvisational acts involves individuals drawing together the social and cultural resources/capital available in a given moment in response to present problems or circumstances that necessitate adapting one’s actions to further one’s immediate interests (Holland, et. al., 1998).

It is Vygotsky’s focus on the human ability to play with symbols that enables Holland et al (1998) to link Bourdieu’s ‘space of practice’ with Bakhtin’s ‘space of authoring’ to describe the second kind of agency: self directed symbolizations. People use symbols to organize and manage their own and others’ behavior. This can occur

even in their physical absence. It is for this reason that it is important to think about how cultural resources are used. Remembered songs, the use of a particular language, recreations of one's story, can be used purposively to redirect oneself toward new action and to cast oneself in a new light within a figured world. Taking into account both forms of agency enables us to examine how new worlds and new identities are being created through tools with which individuals and groups manage one another and their own behavior. Due to the interconnectedness of the concepts of a) figured worlds, b) positionality, and c) social/cultural resources and their necessity for our understanding of agency, it is essential that I more clearly describe each of these three concepts.

***Figured World.*** A figured world is an 'as if' world; a figurative world that is organized and created through a socially constructed, collective, common understanding. It is a space that is "established imaginatively" that is only perceived when situated within it and experiencing its rules (Holland et. al, 1998, p.53). It is recognized by the inclusion of particular characters and is defined by the valuing of certain acts and particular outcomes over others (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 52). For example, Holland et. al. describe the figured world of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) where members are those with 'drinking problems'. Some of the valued acts within this figured world are attending AA meetings, talking about your life before AA, collecting tokens for remaining sober, and naming yourself as an alcoholic rather than a 'drinker.' A valued outcome is remaining sober and continuing membership in the figured world of AA.

Figured worlds are also socially organized and reproduced at a particular historical time. Figured worlds are lived through in day-to-day activities and practices. These figured worlds, when first encountered by the individual, are imagined as being a

particular way, with particular conceptions of the recognized characters, the significance of certain acts, and the outcomes that are valued. But, from the first moment of interaction within this figured world, an individual knowingly or unknowingly either accommodates or challenges the precepts of this figured world based on various influences that converge in everyday activities. Some are influences that stretch from our historical ties to a past we may not even remember but have incorporated subtly into our perceptions – our social memories (González, 2001). Other influences are structural, coming from the social structures and roles into which we place ourselves or have been placed in. As Holland explains, all individuals enter or are recruited into various figured worlds over the course of their lives. But their actions, perceptions, and lived experience within those figured worlds evolve differently for each of them. This is because within the social interactions which occur within these figured worlds, participant’s social positions matter.

***Power and Positionality.*** The negotiation of power, status, relative privilege, and entitlement are an aspect of figured worlds. The constraints or freedom felt within a particular figured world is mediated by how one identifies one’s position in relation to others. For example, in a school, making decisions about whether to speak to the principal, or run for a PTA office would be different for a Spanish-speaking immigrant parent versus a parent who is also a teacher at the school. The parent who is a teacher at the school is positioned as a colleague and thus has more freedom and opportunity to speak to the principal. Social categories (gender, class, race, and ethnicity) can have meaning across many figured worlds (i.e., school, home, community) as in the present study. These social categories “separate those who are routinely privileged from those

who are not.” (Holland, et. al., 1998, p. 130) They are however not necessarily made hegemonic in a particular figured world.

It is through cultural artifacts that positions in particular figured worlds are claimed. Cultural artifacts or resources can be available across a number of figured worlds at once to position oneself and others. According to Holland, et. al. (1998),

What interests us is the processes of development over the long term. The long term, however, happens through day-to-day encounters and is built, again and again, by means of artifacts, or indices of positioning, that newcomers gradually learn to identify and then possibly to identify themselves with-either positively or negatively, through either acceptance or rejection. (p. 133)

Simply because one is offered a particular social position in a figured world however, does not mean one has to fulfill it. Through participation and the development of expertise within a figured world over time, one can move beyond the social positions they find themselves situated within. Since cultural resources are marked by social position, Bakhtin suggests that individuals can exert agency through these cultural resources by rearranging them so as to situate oneself in another social position within the same figured world. An individual with agency can learn to refuse positions and instead create positions they like. It is Vygotsky’s ideas related to semiotic mediation that Holland draws on to further expand her ideas on positionality.

Vygotsky attended to the role of tangible objects as tools people use to affect each other and their social positions. These tools are made into artifacts by attributing meaning to them. According to Vygotsky, through repeated use of these cultural tools they become cultural resources available for personal use in directing one’s own behavior and that of others: resources for exerting agency. The impact of cultural resources changes over time in ways that are marked by the political struggles and social valuation

of their users. One can use the same semiotic mediation devices (cultural resources) that may have served to reproduce structural inequities to exert agency, create resistance to the status quo, and/or establish change.

*Social and Cultural Resources/Capital.* The concept of cultural capital was originally expanded upon by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). He describes three forms of cultural capital: embodied (i.e., knowledge); objectified (i.e., material objects); and institutionalized (i.e., credentials, degrees). In this study, I draw upon Petrón's (2004) definition of cultural capital that includes language and relevant cultural knowledge as a form of cultural capital. This is what she refers to as linguistic capital, a concept originally used by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) to refer specifically to cultural capital in form of a prestige dialect. In the case of mothers of Mexican origin, the Spanish language and/or a Spanish sensibility (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995) as well as English can be activated as a form of linguistic capital. Unlike Bourdieu (1986) who saw cultural capital as something solely held by the upper and middle classes that created advantage for them within social institutions, I, for purposes of this study, see cultural capital as any cultural resources that a person possesses that they are able to activate to achieve a desired outcome and/or position. Exerting agency by using particular cultural capital within a context also signals an advantage that is used in cultural and social selection (Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Petrón, 2003). This means that not all cultural capital has equal value. Thus, I view cultural resources as having dynamic qualities whose conversion into the currency of cultural capital varies based on the context in which it is used.

The social networks in and out of school, including those resulting from their parent involvement, are one element of what Valenzuela (1999) refers to as a person or family's "social capital." It is "defined by its function in group or network structures" (p.27). According to Coleman (1988), social capital is not an intrinsic feature of social networks. Rather, it emerges whenever social interaction makes use of resources residing within the web of social relationships. It is the currency used within social networks for enabling the attainment of goals that cannot be attained individually. Thus, not only can social capital assist in attaining one's goals-it can foster the development of trust, norms and expectations among individuals that have similar goals. I extend this concept of the web of social relationships to include not just those social relationships that have similar goals or are physically present, but also include those social relationships that can run counter to our goals but provide information useful for attainment of our goals, or those relationships that are long gone but live on within our reservoir of inner memories from prior social connections (Bakhtin, 1981). But, as Stanton-Salazar (1997) points out,

although social ties and networks embody aspects of social structure that allow such relations to be highly productive, social relations that may carry potential for support may also embody exclusionary and even symbolically violent properties rooted in the macro-social structures of society.

Capital includes the social and cultural resources a person holds and is able to 'activate' into cultural and social capital (Diamond, 2001). These social and cultural resources are 'potential' resources that must be activated by parents (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The resources accessible to parents are part of what is available for them to draw on to position themselves within the figured world of parent involvement and to inform their beliefs about education and their strategies for participation in their children's

education (Diamond, 2001). Thus the possession of social and cultural resources does not guarantee their conversion into social and cultural capital. As Lareau (2000) explains, members of the same social class or racial group can deploy their resources in different ways, suggesting that a certain degree of human agency and cultural autonomy is associated with the activation of social and cultural capital.

### ***Latina Mothers' Agency in the Figured World of Parent Involvement***

Parent involvement has been heralded as beneficial to the educational success of children (Epstein, 1995). The concept of “figured world” as described by Holland, et. al. (1998) is a world created through a collective common understanding, such as in this case, parent involvement. Upon their children entering school, parents enter into this figured world of parent involvement. Yet, inherent within this discussion are particular mainstream ideas of what is considered parent involvement (Epstein, 1995). For example, in the figured world of mainstream parent involvement, parents are the actors and they are encouraged to be ‘good parents’ by staying involved in their children’s education. They are to do this by reinforcing the school curriculum at home, reading to their children and helping them with their homework every night, attending all PTA meetings, and voluntarily participating in all school activities that they are requested for, such as classroom volunteering, field trips, and school committees (Epstein, 1996). This has created a figured world of mainstream parent involvement where parents are expected to carry out school specified activities such as those mentioned above to achieve academic success for their children and status within the school.

Latina/o parents are often positioned within the mainstream parent involvement literature as silent and passive in their interactions with schools (Vincent, 2001). Recently, there have been efforts to broaden the definition of parent involvement to include alternative ways in which parents, particularly from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, are involved in their children's life and education (López, 2001; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994). These efforts include teaching their children the value of hard work as well as how to be "bien educado" which implies that a well educated person is not only book learned but is also someone who is educated in being respectful, well mannered, and generally a good person (Valdés, 1996). Yet, there remain powerful mechanisms inherent within school sanctioned notions of parent involvement that continue to promote the school's figured world of parent involvement and its characterization of Latina/o parents as uninterested, uninvolved, or simply unskilled to do what's needed for their children's education. This characterization, however, neglects to acknowledge the unique ways in which Latina/o parents activate their social and cultural capital to demonstrate agency within their day-to-day interactions within the school's figured world of mainstream parent involvement. The sense of power achieved or not achieved by parents within these school interactions can result in the transformation (re-authoring) both of themselves, their views, and the original construct in the process, thus determining their further involvement in schools.

As culturally and linguistically diverse parents enter these figured worlds and interact on an everyday basis within these mainstream constructs, how do they respond? We often look at the impact of parent involvement on the educational success of children (Epstein, 1995), but what is often not considered is how culturally and linguistically

diverse parents impact parent involvement and how parent involvement impacts the parents themselves. Their ideas of who they are, what is important for their children, and the role of schools are all potentially influenced. For Latina mothers this can include what it means to be Latina and how important Spanish is for their children.

From the first moment of interaction within the figured world of mainstream parent involvement, parents knowingly or unknowingly either accommodate or challenge the precepts of this figured world based on various influences that converge in everyday activities. Interactions (dialogic exchanges) within figured worlds occur within us, as an inner dialogue with an “other,” as well as between us and other individuals within a figured world (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1986; Vygotsky, 1986). Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogic perspective holds that we encompass a number of views in virtual simultaneity and tension and we are always defining ourselves in interaction with the voices of the ‘others’. In essence, we do not exist but in this dialogic interaction.

These dialogic exchanges are not neutral but function within social positions that are socially organized and reproduced at a particular historical time. Thus, through everyday actions (acts of agency) within the figured world of mainstream parent involvement, mothers of Mexican origin communicate the identity they have authored for themselves at that moment – their practiced identities (Holland, et. al., 1998). The identities, gained within the figured world of mainstream parent involvement, then grow through continued participation in the social positions defined within it (i.e., PTA president, committee member, active parent, inactive parent). As Holland et. al. (1998) state,

Neophytes are recruited into and gain perspective on such practices and come to identify themselves as actors of more or less influence, more or less privilege, and more or less power in these figured worlds. (p. 60).

However, as a mother of Mexican origin becomes continually involved in this figured world, these dialogic exchanges also create a space for agency through improvisations that allows them to (re)author the figured world of mainstream parent involvement within which they find themselves as well as their status within it. As Holland, et. al. (1998) state: “A figured world is formed and re-formed” (p.53). Parental agency through these improvisational acts involve mothers drawing together the social and cultural resources/capital available in a given moment in response to present problems or circumstances that necessitate adapting one’s actions to further one’s immediate interests (Holland, et. al., 1998).

The key point to keep in mind is that all individuals have capital to activate within figured worlds. However, not all social and cultural capital has the same value or social positioning in a given figured world. Thus, what may be considered capital in one context may be considered resources in another context. The cultural and social capital of mothers of Mexican origin has generally been regarded as low in value within mainstream parent involvement. But, as Lareau & Horvat (1999) stress,

Each person through the skill with which he or she activates capital or plays his or her hand, influences how individual characteristics, such as race and class, will matter in interactions with social institutions and other persons in those institutions.

Thus, day-to-day parental agency is seen as having the potential to make a difference in interactions with schools, school personnel and other parents. However, the ability of this change to impact the figured world depends on whether these individual

improvisations within the figured world of parent involvement are recognized and legitimated or marginalized and rebuffed by the ‘others’ that shape the figured world (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). By examining the personal narratives of mothers of Mexican origin, I identified improvisational acts which were created in response to their parent involvement efforts and provided a glimpse into the changes put in motion by mothers.

I adopted Holland, et. al.’s (1998) theoretical framework with a focus on the development of individual agency within figured worlds because I found it useful in conceptualizing this study on the role of mothers of Mexican origin in fostering language within their families and thus as key players in Spanish language maintenance for their children. It provided a lens by which I could focus on the specific practices and actions undertaken by mothers of Mexican origin as they enacted their agency within school parent involvement and yet capture the contextual complexity of factors that converged to influence their views of Spanish for their children. It acknowledged the cultural elements, the historical influences, and the structural constraints that converged in any given moment, while also recognizing the evolving, dynamic nature of individual agency. To better understand why the study of Spanish language maintenance within a broader sociocultural context is important, the next sections provide the rationale for this study and the research questions.

### ***RATIONALE***

The United States is home to over 300 different languages (Baker, 2001).

However, the maintenance of these heritage languages<sup>2</sup> in the U.S. context is filled with controversy. The question is often asked, “Why is the maintenance of heritage languages so important?” Traditionally, arguments against the maintenance of heritage languages centered on seeing language as a problem, something to be fixed or eliminated (Ruiz, 1984). Advocates for heritage language maintenance argued for language as a fundamental right, important in and of itself (Ruiz). As Ovando, et. al. (2003) put it:

[The heritage language] is used at home or in the language minority community because a person’s L1 is intimately connected to his or her self-identity. It is the first means of expression of soul, kinship, emotions, tastes, sounds and smells. [The heritage language] is associated with the most important and intimate aspects of existence. To take away [the heritage language] is to rob a person of his or her most basic identity and meaning in life. (p.136).

Ruiz (1984) argues against seeing language as a problem or as a right and instead promotes viewing language as a resource,

it can have a direct impact on enhancing the language status of subordinate languages; it can help to ease tensions between majority and minority communities; it can serve as more consistent way of viewing the role of non-English languages in U.S. society... (pp. 25-26)

In fact, developing the heritage language as a resource offers two sets of advantages. First, for children acquiring English, the heritage language can speed the acquisition of English and allow for content instruction to continue while still improving their English. Because they can build upon what they already know in the first language, this leads to higher long term academic achievement (Cummins, 1981; Collier, 1989; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). Second, for children who are already fluent in English,

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term heritage language to refer to non-English immigrant languages and indigenous languages. I also adapt the term "heritage" speaker from Valdés (2000b) to refer to a person who is raised in a home or

the gaining or maintaining of their heritage language allows them to become bilingual, offering personal and potential societal benefits. Children who develop their heritage language and know English well do better academically in school than those who leave the heritage language behind (Genesse, 1999; Ramirez, et. al., 1991; Fernandez & Nielsen, 1986; Nielsen & Lerner, 1986). Other benefits of being bilingual are having access to multiple sources of information (Moll, 1992) including older generations who may continue to speak the heritage language (Wong-Fillmore, 1991); having economic advantages of higher earning power (Boswell, 1998); as well as the potential societal benefits of having linguistic resources for international business, diplomatic and security efforts, as well as foreign/second language education (Tse, 2001).

There are several key factors that impact the level of heritage language maintenance in any given situation. These factors include: school, home, community, and other social/ cultural/historical factors. It is often difficult to find ways to look at all of these factors simultaneously. Yet, there is one area in which each of the factors above seem to intersect. It is school parent involvement for linguistically diverse parents and those whose heritage includes a language other than English. It is important not to just look at the role of each of these factors independently, but to look at a context like school parent involvement where the layers of the larger social-cultural-historical factors upon the community, and the community upon the school, the school upon mothers, and mothers upon children all overlap and intertwine.

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family where a heritage language is spoken and/or merely understood and as a result is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language.

In this study, as an advocate of bilingualism, I explored the nature of the socio-cultural contexts that most impact a young child's developing bilingualism: the child's mother as she engages in school institutions within the larger social-cultural-historical context of the community. By focusing my lens on mothers and simultaneously taking a look at these other factors, I was able to look at how they impact parents' values and choices for their children. Ultimately, mothers' of Mexican origin interactions and agency in response to school within parent involvement may determine whether Spanish is valued in the lives of their children. Thus, the problem I sought to address was the need to better understand the larger social-cultural-historical influences on Spanish language maintenance as evidenced through parent involvement. By focusing on parent involvement, where the influences of all three contexts are felt, I gained insight into how these factors impact Spanish language maintenance within particular families of Mexican origin.

### ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

My purpose in conducting this study was to deepen my understanding of the socio-cultural-historical factors that impact heritage language maintenance for young children of Mexican origin. By examining this issue through mothers of Mexican origin within parent involvement, I sought to help program developers, school administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, and community members better understand how schools, communities, mothers, and in turn her children are intertwined, interact, and influence each other. In particular, I sought to help better understand the impact of these factors and contexts on the choices made by mothers regarding the role of Spanish in their

children's lives. My hope is that if people are equipped with knowledge on how parent involvement in schools may impact the choices made by mothers for their children, they will work harder to acknowledge the cultural and linguistic resources and values mothers can contribute to school parent involvement. In addition, they can promote additive forms of parent involvement and education that resist continuing to perpetuate the dominant discourse of English monolingualism and traditional, mainstream forms of parent involvement and education. In this way, an environment can be created that focuses on individuals and the languages they speak as resources to be embraced and recognized. I specifically sought to answer two research questions through this study.

- 1) How do these mothers of Mexican origin enact agency within parent involvement situated in Sonoma's historical race and language context?
- 2) How do their language ideologies and views toward Spanish language maintenance express themselves for these mothers as they interact within parent involvement?

### ***SUMMARY***

As previously stated, we often look at the impact of parent involvement on the educational success of children (Epstein, 1995), but what is often not considered is how the mainstream construct of parent involvement impacts Latina parents themselves and their ideas of who they are and what's important for their children. For Latina mothers this can include what it means to be Latina and how important Spanish is for their children. As mothers enter social institutions, such as schools, that perpetuate the dominant ideology, they engage in dialogic interactions within the socio-historical

context of a community. This dominant ideology perpetuates the hegemony of English and defines what behaviors are considered markers of academic success and good parenting.

I had regular, on-going contact with three mothers of Mexican origin collecting their narratives of the day-to-day experiences they had within parent involvement. Over time, as incidents arose, I focused my inquiry on these key events. These were events that prompted an improvisational response or reaction from the mothers. Collectively, these improvisational acts of parental agency served to shed light on how mothers' position themselves within the figured world of parent involvement and how the value of Spanish manifests itself in response to those interactions within this figured world. For in the case of mothers of Mexican origin, the experiences and people they are introduced to as their children enter school by virtue of parent involvement impact their sense of who they are as Latina mothers and their ability to activate their capital. Ultimately, it affects the value they place on the maintenance of Spanish both for themselves and their children. Therefore, in this study I explored the impact of interactions of mothers of Mexican origin within parent involvement as a way to better understand the sociocultural factors influencing heritage language maintenance.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### *INTRODUCTION*

In this study, I sought to explore Latina mothers in parent involvement as a way to better understand their role in Spanish language maintenance for their children. Drawing on the literature in Spanish language maintenance, parent involvement as well as on Latina/o families' parent involvement; I build an argument for the importance of examining Latina mothers and their interactions within parent involvement in order to explore how it impacts the value they place on their young children gaining or retaining Spanish. If Spanish language maintenance is to occur, Latina mothers, as the guardians of identity and language within their families, are seen as having a pivotal role. They can create an environment and make choices that promote Spanish for their young children, thus building the foundation for their children's continued or future development of Spanish.

In this chapter, I review the research in Spanish language maintenance and the parent involvement literature to situate this study within the research discourses it draws upon. In the first section of this chapter, I review what has been learned about Spanish language maintenance and the factors that impact it. I then discuss the three main models of parent involvement. The research literature in this area has reinforced traditional, mainstream conceptualizations of parent involvement. In the third section of this chapter, I provide a review of key research related to Latina/o parent involvement, as well as the Latina/o language socialization and language ideology literature from whose ideas I draw

upon and extend for this study. This body of research offers insight on efforts to broaden conceptualizations of parent involvement to include non-traditional forms that encompass Latina/o ways of being. For example, the case study mothers in my research actively utilized *consejos* (moral lessons), and *experiencias de la vida* (life lessons) as part of their home parent involvement to complement and sometimes mediate school messages. Finally, I explore the role of broader social-cultural-historical factors such as Sonoma's race relations, and its language policies on the language and identities of Latinas/os in the U.S context, and the particular role of mothers in contesting and accommodating these factors as they raise their children.

### ***SPANISH LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE***

Due to the pervasively subtractive (low value) orientation toward languages other than English in this country, the vitality of heritage languages is diminishing at alarming rates. In the past, a three-generation model of linguistic assimilation (Fishman, 1972, 1980; Veltman, 1983, 1990) was held as the standard. It describes a process in which immigrant families by the third generation are English monolingual and their knowledge of the heritage language is fragmented at best. The latest research indicates that the current trend in the U.S. toward a shift away from heritage languages toward full English monolingualism is occurring as early as the second generation and no later than the fourth generation (Portes & Hao, 1998; Wong-Fillmore, 2000; Tse, 2001; Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992) with incidents of individuals in the first generation shifting to full English monolingualism following a few years in the school system.

Most of the current education programs that offer heritage language support are geared for immigrant children whose families speak a language other than English in the home. Their primary goal is often to use the heritage language as a vehicle to transition the child to English as quickly as possible and not necessarily to support the continued development of the heritage language. Efforts that focus specifically on developing both languages, English and the target heritage language, have included late exit maintenance bilingual education programs and dual language programs. But, in the U.S., these programs are few in number. In the present study, Sonoma ISD had just initiated a dual language program that was having direct impact on the efforts made by Anna, the U.S. born Latina case study mother, toward Spanish language maintenance for her children.

Immigrant families, such as those in Valdés' study (1996), know that they have to learn both English and Spanish. However, they are very much aware of the unquestionable importance and value of English. Every child is expected to become an English speaker (Valdés, 2000a; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) because speaking English is considered essential for themselves and their children - a vehicle for advancement and acceptance in the U.S. As Pennycook (1994) states, "English is one of the "most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment, or social position" (p.14), and families are very aware of this fact. Often, their intent is not to lose Spanish but in their efforts to ensure that their children gain English, Spanish may get less attention. This was confirmed in the current study.

Because of the continued influx of new immigrants and because of the concentration of persons speaking the same language especially in border areas, retention of Spanish in Latina/o communities is often greater than in other immigrant groups

(Valdés, 2000a). A large number of Latina/os in this country are bilingual; that is they can function to some degree in both English and Spanish (Valdés, 2000a). Social pressures to learn English are so strong however, that language shift among Latina/os is happening both across generations and to some extent within an individual's lifetime (Tse, 1999).

The degree of shift reported varies depending on whether one is looking at a shift in terms of language proficiency or a shift in language choice (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992). Shifts in language choice are not typically associated with corresponding losses in Spanish proficiency, particularly for the first generation. Proficiency loss is most dramatic across generations with the sharpest drop occurring between the first and second generation. A shift in language choice on the other hand, begins immediately and progressively toward English across and within generations. Orellana, Ek, & Hernández (1999) through interviews and conversations with Mexican-American children in bilingual schools in Los Angeles, observed “a gradual but marked shift over the middle childhood years toward a preference for English, and a disinclination to use Spanish” (p. 125). It is in this act of increasingly choosing English, where I begin to explore the factors that impact heritage language maintenance<sup>3</sup>.

With a growing number of children in this country coming from Latina/o communities, many of which experience two languages as I did within the contexts of their daily lives, efforts have been made to better understand why some children of

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<sup>3</sup> Language maintenance is the relative stability in number and concentration of speakers of the identified language within a community, the continued proficiency of individual adults and children in the language,

Mexican origin acquire only one language while others acquire two. Children learn about language in the same ways they learn about other experiences—by imitating, exploring, trying out their ideas, and participating in their cultures. Researchers have found that children learn the uses and values of language from their experiences in both their parents' cultures and the culture of the wider communities in which they live (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Allen & Rubin, 1993). Families and communities are central to young children's language and cultural socialization (Teale, 1986; Pease-Alvarez & Vásquez, 1994; Luke & Kale, 1997). The language expectations and practices of families and communities play a key part in children's motivation and language development, including whether the child will become bilingual. Baker (2001) describes language as not a separate cultural event but as a mirror of cultural socialization practices within families and the communities in which a child lives. These socialization practices, that are inseparable from language, begin within a child's family.

The home is a key ingredient needed to obtain language maintenance (Schechter & Bayley, 2002; Hakuta & D' Andrea, 1992; Tse, 2001; Portes & Hao, 1998; Landry & Allard, 1991). Children are influenced by their family's beliefs, values, and culture. Every day, within moment to moment interactions that occur in the home, language choices are made that determine whether a language is maintained (Schechter & Bayley, 2002). Without the use of Spanish in the daily interactions of the home, Spanish will not be fully developed resulting in partial acquisition of the language (Schechter & Bayley,

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and the maintenance of use of this language by individuals and communities in particular domains [i.e., school, home, religion] (Baker, 2001).

2002; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Over time, this leads to eventual language loss. It is the adult language values and practices in the home that were found to be the main predictor of Mexican-origin students' Spanish language use and proficiency (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992). For young children, it appears to be centered in their mothers, who exert powerful influences on their children's attitudes and motivation for language learning (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Zentella, 1987).

Zentella (1987) describes women of linguistic minority communities as "those given the most responsibility for maintenance of the home language and cultural survival" (p. 174). Despite some changes in the roles of men and women over the last three decades, mothers remain the ones more likely to be found taking an active part in their children's schooling and caretaking (Lareau, 2000). As described by González (2001), mothers are the "keepers of the keys that unlock a child's life" (p.15). They are in many cases the constant influence in their children's lives both directly and indirectly through the web of social networks that they utilize for support. As Zentella (1987) states, "they [women] seem to take the language pulse of the community and guide their children accordingly" (p.176). The valuing of Spanish by Latina mothers lays an important foundation for a child to become bilingual.

Yet, there are the larger sociopolitical/historical factors which have been identified as contributing to language shift toward English. They include: the powerful pull of English and support for its exclusive use; the internalization of the negative mainstream society views of the heritage language as stigmatized, useless, and even subversive; the limited exposure to the heritage language; the limited opportunities to learn the heritage language; the parental, societal, and school misconceptions about

language learning; and community and peer influences (Wong Fillmore, 2000; Olsen, 2000; Tse, 1999). These forces are pervasive through all institutional systems, particularly schools.

The dynamics of power and inequality show up in every aspect of classroom life, from physical setting, to needs assessment, participant structures, curriculum development, lesson content, materials, instructional processes, discourse patterns, language use and evaluation. (Auerbach, 1995, p.12)

These forces and messages are interpreted as “correct”; thus one conforms to English and gives up Spanish to attain social acceptance (Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Schools can serve to impede or support parent’s efforts to promote the heritage language (Bayley, et. al, 1996; Allard & Landry, 1992). The typical education imparted in United States’ schools promotes subtractive bilingualism that strongly encourages immigrant children to lose their fluency in the languages they speak at home as they gain English at school (Portes & Hao, 1998; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). However, Smith (2002) discovered that even dual language programs that were said to have a stabilizing or slowing effect on minority language loss in a Mexican American neighborhood, did not prevent the continued language shift to English. Thus, English quickly becomes their stronger language and the one they prefer to use (Tse, 1999). It may begin with a pressured preference for English, but as the child wishes to re-engage in Spanish, they find their Spanish abilities to be less than their measure of what is expected, and therefore turn to English. This only serves to continue to reinforce English. It is not that they are rejecting Spanish. Instead, they are rejecting “a language that, in their estimation, they do not speak well” (Valenzuela, 1999, p.207). They may understand everything that is said to them in Spanish but are not comfortable speaking Spanish. Only when circumstances

arise where they have to speak Spanish (for example, facing an immigrant who speaks only Spanish) does their proficiency in some Spanish emerge. As Schechter & Bayley (2002) found,

...participants ideas about language maintenance have been developed in response to the role that Spanish and English play in their social and familial networks and community where they live (p.109).

Although student's knowledge of their home languages tends to decline over time in a typical school, schools located in areas of high concentrations of immigrants (ethnolinguistic vitality) do reinforce additive bilingualism and the positive aspects of students' retention of Spanish. (Portes & Hao, 1998; Landry & Allard, 1991). However, Bayley, et al (1996) found evidence that ethnolinguistic vitality in and of itself was an insufficient force to counter the sociopolitical factors that impact the shift to English monolingualism. Thus, a community, particularly one where there is high ethnolinguistic vitality of the heritage language, can support language maintenance but by itself is an insufficient condition to maintain the language (Schechter & Bayley, 2002). Wong-Fillmore (2000) declares that only through proactive community action in favor of language maintenance will language maintenance occur. This is largely because of the broader sociopolitical/ historical forces which support the exclusive use of English. These forces perpetuate themselves not only within institutions such as schools but also within the individual as internalization of the negative mainstream society views of the heritage language (Tse, 2001; Griego-Jones, 1994). The case of Wong-Fillmore's (2000) Chen family illustrated this process clearly. These forces or messages are interpreted as "correct" thus one conforms to English and gives up Spanish to attain social acceptance (Wong-Fillmore, 2000). Historically, the main forces that have supported the

preservation of parents' languages are the family and peers in the community, not the school. However, the decision by schools to impede or support parents' efforts to promote the heritage language can make the difference in the intensity of parents' efforts.

In examining strategies for promoting heritage language maintenance, Bayley, et al, (1996) found that the use of selective language strategies is insufficient for attaining anything more than basic Spanish proficiency. Instead, language maintenance requires constant effort and a constant renewal of one's commitment to language maintenance (Schechter & Bayley, 2002). Schechter & Bayley conclude that the,

...decision to maintain a minority language is one that must be constantly renewed in the face of direct and indirect countervailing pressures to switch to English. (p.110).

Ultimately, in order to withstand the societal constraining factors and the internal factors developed in reaction to the sociopolitical/historical factors; successful heritage language maintenance depends on the constant efforts of family, community and schools jointly contributing to and promoting additive bilingualism (Schechter & Bayley, 2002). It is important not to just look at the role of each of these factors independently, but to look at a context like school parent involvement where the layers of the larger social-cultural-historical factors upon the community, and the community upon the school, the school upon mothers, and mothers upon children all overlap and intertwine.

### ***PARENT INVOLVEMENT STUDIES***

In recent years, educators and policymakers have supported parents' involvement in their children's education as a means by which to encourage positive educational outcomes for children. Thus, parents are encouraged to reinforce the curriculum at home

through various educational activities, such as reading with their children and helping them with homework. They are also pushed to participate in various school activities, such as volunteering in the classroom and serving on local school councils.

The emphasis on parental involvement is at least partially due to a great deal of recent research that asserts that parental involvement positively impacts student achievement (Henderson and Berla, 1994; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Steinberg, 1996; Zellman and Waterman, 1998). One of the most popular models within this line of research examines parental involvement from an organizational perspective. In this model, the child's education takes place in three overlapping, important contexts: home, school, and community (Epstein, 1996). Instead of a traditional social organizational model in which the institutional goals of the three institutions are separate, this model states that the most successful families, schools, and communities worked together and had joint goals and missions relating to children's education and development (Epstein, 1996). Epstein encourages schools to use parental involvement programs that focus on six particular types of involvement as goals: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1996). Thus, through building successful family-school-community partnerships, according to this model, children's academic achievement is enhanced. Although in the present study, I emphasize the overlapping relationships between these three contexts, I view the types of parent involvement programs that stem from Epstein's typology to be problematic due to their reliance on school-directed family involvement that allow families' input but only centered on the issues important to the school and conducted in the ways structured by the school. For

example in the present study, satisfaction surveys sent out by Sonoma ISD to parents with children enrolled in the district focused on questions about the effectiveness of existing parent involvement opportunities offered (i.e., PTA meetings, parent education, parent-teacher conferences) and asked for suggestions on how to improve them. What were not included were questions that might elicit new approaches to parent involvement. Another model examines how parental involvement affects children's educational outcomes. According to this model, parental involvement influences academic achievement through three main mechanisms: modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). This model also prescribes to parents specific types of behaviors to conduct with their children without taking into account the existing ways non-mainstream parents may already be supporting their children's academic success. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model advances the idea that by parents actively becoming involved in their children's education through modeling educational behaviors and attitudes, reinforcing their children's school-related behaviors, and providing their children with instruction, parents' behaviors create enabling and enhancing conditions for their children's academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). In the present study I offer a look at existing ways that Latina mothers support their children's academic success.

Another stream of research on parental involvement questions the assumption that parental involvement necessarily leads to improved academic achievement for students and asserts that issues of race, ethnicity, and cultural and social capital significantly affect parental involvement. It is within this line of research that I situate this study. According to this research, parents' class, race, ethnicity and position within societal structures

shape the cultural and social capital they possess (Lareau, 2000; Lareau, 1987; López, 2001; Lareau and Shumar, 1996; Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Diamond, 2001; DeGraaf, DeGraaf, and Kraaykamp, 2000; McNeal, Jr., 1999). The concept of capital was originally expanded upon by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Cultural capital consists of elite signals that are used in cultural and social selection (Lamont and Lareau, 1988) and social capital is comprised of structured social ties and relations that provide a network of resources and that are based on obligation and reciprocity (McNeal, Jr., 1999). Thus, due to issues of cultural and social capital; teachers, parents, and other school personnel tend to privilege specific forms of parental involvement – including volunteering in schools and providing academically relevant extracurricular activities for children – that are based on white, middle-class ideals (Lareau, 2000; López, 2001; Lareau and Shumar, 1996; McNeal, Jr., 1999; Lareau, 1987).

Parents who are white and middle-class tend to be viewed as possessing cultural capital that is valued by the school and are typically members of dense social-networks with other parents in the school (Lareau, 2000; Lareau and Shumar, 1996; McNeal, Jr., 1999). Many working- and lower-class parents, due to different levels and varieties of cultural and social capital—including educational levels, incomes, transportation access, cultural differences, and historical racism—do not become actively involved in their children’s education in institutionally privileged ways (Lareau, 2000; Lareau and Shumar, 1996; Diamond, 2001; López, 2001). Due to their lack of involvement in institutionally-privileged manners, teachers, principals, and other school personnel may conclude that working- and lower-class parents are not interested in their children’s education (Lareau, 2000). The school’s construction of parental involvement thus puts

forth a cultural deficit theory that focuses on teaching poor parents, including those of Mexican origin, how to provide a stimulating, healthy, educational environment for their children. For example, in the Sonoma ISD parent education trainings I observed, Latina/o parents received training on everything from how to prepare a nutritious meal for the family to the benefits of play. The following excerpt comes from my field notes of a parent meeting I attended.

The session began with a discussion of how fat accumulates in the body and a slab of fat was passed around to illustrate what overweight people carry in their body. They then emphasized the importance in adapting traditional recipes to lower fat and higher nutritional versions. They then gave a recipe for vegetarian chili but participants were not told what the sausage that they used was made of until the end to illustrate that healthy and nutritious cooking made with soy does not have to taste bad. Each family was then given a sample package of the soy based Mexican sausage, chorizo, that was used in the chili recipe. As I looked around parents looked disinterested and were talking amongst themselves rather than listening to the trainers. (Parent Meeting Field Notes, 1/20/2004)

This theory assumes that parents of Mexican origin do not have the resources, as defined by schools, to provide for the educational needs of their children. Thus, the school is seen as not needing to make any significant reforms because the root of the problem lies in the individual parent or family. According to this view, children's academic failure arises from the individual deficits of their parents and not from the societal and structural inequalities that reproduce educational inequalities. In the present study, I provide support of the existence of a general deficit perspective toward Latina/o parents in one school district, as espoused by this line of research. I will further outline the issues and parent involvement efforts related specifically to Latina/o families in the next section of this literature review.

### *LATINA/O PARENT INVOLVEMENT*

Working- and lower-class parents, including those of Mexican origin, tend to become involved in their children's education in non-traditional, informal, non-privileged ways - such as through using their family networks (Diamond, 2001) or exposing their children to "hard work" (López, 2001). These non-privileged ways of being involved in their children's lives are becoming well documented. I add to this documentation through the present study. Moll et. al. (1992) expanded on the concept of 'funds of knowledge' to reflect the unique knowledge, expertise and resources available within Mexicano households and family social networks which contribute to the families' survival and well being. The funds of knowledge documented within these households were extensive and from fields as diverse as animal husbandry, plumbing and weaving. I, as Moll and his colleagues, found that these funds of knowledge are present in multiple forms but are often overlooked as resources within schools.

Valdés (1996) in turn, within her ethnographic study, captured the importance of 'respeto' [respect] in the socialization process of the Mexican origin families and children she studied. 'Respeto' involved recognizing the roles family members occupied and behaving in accordance with one's given role. This was considered a key characteristic of what it meant to be 'bien educado' or well educated in the Mexican sense of the word. Delgado-Gaitán (1994) discussed the role of *consejos* as a cultural tool by which parents of Mexican origin teach lessons of morality and cultural values. For example, Laura often offered *consejos* to her daughters on the importance of getting educated in order to get what you want and have a good job.

“Estudian...para que el día de mañana con tu sueldo puedas tener todo lo que tú deseas...lo que tal vez no te pueda dar.” Le digo yo, “Un trabajo donde este....llegues y que...hagas lo que a ti te gusta hacer. No llegues a trabajar a un lugar donde...no te gusta y por necesidad lo estés haciendo.” (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

“Study...so that one day with your salary, you can have everything you want.” I tell her, “A job where...when you arrive and that...you do what you like doing. That you don’t end up working in a place that...you don’t like and that you are doing because of you need it.

Delgado-Gaitán (1994) describes *consejos* as, “cultural narratives of nurturing through a cultural domain of communication, imbued with emotional empathy, compassion, and familial expectations” (p. 314). In fact, as an extension of the concept of *consejos*, López (2001) demonstrated how Mexican immigrant parents in his study taught their children through lived experiences about the strenuous nature, hard work, and poor pay of agricultural work and the importance of doing well in school so as not to suffer their same fate. I found that the present study reinforces these findings.

So the issue is not that parents of Mexican origin do not have the resources or are not involved in their children’s education, it is that the resources and ways in which they are involved are not recognized by mainstream institutions, such as schools. Shannon (1996) through the personal narrative of one Mexican mother about her youngest daughter’s experience in first grade, tells us of this mother’s active parent involvement efforts and the teachers negative reaction to it. The narrative highlights that,

...the paradox of parent involvement for minority parents is that teachers negatively view their traditional non-involvement but also respond negatively when they challenge the status quo and begin to behave like high-status parents. (p. 73).

These institutions question and challenge their involvement and non-involvement in their children’s schooling based on their mainstream, traditional ideas about parent

participation. I found this to point to the need within the present study to further explore how mothers of Mexican origin are impacted by these institutional constraints and systems within their children's schools.

### ***LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION AND IDEOLOGIES IN LATINA/O FAMILIES***

Other studies on Latina/o families highlight language socialization practices where the central role of language and its relationship to their identities are examined within various community and home contexts within the U.S. These set an important foundation for the questions explored in the present study. In Zentella's (1997) study of members of a New York Puerto Rican community 'el bloque,' she found continuous shifting in the nature of the interrelationships between their numerous language forms and their ethnic, racial, and class identities. Zentella found that 'el bloque's' use of Spanglish, a form of codeswitching that combines elements of English and Spanish, symbolized community members' attempts to construct a positive self within a broader political and historical context that defined them categorically as negative and deficient. Just as Zentella's New York Puerto Rican participants played with various dialects as they juggled various identities, so too do other Latina/os. These represent their attempts to resolve what it means to be Latina/o in the U.S.

Vásquez, et. al. (1994) also highlights the diversity of language use and the "interchanging identities of Mexicano, Latina/o, immigrant, Mexican American, Chicano and American" (p.12), but within a Mexicano community in California. Drawing on data from three ethnographic studies, the authors illustrate the interconnections between language, culture, learning, and knowledge to explore the relationship between language

socialization and bilingualism. They show Mexicano parent's active role in ensuring the language socialization of their children in the context of real, problematic, and important activities in their lives. One key idea shared in this research is that socialization is mutual. As much as parents socialize children, children are also socializing parents. The authors go on to describe ways in which bilingual children and their families actively and innovatively use the linguistic and cultural resources available to them in varied contexts. For example, bilingual children were documented serving as translators and facilitators in institutional settings. They found evidence that these parents and children actively construct identities and communication styles within social interactions and learning situations by pooling their knowledge of language conventions and cultural norms across their languages. As Zentella (1997), Vásquez, et. al. (1994) contextualized their discussions of language and identity within the daily life activities of the families they interviewed and observed.

The relationship between language and identity is further illustrated in Schechter & Bayley's (1997) study of language socialization practices of families of Mexican origin living in the U.S. These researchers view 'language practices in themselves as embodying acts of identity' (p.516). They found that the participating children defined themselves in terms of their American or Mexican cultural allegiance and that this allegiance varied according to the values their families attached to the Spanish language as a means of affirming identity and according to their relationship to the majority and minority language groups. In a follow-up study, Schechter and Bayley (2002) identified variations that not only shaped and defined the experiences of parents of Mexican origin living in California and Texas but also helped explain differences in how they pursued

their common goal of making sure that their children maintained Spanish. Whereas parents from both regions viewed bilingualism in positive terms and described Spanish as playing an important role in their children's identity formation, they differed in their expectations regarding the role Spanish-language use played in identity. For instance, parents of Mexican origin in California were oriented toward the use of Spanish in parent-child interactions as necessary for maintaining Mexican cultural traditions and identity. In contrast, English was the dominant feature of parent-child interactions in Texas homes of families of Mexican origin yet with continuing strong commitments to Mexican cultural affiliation and identity. This was a pattern that I found was supported in the present study with the U.S. born Latina mothers I interviewed. Even in the case of some immigrant mothers, such as Esther who spoke conversational English, they addressed their daughters in English to get their attention in conversations. However, the enrollment of one U.S. born Latina mother's son in the local dual language program did produce shifts toward more Spanish parent-child interactions in the home. Overall, this geographic distinction between California and Texas families in the connection between Spanish language and one's Mexican identity reinforces the importance that context plays in discussions of language and identity. In addition, Schecter & Bayley (2002) found that identity is not static and fixed. Rather, parallel to language socialization, it is a dynamic and fluid process that is filled with language choices that vary based on social-cultural-historical contexts. It is this phenomenon that González (1996, 2001) explored. González then expands into the study of language ideologies from which I embark for the present study.

González (1996, 2001) conducted an ethnographic study of twelve households in barrio and non-barrio areas of Tucson, AZ. Framing her study from a language socialization perspective, she illustrated the complexities of daily interactions of families of Mexican origin, particularly between mothers and their 4-7 year old children. González's 1996 article focuses specifically on the parent narratives and examines the expectations of parents of Mexican origin for their children's socialization. Her 2001 book, *I Am My Language*, expands on the ideas originally presented in her article by framing it within a borderlands epistemology and drawing on Holland et al's (1998) work as she looks at issues of language and identity.

González (1996) describes language socialization practices as evidenced within parental narratives from three case studies of parents of Mexican origin from Tucson, Arizona and their children. She finds evidence within these parent narratives of an active interaction between the philosophies constructed for children in the home and the outside social structures within which the families function. She also found evidence of the symbolic position of Spanish within these families. In the present study, I also found the position of Spanish to be an important element of mothers' identities as Esther's comments illustrate.

Español...es el idioma que nosotros traemos de México...y.....es algo que uno no puede cambiar ni debe cambiar. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Spanish...it is the language that we bring from Mexico...and....it is something that one cannot change nor should change.

Spanish was considered the "language of intimacy, solidarity, mutual respect, and identity" as well as "of music, of kinship, of food, and of ritual" (p. 57). She critiques static notions of culture and provides examples of how Latina/o parents are not frozen in

culture but are constantly trying to make sense of their own lives as they transition between multiple past, present, and future cultural expectations and perspectives. The narratives in González's research mirror those I gathered in the present study which highlight how Latina mother's everyday life is filled with new and emergent forms of cultural life that are adapted or adopted from tradition in response to hegemonic structures within various social worlds. They are shown giving up "what [was] not useful to them, appending new strategies, and merging received structures with the exigencies of their current lives." (p.76-77). In this way, parents at the borderlands are active agents forging new cultural forms and practices.

Through the complex dynamics of resistance, incorporation, and accommodation, parents struggle to generate an ethos, at times in direct contradiction to their own upbringing, within which they hope their children will flourish. (González, 1996, p.58)

In essence, what she shows us and what I further demonstrate in the present study is that the process of language socialization is filled with multiple voices that incorporate the sociohistorical, linguistic, affective, and cognitive influences present in any given interaction at any given moment in time. In fact, as Zentella's (1997) parent narratives also illustrated, parental behaviors changed as they pursued a better life for their children and often it was at the unintended expense of Spanish.

In her expanded account of all twelve Tucson households, González continues to draw on the women's own narratives of their experiences and language practices as both mothers of Mexican origin and borderland residents. She continues to show us the complexities of their daily interactions arguing that for women of Mexican origin, language and identity is embedded in the fluidity of daily life. She shows how the unique

interactions that result from the interplay of two or more cultures within the borderlands, influenced their practices and ideologies and shaped perceptions of self and community. In turn, these perceptions are described as influencing the ways in which children learn and families engage with their children's schools. By placing the focus on the interactions between people in their daily lives, González was able to expand my vision for the present study of what is considered culture to include issues of power and the language practices from which they are formed. Due to this broadened view, as González did, I also purposively chose the term *language ideology* instead of just referring to language and culture.

Language ideology is defined in many different ways in the research literature (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). González (2001), in her use of the term *language ideologies*, highlights a more anthropological and Marxist perspective that acknowledges the complexities and the power dimensions inherent within any discussion of language and culture. Woolard & Schieffelin (1994) explain that definitions from this perspective remind us,

that cultural frames have social histories and it signals a commitment to address the relevance of power relations to the nature of cultural forms and ask how essential meanings about language are socially produced as effective and powerful (p.58)

Adopting aspects of González's definition, for purposes of this study, I defined language ideologies as the body of an individual's ideas, attitudes and beliefs about the learning and use of language. These form the basis for negotiating power among groups in social relations, often creating the context for power struggles both between different groups and within groups (Martínez-Roldán & Malavé, 2004). As a case in point, in the present

study, Esther discussed her need to learn English and her frustrations with encountering other Latina/os that refused to admit to her that they spoke Spanish.

Aprendí que en este país si usted no entiende un poco de inglés...me ha tocado que algunas personas que parecen mexicanos o son México-americanos...me hay tocado que ellos dicen, “No hablo español.” o me dicen, “I don’t speak Spanish”. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

I learned that in this country, if you don’t understand a little bit of English....It’s happened to me that some people that look Mexican or are Mexican Americans....It’s happened where they’ve said, “No hablo español.” or they tell me, “I don’t speak Spanish.”

González’s (2001) study is able to also highlight the deeply held place of Spanish within the families of Mexican origin she met. Across González’s (2001) parent narratives, language was seen as the soul of the individual and that of the culture. It was discussed as intimately connected to emotion and a sense of heritage. Mothers’ language patterns varied as the social context did but not due to social variables in the setting or other aspects of speech events, but in response to “deeply felt and deeply internalized emotions.”(p. 43). As González (2001) states,

These women were reacting to their own legacy of socialization, to their own unresolved sibling rivalries and parent-child cooperation and conflict. (p. 43)

Even when Spanish was lost, the social memories of it weaved through to create Spanish inflections in their expressions and actions, no matter what language they were speaking. Thus, González (2001) argues that individuals of Mexican origin, even those that are English dominant, forge a linguistic identity which includes Spanish.

### ***SUMMARY***

Each of the studies highlighted in this literature review provide important implications for future research to be conducted with Latina/o families. In particular,

based on the language socialization research discussed here, two key decisions were made by me as to the focus of the current study. First, recognizing the active role of parents (Vásquez, et. al., 1994; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Schechter & Bayley, 1997, 2002) and in particular the pivotal role of mothers (Zentella, 1997; González, 2001) in the language socialization and identity formation of young children, mothers of Mexican origin are the focus of this study. In particular, based on Schechter & Bayley's (2002) finding that children's cultural identities varied based on families' value of Spanish, I sought to explore the broader contexts and factors that influence mothers' valuing of Spanish for their young children. Second, as language socialization and language ideologies are fluid, dynamic processes that highlight the inherent power dimensions present, there was a need to explore the impact of agency exhibited in the day-to-day interactions of Latina mothers on these processes contextualized within the historical, social, political dynamics of the community and school contexts in which they live (Zentella, 1997; Vásquez, et al., 1994; Schechter and Bayley, 1997, 2002; González, 1996, 2001). In this study, I situated mothers of Mexican origin within a rich contextualization of the broader community and school history and politics around Latinas/os and the use of Spanish in the community in which they live.

One must consider the intersection of race, class, and gender when examining issues related to Latina women in order to paint a complete picture (García, 1990). Focusing our attention within the context of parent involvement provides an opportunity to examine the intersection of these issues and factors. Working class parents, including those of Mexican origin are often positioned within the mainstream parent involvement literature as silent and passive in their interactions with schools (Vincent, 2001). This

characterization, however, neglects to acknowledge the unique ways in which working-class parents activate their social and cultural capital to demonstrate agency within their day-to-day interactions with schools. The sense of power achieved by parents within these interactions is often what determines their further involvement in schools. In this study, I looked at parental agency as improvisations carried out within day-to-day interactions around schooling. These improvisational acts involve drawing together the social and cultural capital available in a given moment in response to present problems or circumstances that necessitate adapting one's actions to further one's immediate interests (Holland, et. al., 1998). By examining the personal narratives of mothers of Mexican origin contextualized in Sonoma, Texas; improvisational acts were identified which were created by mothers in response to their parent involvement in school. These improvisational acts revealed how mothers of Mexican origin often end up re-defining what parent involvement is for themselves, and using cultural tools such as *consejos* (moral lessons), *experiencias de la vida* (life lessons), and *el buen ejemplo* (modeling expected good behavior) in the home to mediate messages emanating from the school that were in conflict with or accentuating messages that supported their efforts at imparting an *educación*. Within these negotiations in parent involvement, the value they placed on the maintenance of Spanish was simultaneously being addressed. Ultimately, the impact of these mothers' conceptions about the role of Spanish and of schools decided the kinds of opportunities made available for their children to become bilingual that were provided in the home as part of their home based parent involvement. I now turn to the next chapter for a review of the logistics of how this study was conducted and my own journey as a researcher.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS**

Methods are a fundamental aspect of research. It provides a window into the research process I experienced as a researcher to conduct my research. In this chapter, I begin by sharing my own struggles with paradigm and the tensions I experienced as a Latina researcher interviewing Latina women. I then provide the reader with a brief preview of the community of Sonoma that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. I then move into a review of the pilot study conducted as a first step in this research and the lessons learned. In the next sections of this chapter, I provide an overview of the participants and a description of the methods used for data generation. The final section of the chapter, then discusses the analysis process utilized to make meaning of the data generated. Weaved throughout the chapter is discussion of the efforts made across the methods to assure the ‘trustworthiness’ of the study.

### ***PARADIGM***

When we engage in research, we bring into it a particular worldview. This particular worldview is referred to as a researcher’s paradigm. Guba (1990) defined it as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action” (p.17). It is these beliefs about the nature of reality and how we come to know reality that influence how a research study is designed and done. I selected a qualitative approach because it lends itself to the nature of the questions being explored and reflects my worldview that life is full of multifaceted perspectives and does not have one single ‘truth’. Although as I began this journey I had

lingering positivist vocabulary that sometimes clouded by ability to grasp the finer points of qualitative research, I discovered as I journeyed further into this research study that my research perspective does not easily fit under one category of qualitative research, but rather incorporates elements of several. Thus, I would say that I have more of a ‘hybrid’ qualitative perspective that comes from taking the different elements into a ‘third space’ and transforming it into something that was able to guide my research such as it emerged rather than trying to force it under one research perspective’s label. To better understand this evolution, I provide a brief history of my journey as a researcher into the research perspectives that guided this study.

As a novice qualitative researcher whose career began within psychology’s quantitative tradition in the 1980’s, I was still battling the voices of traditional scientific methods, and objective ways of knowing as I began my qualitative research. During my pilot, I found myself often slipping into the use of terms such as “investigations,” “conclusions,” and “subjects” as well as finding myself going to great lengths to maintain myself detached and objective to the context in which I was in as I searched for the one truth. Through the experience of the pilot, my struggles with paradigm became evident. This was useful for my growth in that it made me more conscious of when my impulses to remain detached and objective were interfering with my ability to allow myself to internalize my growing awareness of the subjective nature of research and fully engage in the interactive process of qualitative research that demanded I acknowledge my own positionality and its influence on the research process.

I found the interpretivist paradigm as the smoothest way to transition into qualitative research for my pilot study, but from that beginning I have found my ideas to

be evolving. I recognize that qualitative research and an interpretivist paradigm can be positivist in nature. That was probably the reason why it felt like a comfortable place to begin my journey into qualitative research. However, as I entered into the research process, I was able to allow uncertainty and contradictions into my experience. Using the interpretivist paradigm as the base of my perspective, I began by not trying to predict or control the phenomena being studied, but simply described what was there for the purpose of understanding it. Yet, as I tried to make sense of the data I was generating through my pilot, I found that the perspectives that helped me understand what I was experiencing best were those that came from critical race, feminist, and Latina/o cultural perspectives. I realized I was an active instrument in my research process and that the people, places, and phenomenon I was researching were not fixed, but rather changed and evolved over time. Although I would not say that I am anchored in these viewpoints, they certainly influenced my thinking and provided ways of gaining meaning from what I was experiencing. In particular, I found myself drawing on the Latina/o family research paradigm (Hidalgo, 1998), which incorporates elements of the three perspectives I had already been exploring: critical race theory, feminist and Latina/o culture, as I conceptualized examining Latina mothers as having a central role within Latina/o families as guardians of language and identity. I found that it was also very aligned with Holland et al.'s (1998) sociocultural theoretical framework I had adopted for this study. Key features of the Latina/o family research paradigm are that it has an explicit social objective of “producing knowledge that presents Latina/os as active agents facing constraints or exhibiting resistance behaviors within a social structure”(Hidalgo, 1998, p.103); it contextualizes Latina/o family experiences around the sociohistorical,

socioeconomic, cultural, and the Spanish language; it is focused on issues of particular significance to Latina/os (i.e., economic survival, negotiating U.S. institutions such as schools, immigration); and it requires close monitoring of the values, agenda, and experiences brought by the Latina researcher as she enters into the researcher/participant relationship from a Latina/o perspective (Hidalgo, 1998).

My belief in the fundamental role of relationship was also aligned with the Latina/o family research paradigm. I believe we exist and define ourselves in relationship to others. This expresses itself in the need to engage people not in formal, structured ways but through informal, ongoing, personal ways that allow trust and personhood to be established before forging ahead. It means being willing to share as much of who I am as the relationship requires to allow a personal exchange of ideas and values. I believe that it is through this way of knowing that a deeper understanding of the complexity of life experiences is illuminated. I certainly found this to be true in my conversations with the mothers I studied. Hidalgo (1998) also incorporates elements of identity, familism and other values, as well as the Spanish language into the research agenda. However, unlike Hidalgo's views, that emphasize placing families at the center of analysis, I focused on the central role of mothers within Latina/o families.

I continued to approach my study from a 'hybrid' perspective that incorporated strong elements of the Latina/o family research perspective as well as interpretivist foundations. The purpose of this study was to describe the history, experiences, and perspectives of a group of mothers of Mexican origin within parent involvement in a south central Texas community. As the broader social context was of particular interest in framing this study, the community with a focus on the local school district, was

examined from a historical perspective around issues of race and language. Through this study, I explored a complex subject that required looking at ideas within a person's mind as well as exploring the outside social structures that influenced them. Qualitative research, with its emphasis on understanding and describing 'actions and ideas' within the natural contexts in which they occur, fit well with my goals for this study and the sociocultural framework that informed it. It allowed for rich, contextualized description of each of the phenomena under investigation and an exploration of the nature of the relationships among them.

Thus, adopting a qualitative perspective provided me with an opportunity to gain an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of mothers of Mexican origin (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). In particular, I learned about the experiences, histories, and perspectives of mothers of Mexican origin and the importance they placed on their children's development of Spanish. This qualitative research perspective also allowed me to explore these complex social and cultural issues "using both the participant's and the researcher's understanding" (Ritchie and Lewis 2003, p. 17). The interpretivist elements of my research paradigm explain that the meaning of an action resides in the intentions, motivations, desires, attitudes, and beliefs of the researched (Schwandt, 2001) as well as in its relation to the context in which the action occurs, and the researcher herself. Thus, for the researcher as instrument, all observations and analyses are filtered through the researcher's worldview, values and perspectives (Merriam, 1998). This means that since the researcher's biases and perspectives are a part of the research process, the researcher does everything possible to recognize them and name them for the reader.

In any research endeavor that involves human participants, there is a commitment of researchers to “respect the rights of others, fulfill obligations, avoid harm and provide benefit” to those we interact with when doing research (Glesne, 1999, p.115). Thus, in addition to fully complying with all Research on Human Subjects requirements, it is important for a researcher to engage with a personal reflection journal during the course of their research. In an effort to reveal some of my values and perspectives and their influence on the research process as I found them to emerge in my reflections, I now move into a discussion of my journey as a Latina woman researcher interviewing other Latina women. I then review the methodological elements of the study and my efforts to assure the quality and integrity of my study through each stage of the research process.

### ***TENSIONS OF A RESEARCHER IN A ‘COMADRE’ RELATIONSHIP***

As I entered this research, I feared that there would be several factors that would negatively impact my ability to build rapport with the participants: my middle class social status, my outsider status in the community, and my affiliation with a university and the ‘eliteness’ it communicates. As I prepared to enter the field, I began my reflection journal and ‘peer debriefing group’<sup>4</sup> in an effort to consciously reflect on any issues, fears, biases, and unexpected emotions that may appear during the research process. As my fieldwork progressed, I became aware that it was mostly my own fears and anxieties regarding my participants’ potential reaction to me as a Latina researcher that created the

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<sup>4</sup> A group composed of three bilingual education colleagues within the field of education at the University of Texas-Austin. We discussed dilemmas or issues that arose in our respective research projects for purposes of clarification, emotional support, and suggestions for further action.

biggest barrier to my efforts to make contact with Latina mothers and build relationships with them. I don't believe that our differences interfered substantially with our ability to connect with each other, find common ground, and forge a relationship. However, I attribute this largely not to any particular skill I have as an interviewer, but rather to the dynamics described by other women researchers that is created when a woman steps into the home of another woman to talk about issues that are important to her in an informal casual way (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981). As a significant portion of the data generated for this study was drawn from interviews or what I call *pláticas* (*conversations*) with Latina women conducted over several weeks largely in their homes, trust was established rather quickly. These *pláticas* and the personal bond created because of them, held challenges. As Coffey (1999) points out,

It is inevitable that prolonged fieldwork will promote emotional ties and personal attachments that go beyond the parameters of the field. Just as important are the parameters that the field will impose on the long-term nature of those attachments (p.47).

What I soon discovered is that entering into a relationship with Latina/o families may sometimes also grant you entrance into the privilege of becoming mutual *comadres*. A *comadre* is commonly thought of as simply a translation of the English term 'godmother.' In actuality, it also refers to a female friend or neighbor with whom a woman has formed a strong emotional bond above that which they have with others they are acquainted with. In Behar's (1993) seminal work *Translated Woman*, she discusses the *comadre* relationship she established with Esperanza. She described this relationship as an "intimate but respectful friendship and patronage" (p. 5). Within this relationship, she describes the tensions of race and class differences and responsibility that she

experienced. I similarly experienced these tensions and felt my ‘otherness’ acutely at times despite my supposed membership as a Latina. However, despite this I felt a strong connection to the Latina women I interviewed. Over the course of these prolonged *pláticas*, even these that were only over a five month timespan, an intense bond was produced between myself and the Latina mothers who became the case studies.

Finch (1984) discusses the ‘readiness with which women talked to her’ and the hospitality with which she was received in their homes. I found the same openness and hospitality with the mothers I interviewed. I was offered tea or coffee, a comfortable place to sit, and many hours of mutual conversation. The *pláticas* were allowed to proceed largely at their own pace, taking on a life of their own, permitting the speaker to tell her story until she felt she was finished for the day. This worked well for most of the mothers. However, for some, particularly U.S. born mothers, a rising discomfort became evident in them after the interviews. They often expressed feeling that perhaps they had shared too much, a feeling I sometimes shared as well. In the throes of our often emotional conversations, we shared openly from our hearts and only later reflected on the information itself and how that information may be taken by the person with whom we had spoken. In my case, my feelings of sharing too much often arose from the realization that there was no confidentiality agreement on the part of the mothers to disclose my personal information. Realizing that this was a community that I expected to continue to interact within for years to come, I was left feeling vulnerable. Despite this, over the months that I spent with each of these mothers, I continued to openly share information about whatever questions or topics surfaced about myself and they responded with personal stories about themselves and their families that were so full of emotion and

detail that they often left me speechless or on the verge of tears. The level of sharing was so intimate that it often felt dissonant with the time-limited nature of the planned interactions for the study. The reality was that when I entered these women's lives, there was no ideal way for me to bring our *pláticas* to an end without feeling that I was betraying their trust. When the study ended, I felt I had to decide whether to remain the researcher and detach from the participant's lives or embrace the *comadre* role with its commitment to continuing to be a presence at some level in their lives. With some of the mothers, I was spared from having to make the choice as their own personal circumstances (i.e., escalation of marital problems, change of residence) created the end to our talks. For others, I remain in contact with them but in what I consider a more 'American way' – periodic calls every few months to see how they are. This is a far cry from the level of intimacy we had during the study or which is traditionally maintained in *comadre* relationships. My friendships with the three case study mothers served an important function in my fieldwork (Coffey, 1999). They served to identify and clarify the tensions I was experiencing in the field. In particular, sharing membership in the same cultural group - Latinas/os, albeit in a non-traditional form, provided a rich area for critical reflection of these tensions. I found that there were key elements of my background that influenced the nature of my *comadre* relationship with these women.

I am a Latina woman of Mexican origin who has not functioned in any of the traditional Latina roles. Although I was raised in poverty by a single mother in a border community in Texas and have been actively involved with Latina/o organizations most of my life, I feel I am now distanced from the daily influence of active citizenship in a Latina/o community, especially since moving to a country setting. I married late in life.

I have no children. I am formally educated. Finally, I married someone who is not Latino. Even though the participants and I were all Latinas, these differences sometimes resulted in contrasting perspectives between myself and the participants related to the issues we were discussing and created angst within me as to my own identity as a Latina.

As I conducted my pilot study, Sandra, the mother I interviewed, often questioned why I did not have children and if and when I expected to have any. The question did not surprise me but I was unprepared for my own uneasiness in talking about this issue with strangers. I responded to these questions discreetly, saying I had just not been blessed with any and moved on. These questions continued to surface throughout all my interviews. It served to remind me of the expectations I had set for these mothers to share their personal stories with me, a stranger, and allowed me to relax the pace of the interviews overall into the more relaxed format of *pláticas*. My response to this question became more extended and in the course of my conversations (*pláticas*) with the mothers, they served to initiate dialogue with them that clarified their own views about motherhood with its joys and challenges.

Additionally, early in my interactions with participants, it was assumed that my husband was Latino because I retained my Latina/o maiden name. When it became evident he wasn't, there seemed to be a pause. At first I assumed they were adjusting to the idea and trying to figure out what that meant about me. Over time, however, I realized they were looking for my reaction to see if it should matter. This reinforced for me the interactional nature of the research process and how much I, as a researcher, am an integral part of it. It highlighted the importance of consciously reflecting on what occurs within me while I am in the field. I suspect that the awkwardness I sometimes felt

when the issue of my husband's ethnicity was raised was not from a change in the mothers' attitude toward me or my husband, but more my own conflict with my own conceptions of myself as a Latina. A common theme through my reflection log was occasions of feeling awkward and disconnected from families. But, at the time, I was unable to pinpoint the source of those feelings. I realize now that it was in instances when my difference from traditional Latina norms arose that these feelings surfaced most often. They left me feeling more separate than ever from the Latina/o families I was interviewing and hindered my ability to deepen our discussions of important issues. In many ways, the tension I felt regarding ending the research relationships with the case study mothers was not only about the value of the bond I had formed with these women and their families; it was also about my personal need to stay connected with Latinas/os and the traditions they hold to reinforce my own identity as a Latina.

I found that in being able to acknowledge my own tensions within the comadre-researcher relationship, I was able to use that awareness to clarify my understandings of the role I play in assuring the trustworthiness of the research. To assure the quality of my research findings, I took deliberate measures throughout the research process to increase the "trustworthiness" of my study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I specifically included self-reflection, multiple data sources, and prolonged engagement during the data generation phase. During the analysis phase, I utilized my peer debriefing group and participants to review and verify research themes. This group assisted me in my attempts to describe and analyze data allowing me to achieve a level of consensual validation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and thus increase the credibility of the results. Consensual validation is achieved when agreement is found between the responses to the data by the researcher, the

researched, and the members of the peer review group.

The methods I describe in the next section reflect an emphasis on understanding the contexts in which the study was situated and their influence. This served as a way for me to gain a broader understanding of contextual forces that impact young Latina/o children's Spanish language development. It is important to acknowledge that the enactment of individual agency is a dynamic, fluid, ever changing, never ending process. As such the methods I describe simply offer ways of generating a collection of snapshots into this process full of the contradictions and inconsistencies that arose. It was precisely through these collective moments that I hoped to reveal the complex enactment of agency expressed by mothers of Mexican origin and the interconnectedness of broad contextual factors with Spanish language maintenance. In the following sections of this chapter, I will describe the site of the research, the pilot study that shaped this research, the participants of the study, and how the study was conducted.

### ***THE CITY OF SONOMA<sup>5</sup>***

The site for this study was a small city in south central Texas that I call Sonoma. I selected this site due to its accessibility and population characteristics that complement the sample criteria. These characteristics include: a population that is 96% native U.S.-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990); 34.5% Latina/o (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000); 19% Spanish-speaking (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990); and a public school

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<sup>5</sup> Pseudonym. Note all proper names utilized throughout this dissertation are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants and their families.

system with bilingual education options. It is also a community with a history of tensions around issues of race and language, especially between dominant German-American community members and the growing Latina/o community as I will discuss in Chapter 4.

### ***THE PILOT STUDY***

Preliminary pilot fieldwork was conducted in 2002 to inform me about the field situation (Glesne, 1999). I conducted observations and interviews with one mother of Mexican origin in a situation as close to the realities of the dissertation study as possible. The idea was not to get data per se, but to learn about the research process, the research topic, the appropriateness of interview questions & observations techniques, and about myself as a researcher (Glesne, 1999).

I recruited one mother participant of Mexican origin by the name of Sandra who closely met the selection criteria (i.e., born in Sonoma; a child in Kindergarten in the Sonoma district; no older children; of Mexican descent; bilingual language abilities) established for the pilot study. I identified her through my personal contact network within the community. Following my receipt of consent from Sandra, I began data generation. For three months (July – October 2002), I conducted home observations and interviews with her. In addition, I interviewed Sandra in Spring 2003 for follow-up questions and to obtain feedback on the research process. As a result of the pilot study, I made changes to key aspects of this dissertation study. These included: the focus of the study, the characteristics of the mothers to be recruited, the number of mother interviews, the number of mothers initially recruited, the logistics required in order to conduct the interviews, the addition of parent involvement observations in the school and home, the

redefining of social and cultural capital, as well as a greater awareness of the place of the researcher's perspective within the qualitative research process.

The pilot study focused on describing the conceptions of U.S. born Latina mothers toward bilingualism and biliteracy, but as I recruited and interviewed Sandra, a mother of Mexican origin, I found that the topic was a complex one that I had conceptualized too broadly. Through the data generation process, where Sandra repeatedly reported stories that revolved around her parent involvement activities in her children's school, I was better able to narrow my focus to Latina mothers' daily interactions within parent involvement and its impact on the value they place on maintaining Spanish. In the pilot, I established very strict and specific selection criteria for enrollment of Latina mothers. I found this to be cumbersome and unnecessary to the process. I was able to review the original criteria and reduce them to the essentials – resident of the city to be studied, a Latina mother of Mexican origin, and have a least one child (4-7 years of age) enrolled at one of the target primary schools in Sonoma ISD. I also realized as I was recruiting Latina mothers for my pilot that I needed to increase the original pool from which I would be selecting my case studies from 3-5 to 10-12. This would provide a greater range of participant experiences from which to choose the most interesting intersection of factors. As I began interviewing, I also realized that it was important to have all the participating Latina mothers take part in an initial set of interviews so as to have enough background information from which to select the 1-2 case studies. Therefore, the original ten interviews planned for all participating mothers was reduced to three interviews with only those Latina mothers selected as case studies participating in follow-up interviews.

One of the most obvious issues that I did not even consider before the interviews began was the challenge of scheduling the interviews and arranging child care for the Latina mother I was interviewing. After the first two interviews in her home, with TVs blasting and children pulling on the researcher (and her stuff) and crying when their mother's attention had been away from them for too long, we learned to make sure that someone would be available to watch the children during the time of the interview and I learned to set aside the things they could play with and put away from their reach the things that were breakable. If no child care was available, we re-scheduled or I went for just a home observation with no expectation of doing an interview. This took the pressure off both of us and allowed me to have some relaxed visit time with the whole family.

I would say that the biggest lessons gained from the pilot study were the understanding I gained of myself as a researcher in a qualitative research process. I struggled with wanting to maintain my distance and be objective and yet wanting to be a good friend and *comadre* to Sandra and her family as we got to know each other. When issues arose, I wrestled with wanting to provide the answer and wanting to see what answers she was able to find herself. I did not achieve a complete resolution to these issues and they arose again in this study. The difference is that I was more comfortable with the idea of not knowing what was next, I was able to allow myself to respond to situations as the moment dictated, and I'm better able to let the participant speak without my mind trying to fit their answers into my pre-established ideas. Through the pilot, I learned that the most important qualities a qualitative researcher can bring to the process

of data generation is the ability to listen and really hear what participants are saying and the ability to be flexible.

During the 2002 pilot study, statements were made to me by informants that referred to the long time it had taken to get Spanish in the schools and implied that its position was so precarious that any questions about the use of Spanish in the schools could jeopardize it. There were also incidents that described the lower status of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the role of the city's Chamber of Commerce, whose membership consisted of largely German-American descendants, in limiting local Latina/os access to city resources and positions. This information guided me in this study to explore the history of this community and school district around issues of race and language to establish the historical backdrop to the research questions being studied. I describe this community's/school district's background in more depth in Chapter 4.

### ***THE PARTICIPANTS***

Primary participants for this study were seven mothers of Mexican origin who had young children (ages 4-7) at the time of the research. The mothers' ages ranged from about twenty-five years of age to forty-three years of age. They varied primarily by immigration status, languages spoken, and by their level of parent involvement in the schools (see Table 1). In addition, three Latina/o Bilingual/ESL teachers that had retired or had worked in the Sonoma school district for over 20 years also participated.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Phase I and Pilot Study Latina Mother Participants.**

Name*	Age	Place of birth	Legal Status	# child	Marital Status	Campus	Program Model	Lang	PI
Maria	28	Mexico	R	1	Sep	Aguila	B	E/Spa	H
Anna	43	U.S.- Sonoma	U.S.	3	M	Aguila	D	E/Spa	H
Esmeralda	25	U.S.	U.S.	3	S	Aguila	B	E/Spa	Mm
Laura	32	Mexico	U	4	M	Puma	B	Spa	H
Esther	34	Mexico	U	2	M	Puma	B	Spa	Mm
Connie	35	Mexico	R	4	M	Puma	B	Spa	L
Betty	38	U.S.- Sonoma	U.S.	2	M	Puma	Main	E/Spa	H
Sandra (Pilot)	32	U.S.- Sonoma	U.S.	3	M	Aguila	B	E	H

R-resident; U.S-citizen; U-undocumented; Sep-separated; M-married; S-single; B-Bilingual; D-Dual Language; Main-mainstream classroom; E-English; Spa-Spanish; PI-Parent involvement; H-high; Mm-medium; L-low; \* = pseudonyms

### ***Recruitment & Selection***

***Latina Mothers.*** I recruited mothers of Mexican origin through the two primary schools located in Sonoma Independent School District (ISD) – Aguila and Puma primary schools. Within each campus, one Kindergarten classroom for each program type (i.e., bilingual, mainstream, dual-language) available was randomly selected by myself and the school personnel jointly to spearhead the recruitment effort. I held a meeting with each selected classroom teacher to explain the project and the Latina mother recruitment process. I then generated a list of all Latina mothers enrolled in their classroom, sent out invitation letters to all of them and provided a return envelope for them to return the survey response (not interested or interested) in a sealed envelope to the classroom teacher [See Appendix A: Mother Invitation Letter/Survey (English/Spanish)]. By using this method, I assured that the first contact with the family was one that was established through a familiar source that I believe inspired a greater degree of trust in me as a researcher.

Through the survey, I requested information specifically needed to determine eligibility for participation, based on established selection criteria. The selection criteria was: a) to have at least one child between the ages of 4-7 enrolled in one of the two selected primary schools in Sonoma ISD; b) be a resident of Sonoma, Texas; and c) be of Mexican origin. These criteria directly reflected the purpose of the study and served to guide my identification of information-rich cases. I made efforts throughout the recruitment and selection process to maintain equal distribution of mothers of Mexican origin that were born in the U.S. and those that were U.S immigrants born in México. I did this in order to take into account the significantly different experiences that individuals who immigrate to this country have as compare to those born and raised in the U.S. However, I had a significantly lower response rate from U.S. born mothers. Despite this limitation, I was able to explore and include in this study the perspectives of U.S. born Latina mothers.

I received a total of twenty surveys from the fifty-one surveys distributed on both primary campuses for a return rate of thirty-nine percent. I obtained the highest response rate from mothers whose children were enrolled in a bilingual education program option. I did not consider two mothers because one was not Latina and the second did not have a child in Kindergarten. Of the remaining eighteen mothers, I was able to make contact to review the purpose of the study and schedule an initial interview (*plática*) with ten mothers following six weeks of contact attempts by phone. I had three of the mothers who later cancelled their interview appointments due to a personal crisis (hospitalization; loss of housing) and when I tried to re-contact them, I found their telephones disconnected. Thus, I selected the seven remaining mothers from both primary school

campuses to participate in the first phase of interviews. I used the first phase of interviews as an additional screening process for the selection of the final case study mothers which were to be the focus of the study. Although I originally planned the first phase interviews as three *pláticas*, mothers' time and personal constraints demanded the interviews be more flexible. The Phase I interviews thus ranged from one-hour long *pláticas* to four shorter ones in their home setting. Three of the Phase I participating mothers who began the interview process by participating in one Phase I interview did not complete the second half of the interview content that was to be scheduled with me for a later date. In each case, pressing family issues emerged (i.e., father's illness and long-term care; pregnancy and impending divorce; and job demands during peak work season). This left me with four mothers of the original seven in the participant pool.

My original intent had been to invite two mothers from each primary school site to participate in Phase II follow-up interviews and observations based on the following supplemental criteria: 1) Immigration status (divided evenly among U.S. born versus Mexican born immigrant); 2) language (English dominant, bilingual, Spanish dominant); and 3) level of parent involvement in education (low versus high). However, due to the high attrition rate of participants I was faced with only four mothers from which to identify the Phase II case study mothers: Laura, Anna, Esther, and Betty. Upon reviewing their Phase I interview data and the supplemental criteria, I found that there was an even distribution by immigration status and language(s) spoken among the remaining four mothers. They all described having relatively stable medium to high parent involvement levels. Their cases offered a compelling intersection of factors that I felt would provide opportunities to understand the complexities of the phenomenon I was

studying. Therefore, I felt comfortable inviting each of the four remaining mothers to participate in Phase II follow-up interviews and observations. I received consent from three of the mothers to participate in Phase II interviews. They became the case study mothers: Esther, Laura, & Anna to be discussed further in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

*Latina/o Sonoma ISD Teachers.* I recruited two retired and one current Latina/o bilingual education teacher who had worked or were working within the Sonoma school district for 20 years or longer. They were recruited through the primary schools and my personal contact network. I distributed invitation letters through personal contacts made during observation visits to the schools' parent involvement programs as well as through contacts already established with a local retired teachers' network. I identified four persons as the key persons within the community that knew more about Latinas/os in the schools than anyone else. I was provided their contact names, phone numbers, and the name of the person who had given me their information. This allowed me to be introduced to these teachers through a personal contact they were familiar with. Establishing this connection through a familiar person increased their trust in me as a researcher. I received consent from three to participate in the interviews. One person was willing to serve as an informant but was unwilling to participate in a formal interview as they felt they were putting themselves at risk for retribution from school personnel. The next sections of this chapter will discuss the data generation and analysis procedures utilized for this research.

## ***DATA GENERATION***

From July 2002 through August 2004 I was semi-immersed in the community of Sonoma. This study was conducted over several phases. I began with the conducting of my pilot study from July-October 2002 with follow-ups in Spring 2003. I continued collecting information and documents on the community and school district throughout 2003-2004. I then conducted the mother interviews and parent involvement observations from January through July 2004, and completed the teacher interviews July-August 2004. Utilizing a qualitative research approach that incorporated naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and ethnographic fieldwork strategies, I examined the history, experiences, and perspectives of a group of mothers of Mexican origin within parent involvement in Sonoma, Texas. I then examined the influence of these factors on them as Latina mothers and their educational and language expectations for their children. This type of engagement in the field allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the complex socio-cultural phenomena which was the focus of this research. In addition, the generation of data from these different types of data sources allowed me to triangulate my data. I was able to compare my observation data to interview data as well as cross-check the data I obtained from school administrators with data obtained from mothers. My triangulation of the data thus assured the quality and consistency of the information obtained by helping me to clarify meanings and minimize any misinterpretations (Stake, 2000). In the following section, I will describe the data generation process for each of these research activities.

### ***Interviews/ 'Pláticas'***

I conducted interviews with selected mothers of Mexican origin; Latina/o teachers; school administrators, and with school/community informants. The interviews I conducted with mothers of Mexican origin were the main data generation method and were conducted in two Phases: a) Phase 1: Screening stage, and b) Phase 2: Case study stage. I carried out the interviews in an informal conversational style referred to as *pláticas*. In the next section, I will discuss the process followed with each interview group.

***Mother Interviews: Phase I.*** Following recruitment and selection, I had seven Latina mothers take part in informal, guided conversational interviews (*pláticas*) with me regarding family & language use history, education & school relations/expectations, and parent involvement & resources (See Appendix B: Phase I Mother Interview Guide). I used the Interview Guide as a list of possible things to talk about depending on the participant's responses and did not use it as a tightly structured set of questions to be asked verbatim as written (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). This allowed participants to speak freely (in their own terms) about the issues raised by me plus other concerns they wanted to introduce. These *pláticas* typically lasted about one-hour to an hour-and-a-half in length. My interviews with Laura were the only exception, with her interviews typically lasting about three hours. I conducted most of the Phase I interviews in the mothers' homes over a one-month period of time between February 2004 and April 2004. I audio recorded and transcribed all interviews/*pláticas* for analysis.

***Mother Interviews: Phase II.*** Once I identified the three case study mothers, they took part in weekly telephone and/or face-to-face *pláticas* over an eight- to ten-week

period of time between March and May 2004. These interviews were typically about an hour in length regarding the day-to-day home and school parent involvement activities they were involved in and their views about their children's school. My focus in these on-going *pláticas* was to explore the responses of the case study mothers when confronted with school parent involvement activities and/or "key events" (See Appendix C: Phase II Case Study Mother Interview Guide). Parent involvement "key events" are situations that arise at the school that raise concerns; provide exposure to new information and/or people; and/or require some kind of action or response by the mother. I used these key events to document the ways in which the mothers expressed their agency over time within their parent involvement activities. I conducted follow-up *pláticas* with Laura and Anna during the summer of 2004 to further explain information they provided earlier. I audio recorded and transcribed all interviews/*pláticas* for analysis.

***Bilingual Education/ESL Teacher Interviews.*** Three Bilingual Education/ESL teachers that have worked in Sonoma ISD for over 20 years participated in individual interviews regarding their perspectives and experiences as Latinas/os in the City of Sonoma, Texas and in Sonoma ISD. Serving as the oral historians of this community and district, these interviews were conducted to better understand the changes that have taken place over the last 20 years regarding community and district attitudes toward Latinas/os, bilingual education, and Spanish language use (See Appendix D: Teacher Interview Guide). These Bilingual/ESL teachers have lived and worked within the social context of the school and community during the last twenty years providing a glimpse into the inner workings of the district and community. These types of oral histories help us better

understand the social worlds studied within specific time periods and/or events (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). By allowing these teachers to share their life stories and what they have witnessed around race and language issues within this community and school district, I was able to gain the historical context about the community and school district in which this study is taking place. The interviews I conducted with them were typically about two hours in length and were conducted in the home of the teacher, or in one case, at her place of employment during summer 2004. I audio recorded and transcribed all interviews for analysis.

*School Administrators.* When I sought permission from Sonoma ISD in December 2003 to conduct my research within their district, I met with the principals of each primary campus to describe my research and its benefits. I received permission from Sonoma ISD to begin the research soon after. This permission included their encouragement to meet with the following administrators: the District Bilingual Education/Migrant Coordinator; each primary campus' parent involvement coordinator; and the principal from each primary campus. I met with each of the named administrators for one interview with the topic of discussion being parent involvement opportunities offered by the district. However, this topic focus did not prevent participating administrators from sharing information on other issues they felt were important for me to be aware of related to the district's engagement with Latina/o issues. The content of each of these interviews were reflected solely in my field notes. They were written from notes taken during the interviews that were expanded on only after leaving the context in which these interviews occurred.

***Informants.*** As in many ethnographic studies, over the course of my fieldwork, I was often approached by individuals in the school and community who shared information relevant to the study in an informal way. I considered these informal contacts with individuals I refer to only as ‘informants’. They provided me with critical insider information about the context I was in. The content of these interviews were reflected solely in my field notes, written only after leaving the context in which these interviews occurred.

### ***Observations***

I conducted informal observations in the home and school. These observations served as the basis for providing richer descriptions of the interactions and climate in both the home and school contexts. My home observations were made in the mother’s homes before, during, and after our *pláticas*. I focused these observations on 1) the ideas and emotions expressed related to education, language, and parent involvement; 2) exchanges I saw occur between mothers and school contacts, and any other persons that were present in the home setting at the time of the interviews; 3) actual language choices made in the home setting; and 4) the language of the resources and materials present in the home (i.e., videos, music, books).

I conducted my school observations as participant observations at the two primary school’s scheduled parent involvement events/meetings during the months of February to May 2004. I focused my observations on 1) the language choices made by school personnel and Latina mothers; 2) how mothers of Mexican origin were represented and involved in this setting; and 3) the targeted mothers’ interactions, if any, with educational

staff, other parents, and their children. Within these interactions, my observations were focused on the ideas expressed related to education, language, and parent involvement. I recorded all observations in daily field notes based on memory and condensed notations jotted at study sites. Jotted notes consisted of key words and phrases written down inconspicuously during observations. These served to jog my memory when I later expanded my field notes (Spradley, 1980). These notes provided running chronological descriptions of events, places, people, things I had heard and overheard among people related to the topics described above.

### ***Documents***

To supplement and further corroborate the information gained from the interviews/*pláticas* and observations, I reviewed and retrieved several documents. I specifically collected documents to address: 1) the local history of Latina/os and Bilingual Education; 2) Sonoma's parent involvement policies and practices; and 3) Latina mothers' narratives. The historical documents I collected included: documents from Sonoma's historical society records; prior research on the history of bilingual education and Latina/os in this community; and Sonoma's local newspaper archives (1960-1980). The parent involvement documents I gathered included: the Sonoma ISD's parent involvement website; Sonoma ISD's parent manual; Sonoma ISD's Parent-Teacher Association meeting agendas and minutes from both primary campuses; parent involvement event announcements and handouts at both primary campuses; and all school documents received by case study mothers from March-May 2003 (i.e., classroom newsletters, teacher notes, field trip announcements).

In addition, I invited case study mothers to write journal entries on their day to day activities with parent involvement in a journal I provided to each of them. This was an optional activity and therefore produced uneven results. Laura used the opportunity to write an essay on her life story that introduced herself, her family, and her values. Anna on the other hand used the journal to document the specific activities she and her family did with the children. Esther declined the invitation to journal. Thus, I included the journal entries provided by Laura and Anna as data sources.

### ***DATA ANALYSIS***

Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data (Merriam, 1998). Merriam describes it further as “a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation” (p.178). As I conducted data generation, I began data analysis in order to allow the results to guide the direction of the next phase of data generation. However, as the data generation intensified, the analysis slowed and was resumed fully only after the completion of the data generation phase of the study. The data sources I used for analysis of this study were those generated from the research activities described in the previous section (i.e., interview transcripts, field notes, reflection journal entries, and documents). I began with a provisional start list of codes and code definitions as recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994) that included: social/cultural capital; role/value of Spanish; parental agency; parent involvement; constraining factors; gender roles; and mothers’ personal and language history. I generated this list of initial codes from the conceptual framework of the research and my

list of research questions. This was simply what I used as a starting point from which to begin to see whether the codes fit with the data and the corresponding conceptual framework. As I began analyzing the data using my provisional codes, I was able to confirm their relevance to the data. I was also quickly able to expand on these provisional codes as I moved into an emergent theme analysis strategy as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

### ***Emergent Theme Analysis***

This form of analysis involves “discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one’s data” (Patton, 2002, p.453). An emergent theme analysis strategy involves using the data to discover the themes that emerge, describing them and hypothesizing about the relationships among them (Patton, 2002). This is another element of the data analysis process that I used in this study. The process of emergent theme analysis involves three basic steps: coding, memoing, and theme production. To facilitate this process, I utilized the ATLAS.ti v.5.0 qualitative data analysis and management software (Muhr, 2004). It assisted me in organizing my data, as well as in coding, searching, and sorting through the data for analysis purposes.

Codes serve as labels for assigning meaning to information compiled during a study (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). I utilized three levels of coding. First, I coded each document for the provisional start codes described earlier. Each interview transcript, field note, journal, newspaper article were entered into ATLAS.ti as a separate document. However, for purposes of analysis, groups of these documents that were related to Sonoma and Sonoma ISD history, all Latina participating mothers, each case study

mother, and Sonoma ISD parent involvement were established as separate units of analysis to facilitate case study analysis and cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998). The second level of coding involved me looking at each document and labeling with a code my perception of what was conveyed in segments of text. I then undertook focused coding as codes accumulated and a set of code names and their descriptions began to emerge; although still allowing more new codes to emerge if needed. (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

During the next stage of my analysis, I utilized memos and a researcher's log to move from coding to theme production. I used the memos function within the ATLAS.ti software to provide written explanations of the codes. They served to clarify and describe the code more fully, identify larger categories or themes that were merging, and record hypothesis emerging from the data about the relationship between these categories (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). In addition, I frequently found myself capturing my mental synthesizing of data in a paper log I kept with me; although, I often incorporated these jottings into my ATLAS.ti memos and my researcher's log. As I began to identify larger themes that emerged from the data, memos provided the descriptions of these overarching themes.

### ***Case Study Analysis***

A case study is a holistic description and analysis of a single person and/or context. The purpose of my analysis is building and communicating an understanding of the case. I gathered together all the data sources related to each individual case as one

unit of study as described above. What follows is a brief description of the analysis process that I used for these case studies.

I collected all data together related to each of the three mothers of Mexican origin and the community/school context to construct four case records in ATLAS.ti. A case record is defined by Patton (2002) as “a condensation of the raw case data organized, classified, and edited into a manageable and accessible file.” My goal was to develop descriptive narratives around broad themes to present holistic understandings of how these themes intersect within each case. I developed these themes around families of codes from the elements of the research study’s theoretical framework, which continued to have a good fit with the data, and from those that emerged from the emergent coding process.

In Chapters 6-8, I present each mother’s case study written around three main categories that were drawn across the three cases to address the research questions: personal background, parent involvement, and language ideologies and Spanish language maintenance (Merriam, 1998). By using these three main categories to organize each case study, it allowed for cross-case distinctions to be made more visible. Within each of the three categories, themes were identified and used to further organize each case study. For example under personal background; themes of family and educational background, current life circumstances, and key social and cultural resources unique to each case study were presented. By doing this, I illustrated through each case study the unique issues that emerged for each mother within these themes and the interrelationships between the categories and themes. Within each case study I was able to highlight the

nature of these Latina mothers' agency within the dailiness of parent involvement and its impact on the role they saw for Spanish in their children's lives.

As a final element of analysis, I identified themes within the community/school history data set and the Sonoma ISD parent involvement data set related to language, race relations, and education for Latina/os. These were then used to develop the community historical case portrait provided in Chapter 4 and the current Sonoma ISD parent involvement context within which the mothers of Mexican origin in this study function provided in Chapter 5.

I report my research findings in the next five chapters located in Parts II and III of this dissertation. I provide rich contextual descriptions in order to increase the transferability of my findings (Creswell, 1998). In these chapters I examine the influences of social-cultural-historical factors [within school parent involvement] on the acts of agency Latina mothers of Mexican origin; particularly how they manifest in their educational and language expectations for their children. In Part II, I offer Chapter 4 and 5 to build the context for the study. In Chapter 4, I provide a historical portrait of Sonoma and Sonoma ISD as it relates to Latina/os and education. Then, in Chapter 5, I introduce Sonoma ISD's figured world of parent involvement including its current parent involvement policies and practices and their impact on Latina/os. In Part III Chapters 6-8, I present Esther, Laura, and Anna. In these chapters I depict their agency within parent involvement providing a holistic view of how the data comes together in their lives as individual women. In Chapter 9, the final chapter, I discuss the overarching themes that emerged across all the participating Latina mothers and the implications of the findings of this research.

## **PART II**

### **SETTING THE CONTEXTUAL STAGE**

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### SETTING THE CONTEXTUAL STAGE

When their children enter public school, mothers of Mexican origin are confronted with an institutional system that introduces them into a world of parent involvement that is shaped by elements of broader contexts. The entrance of three Latina mothers (Esther, Laura, and Anna) into the world of Sonoma Independent School District (ISD)'s parent involvement brought a complex intersection of contextual factors into every interaction. Therefore, before I can discuss how the agency they expressed in their daily-lived parent involvement experiences impacted their language ideologies, I must present the key elements of the socio-historical context which form the backdrop for Latina mothers' interactions in Sonoma and Sonoma ISD.

Each context has a complex and unique history and progression that encompass political issues and power relations. In the case of Sonoma, these political issues and power relations are largely negotiated around issues of race and language. This is not surprising, as race is a central source of societal organization in the United States (Omi & Winart, 1994; Menchaca, 2001). Race is a social construct (Omi & Winart, 1994) meaning that what is defined as race is not fixed or static; rather, it shifts and changes over time (Omi, 1999). These racial constructs operate as social and political categories of inequality to wield political power. As Ochoa (2004) points out,

While Mexican Americans are usually discussed as an ethnic group that shares cultural characteristics, in the United States they have been racialized and socially constructed as distinct from European Americans both racially and ethnically (p.237).

Many times racial and ethnic categories function as overlapping categories of inclusion

and exclusion that are used to divide, rank, and discriminate. However, although ethnicity remains a construct that many Latina/os use as a frame of reference to distinguish and stratify themselves within the racial constructs we function in at any given moment in U.S. society, socially and politically, race remains the more powerful construct in the U.S. (Omi & Winant, 1994). Language is second only to race as a contested issue in the U.S. and is often used as a tool in racial power struggles (Flores & Yudice, 1997; Attinasi, 1997). Language has often been the vehicle by which Latina/os have attempted to politically reshape the institutions through which power is circulated. As such, it was important to consider the roles of both race and language within the contexts I explored in this study.

In the next two chapters I offer an overview of the historical backdrop of Sonoma and Sonoma ISD as well as the current dynamics within Sonoma ISDs ‘figured world’ of parent involvement. These are presented in Chapter 4 through the description of key events that highlight the ways in which Spanish and Latina/os are situated in these contexts, often maintaining them in positions of unequal political power. These events include Sonoma ISD’s history of language education, as well as the past and present political negotiations between Latina/os and the power elite of the community of Sonoma as manifested in school policies and practices. Additionally, Chapter 5 introduces the ‘figured world’ of Sonoma ISD parent involvement describing the current parent involvement discourse promoted, and how Latina/os and Spanish in particular are viewed and treated within the school context. This allows us to envision the complexity of past and present contextual factors that are entering the world of parent involvement with the mothers of Mexican origin studied as they enroll their children in public school.

## CHAPTER 4

### ”DON’T ROCK THE BOAT”

Sonoma is a suburban community with a population of just over 36,000. The tourism industry, the cornerstone of the local economy (Sonoma Chamber of Commerce, 2004), is built around its intensely visible German image. Outsiders are often surprised to realize that Latina/os represent an equal proportion of the city’s population as the Germans – one third. Despite a twenty-five percent increase in the city’s population since 1990, the racial profile of this community has remained relatively stable over the last thirty years (U.S. Census Bureau, 1970; 1980; 1990; 2000). Of the Latina/os reported in the 2000 census as living in this city, ninety-five percent were U.S. born. As we look at the school demographics, we begin to see hints of the future growth trends of this community. In the primary schools, Latina/os now represent nearly fifty-percent of the population (AEIS<sup>6</sup> Sonoma ISD Puma and Aguila Campus 2003-2004 School Reports).

During my interactions in Sonoma over the course of this study, I often witnessed elements of this community’s past seeping into the present school politics and policies. The seemingly ordered and civilized community relations between today’s Latina/os and its German citizens appear to still be recovering from forced change and past injustices. In this section I provide a discussion of how race and language uses expressed themselves

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<sup>6</sup> AEIS stands for the Academic Excellence Indicator System which reports on the annual performance of students in each school district in Texas through collection of a wide range of data collected through its Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). For more information link to the following website: [www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/about.aeis.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/about.aeis.html)

through Sonoma's evolving language education policies, key political and legal events in Sonoma's German-Latina/o relations, and the current state of Latina/o-German relations in Sonoma schools.

## ***LANGUAGE EDUCATION***

### ***German-English Bilingual Education***

Sonoma was founded in the mid 1800's under the Republic of Texas following the purchase of a parcel of a Spanish land grant by German immigrant settlers. These approximately 200 German founders of Sonoma brought with them a strong commitment to education and the maintenance of their own cultural heritage. Thus from the early days of their settlement in 1845, education was provided in German and in English. As one of the first school districts to become a public school system supported by citizen taxes (Blanton, 2004), they continued to provide German-English bilingual schooling until World War I when pressure from public sentiment against anything German surfaced and forced the ceasing of German instruction.<sup>7</sup> Since World War II this German stronghold has experienced a steady influx of outsiders. As a result, the German population's proportion of the population has been reduced (Smith, 1963). The forming of a Mexican School in 1908 (discussed later in this section) did not reflect the same commitment to bilingual education in Spanish-English. Instead, the focus was on English

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<sup>7</sup> For an excellent, detailed chronicling of the history and evolution of bilingual education in Texas including the German-English bilingual education programs of Central Texas where Sonoma, Texas is situated refer to Blanton's *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*.

acquisition and preparing Latina/o children for advanced grades by teaching them basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

### ***Foreign Language Education***

In the late 1950's in response to Russia's deployment of the Sputnik satellite, federal money under the National Defense Education Act was put into education for math, science, and foreign language instruction. It was as a result of this renewed emphasis on learning foreign languages that German was reintroduced in 1957. At that time approximately twenty-five percent of the students in Sonoma ISD were from homes where German was spoken. With the leadership of the Superintendent at the time, an innovative program of teaching Spanish and German at the elementary grades was instituted. In 1961, Russian was added. The purpose of this first of its kind in the nation foreign language program was to make "students really proficient in a second or third language—not just give them a smattering knowledge" (The Dallas Morning News, 12/10/1961). Of the total enrollment at the time of 3,200 students, almost half were taking language courses. This program was maintained until the early 1970's when children were noted to be having a lot of trouble reading. As they increased reading classes to two a day, they dropped the foreign language classes (Teacher Interview, 7/2/2004).

### ***State and Federal Bilingual Education***

The Sonoma ISD state funded bilingual education program was started in 1973 and included funding for a summer bilingual program. The community didn't fight

against the state bilingual program. Non-English speaking students were bused from other schools in the district to a central location to get their language skills assessed. The state bilingual education program continually struggled with limited personnel, undeveloped teaching practices, and limited administrative support. In the beginning, a combination of English as a Second language instruction and Spanish instruction were used. However, the teaching practices were untested and left teachers struggling to figure out how to implement them.

The state bilingual program dollars were also not enough to help with other internal issues that arose. Generally perceived as exclusionary, the additional resources directed to just bilingual students and teachers made many other teachers resentful. Bilingual teachers started noticing a change in people. Those that had been friendly and supportive in the past began to separate and distinguish between their kids and bilingual teachers' kids. They turned their backs on anyone and anything having to do with the bilingual program. They were heard saying things like, "Okay. Well now it's their responsibility. We wash our hands and we don't have to do anything with them. It's taken care of." All of a sudden bilingual teachers felt totally responsible for these children. Bilingual teachers began feeling isolated, left out, and labeled. One teacher described it this way, "It was like Charles Atlas..., who was the strongest man in the world with the world on his back. ...that's how I felt. All of us felt that way." (Teacher Interview, 7/2/2004)

In an effort to try not to exacerbate existing teachers concerns over unsubstantiated fears of losing their jobs, the district made a commitment to only hire bilingual teachers as the need arose or as teachers retired. These efforts to appease the

established members of the District resulted in the bilingual education program not beginning in kindergarten because all the kindergarten teachers were Anglo and monolingual English speakers. Thus initially, bilingual education began in first grade. First grade bilingual teachers then had to do two years work in one year. Despite these challenges, the state bilingual education program resulted in the first significant push to hire bilingual teachers in the district.

During this time Sonoma ISD had been applying and receiving federal Title I funding which had been used to hire bilingual teacher aides for the kindergarten classrooms. As their Title I funding began to be exhausted, the District searched for additional revenue sources. One option identified was new federal Title VII bilingual education funding. There was a sense that since they were already doing the state bilingual education program, the federal money could be used to support existing programs and services. Sonoma ISD received the federal Title VII bilingual education program. Unfortunately, a court ordered desegregation plan in response to a longstanding lawsuit filed against the district by Latina/o parents was decided during the same time that the Federal bilingual education program was begun (This lawsuit will be discussed later in this chapter). Therefore, the general perception in the community was that the federal bilingual education program was connected to the lawsuit and resulted in strong community opposition to the program.

Change and resistance were evident throughout the district. Despite the opposition, the bilingual education was expanded to kindergarten, the largest pool of bilingual teachers was hired, and an outside evaluator was secured to provide recommendations. However, according to the teachers I interviewed, the unwritten

philosophy adopted within the program was one associated with a transitional bilingual education program model where the main goal of a bilingual teacher was to make the transition of Latina/o children from Spanish to English as quickly as possible. In addition, no status was given to the program as the new Director of the Bilingual program was not given an administrative position or an office in the administrative building. This would have been the first time a Latina/o would have been an administrator at the district, but the district resisted taking this step. Neither the bilingual program nor Latina/os were accepted as equal members of the District.

### ***RACE, POLITICS, AND THE LAW***

*...Through policies which are explicitly or implicitly racial, state institutions organize and enforce the racial politics of everyday life. (Omi & Winant, p. 76)*

#### ***De facto segregation: The Mexican School (1908-1951)***

Schools were segregated, attendance laws were not enforced, and inferior equipment and facilities were provided for Latina/o students as compared to those provided to Anglos (Smith, 1997). Latina/o students in Sonoma were not segregated by laws but due to a form of de facto segregation common throughout Texas. Sonoma ISD School Board members decided in 1908 to open a separate school for Mexicans based on what they considered to be the best interests of the children. The decision was largely based on two factors, 1) a petition from the Latina/o community asking for a ‘separate school for their children’ and 2) the additional academic preparation deemed to be needed by Latina/o students due to a) their migration status that forced many to miss weeks of school, and b) their non-English speaking status. Although Latina/os initially

petitioned for the separate school, they soon discovered that any attempts to have Latina/o children attend the Anglo schools closest to their homes were denied.

Throughout the history of the “Mexican school”, it was plagued by high teacher turnover, overcrowding, and limited resources (Smith, 1997). The Sonoma ISD School Board continued to lack Latina/o representation throughout the history of the Mexican school. The Mexican school provided education for Latina/o students up to the sixth grade. With no access provided to the all-Anglo high school, Latina/os in 1924 petitioned the School Board for resources and most importantly for permission for their children to advance to high school. It would not be until 1929 that the school board finally allowed pupils in the Mexican school who completed the sixth grade to be admitted to the high school. In the 1930’s, a new Mexican School was built and renamed the Stephen F. Austin School. In 1933, the first Latina/o student graduated from Sonoma High School. Latina/o children continued to attend the separate Mexican elementary school until 1951, when it was announced, “The Latin-Americans this year will be absorbed into the system, and will not be housed in a separate school as in former years.” (Sonoma Herald Newspaper, 9/7/1951). This coincided with other city efforts to end segregation such as the opening of movie theater main floors and city park swimming pools to Latina/os.

### ***Political Negotiating***

As the number of Latina/os in the community increased so did their political leverage. By the late 1950’s politicians were actively soliciting the Latina/o vote. The

following series of events described by María, a Sonoma resident and retired teacher, depicts how the political negotiating occurred.

I graduated and we had come to a dance in the Spring [of 1956] to Sonoma, cuz he [Franco, my boyfriend] had friends here...He had these friends here in Sonoma and they invited us to this political dance, political fundraiser. Well all the biggies in Sonoma were there, the mayor, all the people that were running for office,...some school board members. They were at the West End Hall, which was the community hall [located in the area of town] that most Hispanics live [in]. They had this dance and we just came and we were having a good time dancing. I overheard some political talk and I didn't care about politics... 'What do you want if you give us the west side vote? ...He [a Hispanic man in the group] said, 'We want teachers, Hispanic teachers.' And they're [saying], 'Well, there aren't any that are qualified that apply.'" He said, 'Here's two right now [pointing to María and Franco]' ... She's graduating from Rice [University] and he has been teaching in Cuero and he's got his Masters degree.' Well of course they couldn't back down. They said, 'Well, would ya'll come to an interview?' I said, 'Yea, I guess so.' (Teacher Interview, 7/2/2004)

Despite these political negotiations, the two Latina/o teacher applicants found themselves taken through an unusual series of preliminary interviews prior to being allowed to even submit an official application for a teaching position. It seemed that those in political power in the community had to establish the qualifications of the applicants to be able to do their own political bargaining within their own power base. María describes her interview with the District principals:

We came and they were all very gracious. Except for one principal who was known for his...he still had a German accent and he talked about people who had a Spanish accent. He was a good man in that he understood the children but, he was guarded. Sink or swim. I'm afraid to say he was racist. He said something... 'Well, I like you. I'd hire you if I had an opening. But, you know people will be suspicious of your golden color. But I know that this other principal is going to need you. He needs you badly with his school. I know that the school on the west side needs you too.' I heard later that they weren't going to hire us. But someone on the Board covered up my name and he said, 'Now if her name was Smith would you hire her?' and they [the Board] said 'Of course we'd give her a chance.' He said, 'Well...?' He's the one that encouraged them. So we sent our application in and we were hired. (Teacher Interview, 7/2/2004)

María soon found out that getting hired was only the first step. The first piece of advice offered to her was to make sure not to ‘rock the boat.’ Every action taken by Latina/os hired by the district was watched. The principal at the school she was hired to teach in was told, ‘You watch her. Don’t let her use Spanish with the parents or the children.’ Despite this directive, the principal did not interfere with her teaching or pass on the request. María focused on teaching the children, avoided politics, and soon found herself repeatedly recruited to take charge of every new program that came along for non-English speakers. She continued this role into the 1970’s, when after initiating the federal bilingual education program and finally getting a substantial block of Latina/o bilingual teachers, she was able to recommend that administrative responsibility be given to another Latina bilingual educator. Previously, many of the Spanish-English bilingual teachers hired were Anglo.

### ***The Sonoma ISD Desegregation Lawsuit***

As a few Latina/os like María continued to work within the District, a group of Latina/o parents tired of the district’s discriminatory school placement and resource allocation practices ‘rocked the boat’ and filed a lawsuit in 1968 against the district on behalf of their 24 children. At the center of the issue were two schools, one 98% Latina/o and one 98% Anglo. The complaint was that school district boundary lines were producing actual segregation and providing discriminatory superior equipment, materials, supplies, and curricula for schools with predominantly non-Mexican-American pupils (Sonoma Herald and Zeitung Newspaper, 9/5/1968). Latina/o residents reported that some of the original German families who still lived in the neighborhood would transfer

their children to schools where there were more Germans. German families were allowed to make this transfers, but when a Latina/o family tried to change schools it was not allowed. The main person who spearheaded the lawsuit effort was an outsider from South Texas who had moved to the city. He was soon labeled 'radical' for challenging the status quo and his views were positioned by the power elite as not representing the majority of Latina/os in the community. The majority of the Latina/o community followed the lead of the power elite marginalizing the 'radical' elements that had entered their community.

The lawsuit proceeded through the court system through the mid 1970's changing the climate of the community in the process. The lawsuit made many residents angry and polarized the community. When the decision was filed in favor of the plaintiffs, the community was forced to face that there was a problem. Sonoma had no choice but to institute a plan that would remedy the segregation. The remedy instituted was to reassign each school throughout the district to serve designated grade levels for all district students. For example, the school that had 98% Latina/os became the first and second grade campus for all Sonoma ISD students and the 98% Anglo school became the third and fourth grade campus for all Sonoma ISD students. As a result, neighborhood schools, other than one at the center of town that had maintained racial diversity, were often a distance from families' homes.

According to María and other Sonoma community informants, there were many people from all sides of the community unhappy with the lawsuit. Many in the community thought the bilingual program was at fault for the forced changes to Sonoma ISD. Although it wasn't, the bilingual program took the brunt of the blame and the

expressions of anger and resentment expressed. The mainstream Sonoma ISD teachers felt threatened again. They were very unhappy because they were being shifted around to other schools. The feeling was these Latina/o children were getting too much help and that their Anglo children were being left out. The legacy of the desegregation lawsuit continued. I found that even today this lawsuit continues to shape the way the district is organized, the way educational resources are allocated, and the way the district is talked about within the community.

### ***TODAY'S RACE RELATIONS IN SONOMA***

There are causes of hope and lingering frustrations within Sonoma as in many communities across the United States who faced racial inequalities and the eventual course corrections that arise to remedy them. What follows is a brief overview of three main indicators that I use to provide a portrait of Sonoma's current status in its race relations: the implementation of language programs; the Latina/o approach to community issues; and the representation of Latina/os in leadership positions in the community and district. These indicators arose from the data obtained from Latina/o teacher and mother interviews as well as from Sonoma ISD and community informants about race relations in Sonoma.

#### ***Language Education Programs***

Over the years, Sonoma ISD's student population growth created the need for additional campuses at the elementary level. The new campuses were built on the east side of town and efforts were taken to ensure that enrollment catchment boundaries for all

campuses continued to allow for diverse representation. These efforts have had varying degrees of success over the years (I will discuss this further later in this chapter). A transitional bilingual education program approach has been in place at Sonoma ISD since the 1970's as described earlier in this chapter. Then, in 2001, Sonoma ISD hired Mr. Smith as principal for the Aguila (Pre-K to 1<sup>st</sup> grade) campus. He came from outside Sonoma with experience, new ideas, and a determination to start a Spanish-English dual language program. This action and the subsequent efforts taken by Mr. Smith have created potentials for long term change in the way the district approaches language education and the status given to Spanish in the schools. Therefore, I begin this section with discussion of the dual language program instituted at Sonoma ISD. I then contrast it with the larger transitional bilingual education program offered across the district.

***The Dual Language Program.*** Aguila campus principal Mr. Smith is Anglo, married to a Latina, fluently Spanish-English bilingual himself, and a past administrator in a dual language program. Over the course of his first year, he very carefully and deliberately educated key district and community members on all aspects of the dual language program. He did this through the formation of a dual language committee consisting of parents, teachers, and school administrators from his campus. They studied the dual language immersion model by reviewing current research, receiving training from dual language experts, conducting telephone interviews with schools across the nation instituting dual language programs, and visiting local area schools that had implemented the program.

By the end of the 2002-2003 school year he had garnered enough support for the program (from both Latina/os and non-Latina/os in the community) that the dual

language committee's proposal for an Aguila campus dual language program to the school board passed without resistance. The Dual Language Committee recommended that Sonoma ISD institute a 90-10 dual language program model. In 90/10 programs, ninety-percent (90%) of instruction in the early elementary grades is conducted in the language with the lower status in the community of the two targeted, in this case Spanish and ten-percent (10%) is taught in English, the higher status language (Cloud, Genesee, and Hamayan, 2000). The dual language program consists of classes that integrate monolingual or dominant English speakers and speakers of Spanish into roughly 50-50 ratios. The approach is described by Sonoma ISD as "a partial immersion model for the English-speaking child and a bilingual model for the Spanish-speaker." The ultimate goal of the program is that all students become bilingual, possess strong literacy skills in both languages, and attain a high level of cultural understanding while also gaining mastery of the state curriculum.

For the 2003-2004 school year, the dual language program's first year, a lottery was required to provide equal opportunity to enter the dual language program due to the larger than expected demand for the program. There simply were not enough slots available to meet the overwhelming demand. One Latina/o administrator commented about the dual language program:

I give him [the principal] a lot of credit for going out and doing his homework and not just mandating the program. ...that was when people said, 'No. He knows what he's doing.' He researched it. He talked to a lot of people. He brought the board in and said, 'This is what we plan to do...' ...and there was no argument! ...A lot of people are watching in the community to see how that works and what kinds of kids go there. It's also a status thing, believe it or not. If you have one parent that is of stature in the community and they like it, the others will follow. (CV Interview, 8/6/2004)

The program, now in its second year (2004-2005), offers Latina/o teachers and parents hope. They see Spanish and those that can speak it, long undervalued, suddenly raised in status in the community. However, there remain several tensions. First, although the dual language program is being strongly promoted, the district has chosen to not promote it as another component of its existing bilingual education options and it is only offered on a limited basis on the east side of the district.

***Transitional Bilingual Education.*** In contrast to the dual language program, the bilingual program is promoted as,

a program [to] enable Limited English Proficient students to become competent in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composing of the English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in their primary languages and English. The program – offered in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth – emphasize[s] the mastery of English language skills, as well as provide[s] ‘understandable instruction’ in their primary language in mathematics, science, and social studies. (Sonoma ISD Program Manual 2003-2004)

This model of transitional bilingual education is oriented toward the development of English through the continued use and support of the native language (in this case Spanish). It is a remedial approach that looks at children who do not speak English as having deficits that need to be ‘fixed’ to become English speakers (Roberts, 1995). It does not promote the development of bilingualism as the dual language program but rather continues to focus solely on the attainment of English proficiency (Baker, 2001). I found this problematic because it continued to perpetuate divisions between those enrolled in bilingual education programs that were seen as remedial versus those enrolled in regular education or dual language classes that had higher status in the community.

Second, with the program only being offered on the east side of the district where Aguila Primary School was located, there were constant requests to the campuses on the

west side of the district where Puma Primary was located to also begin a dual language program (Additional information on the district demographics will be discussed further in Chapter 5). The possibility of its expansion was limited according to Sonoma ISD central office administrators by the lack of anyone in the west side of the district willing to take on the leadership of this program. This was despite the fact that the west side of Sonoma was considered the longstanding stronghold of Latina/os in the community.

Finally, beyond the issue of the program models being implemented around language education, there is a guarded debate about what the inclusion of the Latina/o population means for administrators unused to working in campuses with diverse populations. When the west side primary campus expanded, from a Kindergarten campus to a Pre-K to first grade campus, a bilingual education classroom was added for each of the grade levels. Used to having its state ranking determined without the inclusion of this population, the west side campus administrator expressed concern to bilingual teachers on her campus over this population bringing down the campus scores and the campus's subsequent ranking. In one year's time, the west side campus scores did drop and the campus moved from a ranking in 2002-2003 of 'recognized' to a ranking of 'academically acceptable' in the 2003-2004 school year. According to some bilingual teacher informants, this has led to some resentment and additional push from administration on Latina/o parents and teachers to do their part to make sure this population of Latina/os 'keeps up'. The result has been a focus on remedial types of activities directed specifically at Latina/o children enrolled in bilingual classrooms and their parents.

### *Latina/o Community Approach to Issues*

Historically and into the present, the majority of Latina/os in Sonoma have stayed within their comfort zone. So tenuous is their perception of the hold they have on their voice and power within the community that they have chosen to not ‘rock the boat’ because what they have in the community might be taken away from them or it might get destroyed. This Latina/o resident captured the sentiments expressed by many in the community.

When I first came here I was told not to rock the boat. ‘Don’t rock the boat, just go along with everything and just do everything they tell you to do.’ That attitude is all over the West end [Hispanic community]. ...If you go out into the community, you don’t rock the boat; you don’t say anything and that’s that. ...people just never said anything in Sonoma because they were afraid they would have retribution, not just of their jobs, but their children, their families, where they lived; that there would be retribution for them becoming vocal. (Interview, 8/6/04)

In fact, many attribute the under-representation of Latina/os in leadership positions, not to a lack of opportunity but rather to a lack of Latina/o leadership. The same Latina/o resident goes on to describe what surfaced as a repeated theme in community interviews.

...they can’t find people to run. They can’t find anybody that wants to do it. ...You don’t have the leadership. You don’t have anybody that’s willing to take the risk and willing to stand up and say, ‘You know what, this is not right.’ ...Everybody kinda backs off because you may have retributions and you don’t know when those retributions will come and so you back off and you don’t rock the boat. The right person hasn’t come along that can grab everybody. We’ve tried. There’s a lot of people...they’ve tried to start those kinds of things here. But they always fall on deaf ears because there’s no support. (Interview, 8/6/04)

For many in the Latina/o community this is a continuing issue that has prevented progress from occurring faster for Latina/os in Sonoma. For others, they attribute the progress they have made thus far to their non-confrontational approach and their willingness to negotiate with those in power to find common ground that benefits both communities.

The result of these two approaches is a general sense of the Latina/o community being a complacent group willing to accept what is given to them.

### ***Latina/o Representation in Leadership***

Although the proportion of Latina/os in the community has remained relatively stable over the last 30 years, there have been improvements in their representation in leadership positions within the community. You now find Latina/o County Commissioners, School Board Members, physicians, and teachers. However, they remain underrepresented in all areas. The Sonoma ISD school board, which consists of seven elected members, includes one Latina/o representative. Within Sonoma ISD, despite Latina/os representing over 40-percent of the student body, Latina/os represent only eleven percent of the teachers employed in the district (AIES Sonoma ISD District Report 2003-2004). Latina/o district or campus administrators are even more difficult to find. It wasn't until the 1990's that the first Latina/o campus administrator (principal) was assigned. As many other Latina/os who entered the district over time, she was closely watched as she moved up through the ranks. After nearly fifteen years with the district she was assigned a principalship in the smallest campus in the district. It was a trial run to see how the community responded and to make sure she was not detrimental to the program. Having built fifteen years of credibility as a teacher within the district, she was well-received. Although, many did not believe she was Latina due to the lightness of her complexion. This was not an uncommon characteristic of many of the Latina/os who were the early pioneers within the district many of whom were either light-complexioned and/or had intermarried and had non-Latina/o surnames.

Since the arrival in the late 1990's of a new Superintendent, recruited from outside Sonoma, gains have been made in Latina/o representation in leadership positions. Latina/os now represent 5 of the 29 district and campus level administrators in the district (Sonoma ISD District Personnel List for 2003-2004; AIES Sonoma ISD District Report 2003-2004). There are also a number of administrators that have been hired from outside Sonoma. Among them are a few Latina/os. However, these Latina/o administrators entered the district facing discrimination as their qualifications and Latina/o status were viewed skeptically by others. As one Latina/o administrator commented,

I've been here 6 years. When I arrived, people were very skeptical of Hispanics. I was told, 'You are here because you are a token.' People actually said that to me. If you are Hispanic, you were automatically assumed to be a bilingual teacher [not an administrator]. It's gotten better in the last 3 years. What is helping it change is that new teachers have been hired that are open to new ideas. (Interview Field Notes, 1/16/2004)

Despite these issues, trends toward more Latina/o administrators and the hiring of people from outside the community were cited by Latina/o parents and teachers as signs of progress and opportunities for positive change. Yet, during a recent search for a new High School principal, the inner discussions held by Sonoma ISD personnel when reviewing candidates highlight the continuing tensions and uncertainty that existing residents have about the community's ability to accept Latina/os in leadership positions.

When I was on the committee to hire the new principal at the high school last year, one of the candidates was Hispanic and he was awesome. ... Well, when the committee sat...and I was the only Hispanic on the committee, when the committee sat and said 'Well, do you think Sonoma is ready for a Hispanic principal at the high school? And I said, 'Sure they are. Sure they are. They're ready.' And everybody was. But those [who asked the question] were the older people from Sonoma. Those are the one's that have been here for...you know, their parents have been here and their parents and so on. But, some of the newer people were very much in agreement that our population in Sonoma was

becoming more Hispanic and that we needed to have more representation at the administrative level. (Interview Field Notes, 8/6/2004)

Despite, these tensions and uncertainties it was the newcomers and the Latina in the committee that pushed beyond the issue of the candidate being ‘Hispanic’ and who were able to guide the committee to consider the candidate on his/her merits. In the end, the ‘Hispanic’ candidate did not make it to final consideration but the inclusion of the candidate in their pool allowed them to bring to the surface and confront the often unvoiced racial tensions and attitudes of the past and come to consensus about their preparedness for the changes that lie ahead.

### ***SUMMARY***

The history of Sonoma reveals a community changing. Although a long history of unequal power distribution is evident among the German power elite and the Latina/o community, they have moved forward, often pushed forward by the radical Latina/o elements no one seems particularly supportive of, particularly within the Latina/o community itself. María, like many other Latina/os in Sonoma, made a decision to work within the system and ‘not rock the boat’ in order to keep serving the Latina/o children she knew and loved. Today, this theme of ‘Don’t rock the boat’ continues to be expressed by Sonoma Latina/o parents and teachers alike who are still afraid of a) the repercussions and/or the derailing of progress if they rock the boat and b) the label of being a ‘radical’ like those who brought the lawsuit and created so much direct animosity toward Latina/os from their German neighbors. This is what Omi & Winant (1994) describe as a typical response by those in power when a community’s racial order has been destabilized

through a social movement (i.e, the lawsuit). The power elite in Sonoma, in an effort to re-stabilize the racial order so that its crucial elements remained intact, agreed to changes and absorbed the demands made by those that initiated the lawsuit. However, the power elite did this by enlisting the passive segment of the community, in this case those that 'didn't rock the boat', to take up the roles and practices defined by the redefined racial order. The active members of the movement were 'radicalized' and were given no role in the redefined racial order of the community. Thus, the passive segment of the Latina/o community sees and experiences change but it is superficial. In fact, fundamental change in power relations within the community remained unchanged. Equipped with an image of the current Sonoma community dynamics between Germans and Latina/os and how they have been shaped by the past, I now move the discussion onto Sonoma ISD to describe parent involvement policies and practices and their approaches and responses to Latina/o parents.

## CHAPTER 5

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SONOMA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (ISD)

Schools, as all social institutions, function as society's socialization agents within which collective ideas of what is a good education and how a good parent should be involved in their children's schooling are prescribed and reinforced (Nakagawa, 2000). These collective ideas form the 'figured world' of parent involvement (Holland, et. al., 1998). This 'figured world' is most powerfully witnessed through the examination of the written policies and the discourses conveyed and enacted by these educational institutions.

Sonoma ISD is no different. There are key players, set roles, and specific actions that hold more value than others. It is here within Sonoma ISD that the broader societal discourse of the 'ideal parent' is implemented and reinforced for parents while simultaneously converging with the deep-rooted local discourse about Latina/os and the role of Spanish in the schools. In an effort to detail the figured world of parent involvement as expressed in Sonoma ISD; I describe Sonoma ISD, the Sonoma ISD parent involvement policies, the parent involvement discourse revealed by these policies, and the parent involvement opportunities Sonoma ISD offers to all its parents. To understand how Latina/os are authored in Sonoma ISD's figured world of parent involvement, I then review how Latina/o parents are viewed by school personnel, the parent involvement opportunities made available to them, and the role of Spanish for Latina/o parents in this figured world. Following the conclusion of this chapter, I end

Part II with a summary of how the themes of race and language express themselves in the context of the city of Sonoma and Sonoma ISD.

### ***DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS***

To begin the discussion of parent involvement, we must first understand the demographics of the context in which it occurs. Sonoma ISD is a medium-sized district of about 6,329 students and 409 teachers. Its student enrollment has steadily climbed over the last ten years as the city's population has increased. Over thirty-six percent of students enrolled in the district are classified as economically disadvantaged; with only 7.3 percent classified as limited English proficient. Overall, with their student population being dominated by Whites and 'Hispanics', Sonoma ISD's demographics are not particularly diverse. Fifty-five percent (55%) of students are white, forty-three percent (43%) Hispanic, one-and-a-half percent (1.5%) African American, 0.2 percent Native American, and half percent (0.5%) Asian/Pacific Islander (AIES Sonoma ISD District Report 2003-2004). These demographics shift slightly when we enter the two Primary school campuses of Aguila and Puma.

Aguila Primary is located on the eastern side of Sonoma and houses 569 students from Pre-K to 1<sup>st</sup> grade. This campus is described by district administrators as populated by middle class, white collar families. The Aguila Parent Involvement Director who is focused on working with 'at risk' students and their families described the campus differently.

She stated that she was surprised by the poverty level of some of the families. She used to work in the poorest school in an adjacent district and although the school building is new and some of the surrounding houses are upper middle class

subdivisions, there are pockets that are even poorer than where she was before. (Field Notes, 12/11/2003)

Based on the Aguila campus data, both descriptions are accurate. In fact, 48.5% of students from Aguila are classified as economically disadvantaged, 14.2% have a classification of Limited English Proficient (LEP), and 49.9% of the student population is Hispanic. The second campus is Puma Primary. It is located on the west side of town, commonly considered the Hispanic stronghold of the community, and is a relatively small campus with only 359 students from Pre-K to 1<sup>st</sup> grade. A district administrator described the Puma campus as “a higher income area of town. They [parents in this campus] create more of a fuss and have a bigger voice in the district” (Field Notes, 1/16/2004). These voices, as reported to me by a couple of community informants, come from a largely white, affluent section of the campus attendance zone that is able to exert power by threatening to move their children to private schools if their voices are not heard and acted upon. Despite this perception of affluence, Puma has similar demographic characteristics as the Aguila campus: 51.3% of students are classified as economically disadvantaged, 15.9% have a classification of LEP, and 57.9% of the student population is Hispanic. It is important to note that in my observations, the campus descriptions offered by the district administrator reflected the segment of the parents in that campus that held the power and therefore exerted the greatest influence over local school decisions.

In spite of the contrasting perceptions and demographics of Sonoma ISD, there remains a collective way the district talks about and represents how all parents should interact with schools. This is what Nakagawa (2000) refers to as the ‘parent involvement

discourse.’ It is school’s policies that are the vehicle through which these collective ideas are communicated and reinforced to parents. It is this parent involvement discourse revealed through policies that begins to sketch an image of how schools view the roles of parents and the expected actions of the ‘ideal parent’ as defined within the figured world of Sonoma ISD’s parent involvement.

### ***THE PARENT INVOLVEMENT DISCOURSE OF SONOMA ISD***

Nakagawa (2000) argues that schools socially construct a specified ‘ideal’ image of a ‘good’ parent through texts (i.e., policies, communications, and narratives). This provides a means through which to focus and describe one particular aspect of Sonoma ISD’s figured world of parent involvement: the discourse. In examining Sonoma ISD’s texts, I was able to identify the major precepts of their parent involvement discourse and the characteristics and expectations of the ‘ideal’ parent promoted by Sonoma ISD to parents.

In the past, Sonoma ISD’s parent involvement activities had not been a focus. As one administrator reported, “Five years ago, parent involvement was zip, especially for bilingual parents” (Field Notes, 1/16/2004). However, with the inception of national educational accountability and high-stakes testing, additional parent involvement requirements have become the foundation of all of our nation’s public school systems. There is strong motivation to fulfill these requirements as every public school in the nation is required to meet the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001* in order to continue to receive federal education funding through the state. The requirements under the *NCLB Act of 2001* include provisions in four key areas: 1)

parent's involvement in educational policy development; 2) commitment to shared responsibilities between schools and parents for high academic achievement; 3) the building of parent capacity for parent involvement; and 4) assurance of parent access to parent involvement to the extent practicable. This emphasis is at least partially due to research that asserts that parent involvement positively impacts student achievement (Henderson and Berla, 1994; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Steinberg, 1996). In many instances parent involvement is part of a strategy to improve education for children of color and those from low-income families (Fine, 1993). However, the practices advocated in Sonoma ISD, as in many school districts in the U.S., remain grounded in white, middle-class conceptions of the 'ideal parent' (Lareau, 2000; McNeal, Jr., 1999) leaving parents who do not practice these values to be challenged or found lacking in some way (Shannon, 1996; Fine, 1993; Delgado-Gaitán, 1991).

Sonoma ISD provides parents at the beginning of each school year with a school handbook that specifies school district policies and expectations. It provides information on everything from the school curriculum to immunizations and bus transportation guidelines. Since the inception of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Sonoma ISD has added specific language to their vision statement and sections of their school handbook regarding parent involvement to acknowledge its compliance with these NCLB provisions. In the following section, I review the Sonoma ISD parent involvement vision statement and a selected section of the school handbook specific to the school-parent partnership compact. I do this to highlight the underlying discourse revealed through these texts about how Sonoma ISD defines the role of parents in relation to schools and the characteristics and expectations of the "ideal" parent.

Sonoma ISD's parent involvement vision statement establishes some important themes communicated about the role of parents in relation to schools.

Sonoma ISD believes that the family, the community and the school are partners in education. Sonoma ISD will follow federal and state expectations and guidelines for parent involvement. Parent involvement is paramount in the Sonoma ISD as it partners with parents to enhance the academic and social success of all students. (District Parent Involvement Statement on Sonoma ISD Website 2003-2004)

In the above vision statement, the Sonoma ISD uses the term 'partners' twice. Its use emphasizes that a school's work cannot be done alone. Next, parent involvement is noted as 'paramount' and a key to academic and social success of students. It situates parents as the answer to schools problems; holding them up as a resource. However, as the text in Figure 1 reveals, there are specific ways in which schools want parents to be involved. And parents are often only considered a resource if they are involved in school in ways that meet this 'ideal' parent image the school seeks. If parents attend parent-teacher conferences, do the home activities the teacher suggests, participate in school events, volunteer, respond to school communications, encourage their children to do as the school says; they become the 'ideal' parent schools seek –they are parents that make the school's work easier and thus these parents become resources. Finally, the district highlights its compliance with federal and state guidelines. This points to the extent to which its actions are organized and constrained to meet the requirements set forth by these policies. The subscript is: 'The school is powerless and at the mercy of parents and government requirements to achieve the outcomes of student academic and social success.'

What is the ‘ideal parent’ image the school seeks? Examining Figure 1, I find that this Sonoma ISD text describes a list of parent involvement actions that Sonoma ISD expects the ‘ideal parent’ to do. Although described as a partnership, the school handbook focuses on the actions schools expect parents to take. Parent involvement is framed around specific responsibilities that parents have to their children.

**Figure 1. Text of Sonoma ISD Parent Involvement Policies**

<p><b>“Parent Involvement-</b> <i>Partnerships with homes and schools-</i> Education succeeds best when there is a strong partnership between home and school. The partnership thrives on communication. The school asks parents to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage a child to put a high priority on education and to commit to making the most of the educational opportunities provided by the school.</li><li>• Stay informed of school activities by reading “mail” distributed on a weekly basis or daily assignment notebooks. Teachers will send home graded papers, notes, a citizenship folder, calendars, and/or school newsletters on a daily or weekly basis.</li><li>• Become familiar with all of your child’s school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the ISD.</li><li>• Discuss with the counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.</li><li>• Monitor your child’s academic progress and contact teachers as needed.</li><li>• Attend scheduled conferences and request additional conferences as needed.</li><li>• To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, counselor, or principal, please call the school office for an appointment. A teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during his or her conference period or at a mutually convenient time before or after school.</li><li>• Become school volunteers.</li><li>• Become active members of PTA.</li><li>• Provide the school with a complete and up-to-date address and phone number for home and work.</li><li>• Contact the school to share important information: (special health problems, serious illness, death in the family, divorce, or other information that could affect the behavior of a child.)”</li></ul> <p>(Excerpt from Sonoma ISD Elementary Handbook 2003-2004, p. 4)</p>
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There are the parent-teacher conferences, the PTA meetings, the volunteering, the homework, and the general expectation that a parent’s efforts will all be focused on consciously creating learning experiences for their children that reinforce what is taught

at school. Thus, the ideal parent is a parent who visits the school campus, whose schedule revolves solely around the school's needs, and who does what the school asks them to do. It is not the parent that is actively engaged with their children only in the home, the parent who may not speak English, the parent who openly questions the actions of the school, the parent who economically cannot afford to take time off to volunteer. Because the 'ideal' parent does the work of schools, there is an implication that the ideal parent is also one who doesn't challenge the school.

The parent involvement actions described as part of this parent involvement discourse is defined by schools. Inherent within the discourse are deficit messages and representations of parents. For example, in the Sonoma ISD vision statement discussed earlier and in the school handbook excerpts in Figure 1, the burden of student success is placed on parents. They emphasize that schools can do their part. However, without the involvement of parents, as defined by schools, student success is unattainable. There are other deficit messages implied in these same two texts. First, Sonoma ISD may demand parent involvement in exchange for providing quality education. Second, parents are failing their children if they are not involved or do not do enough to support schools as the 'ideal parent'. There is little mention of the actions to be taken by the school to accommodate and communicate with parents as part of this partnership. In addition, the expectations described are tied to the needs of the school. They center on ways that parents can support a school's work with children and mostly ignore the ways that the school can define joint goals with parents that incorporate parents' and students' needs and priorities. These deficit messages and representations of parents are not unique to Sonoma ISD. They are messages that have been identified by other researchers as part

of the larger parent involvement discourse promoted in the U.S. (Nakagawa, 2000; Fine, 1993; Delgado-Gaitán, 1991).

The reality is that seldom do actual parents match the ‘ideal’ parent image. The result is that parents become identified as the source of school problems when they don’t meet this ideal. This puts the weight of the problem of children’s academic failure on the perceived individual deficits of parents of children of color and not on the structural inequalities that reproduce educational inequalities. The ‘parent involvement discourse’ that is established is one that offers conflicting messages: parents are the solution and parents are the problem. These messages set up Sonoma ISD to have to reconcile these conflicting messages by informally classifying parents based on the degree to which they meet the ‘ideal’ parent image. (I will discuss this issue of the categorization of parents and the corresponding status assigned to them in the next section). I argue that through recent national educational accountability policies, this parent involvement discourse and its deficit messages and representations of parents has only been further institutionalized in Sonoma ISD and continues to perpetuate the hegemonic power relations in place within Sonoma, a result that is consistent with findings from other researchers (de Carvalho, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Nakagawa, 2000).

### ***SONOMA ISD’S EXPRESSED VIEWS OF LATINA/O PARENTS***

School districts often view Latina/o parents’ involvement in schools from a deficit view due to a lack of awareness of the educational resources and strategies used by Latina/o parents in their households (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). In interviewing and observing Sonoma ISD personnel as they discussed and conducted parent involvement

activities, I specifically set out to understand how they viewed and interacted with Latina/o parents.

The views of school personnel toward Latina/o parents were full of characteristics that at once praised Latina/o parent involvement efforts while also reinforcing many stereotypes. This was prevalent even from school personnel that were Latina/os themselves and considered themselves advocates for Latina/o families. In many cases these were the individuals that practiced what Villenas (2001) termed ‘benevolent racism’ providing well-intentioned parent involvement opportunities and interventions that perpetuated Latinas as ‘in need’, ‘victims’ of Latino male machismo, and as ‘lacking’ in needed skills to speak English and educate their children. In the following excerpts from interviews with school personnel, various specific examples of qualities that have been attributed to Latina/o families are provided. The qualities emphasized to me thus created a particular image of a Latina/o parent that was perpetuated in Sonoma ISD schools.

They (bilingual parents) are always wanting more. There are a lot of moms that don’t read or write. At this school they are very close knit. There are only three bilingual teachers. Many of the families come from very traditional homes where the woman is expected to be home with the kids and take care of the house and have dinner at the table for her husband and be waiting for him. (Field Notes, 1/14/2004)

In this excerpt, Latina/o parents are described by the school parent involvement coordinator as ‘always wanting more’ and having close knit families. In explaining what was meant by ‘always wanting more,’ the parent involvement coordinator explained that these parents always wanted to learn more ways to help their children. Latina/o parents’ willingness and eagerness to learn for the benefit of their children was a characteristic

that many of the school personnel highlighted. In addition, the parent involvement coordinator depicted Latina women as victims of traditional patriarchal roles that position them as caretakers of their homes, children and husbands. In expanding upon her description of how close knit Latina/o families are and her own adoption of this quality, she describes the following scenario, “When you go visit [Latina/o families’ homes] there are four families and twenty people living at the same address. I used to comment on that and now I’m one of them” (Field Notes, 1/14/2004). In this next excerpt, she reinforces her image of Latina/o parents as interested in education while acknowledging that this is an image that is not generally associated with Latina/o parents.

There are higher numbers of bilingual parents participating [in PTA meetings] than the other parents. “You wouldn’t think so but they are the ones that really care about their children’s education.” (Field Notes, 1/14/2004)

As a Latina school personnel member, she positions herself to me as a person who has become an insider and really knows these families. In addition, she specifically describes Latina women as stay-at-home mothers who cater to their children and husbands but who also have high rates of illiteracy. Further, she describes Latino fathers as laborers who like to do things with their hands. She does this in our interview when she discusses her efforts to get Latino fathers involved.

They’re used to working with their hands. A lot of them work in construction or masonry. So, when a project came up that needed volunteers to help build the school patio, I thought that would be a great project to get these fathers involved. (Field Notes, 1/14/2004)

As this example illustrates, the way that she positioned Latina/o mothers and fathers guided the kinds of parent involvement activities she offered to them. Excerpts from other school personnel narratives highlight their perception of Latina/o parents’ tardiness

to school events as a cultural characteristic, and the existence of a tendency among Latina/o Spanish-speaking parents to know more English than they reveal to school personnel.

The training was scheduled to begin at 5:00pm but at 5:00pm no parent had arrived. One of the bilingual teachers said, “I’m learning that its 5pm but it will be 5:30pm. If I say 5:30pm, it will be 6:00pm. It’s part of the culture.” Finally, around 5:30pm parents begin to arrive with their children. (Bilingual Parent Training Field Notes, 4/5/2004)

There was one point in the [migrant parent meeting] presentation when she was talking about children getting recognized for perfect attendance when she could not recall the word in Spanish for “Recognize.” As she struggled to remember the word, several people jumped in with a few of the mothers speaking in English. At hearing some of the mothers use English, the PEIMS Director said, “So some of you DO know some English. That’s very good.” (Field Notes, 1/16/2004)

In most cases, school personnel’s descriptions of Latina/o parents conjured up images of a homogenous, immigrant Spanish-speaking Latina/o parent community. Yet, as described earlier in this chapter, Sonoma’s Latina/o population is made up largely of U.S. born Latina/os. It was only the narrative from a district administrator that began to build a more heterogeneous image of Sonoma ISD’s Latina/o parents by acknowledging the presence of U.S. born Latina/os. However, even this school staff person shifted quickly to highlighting the characteristics of the immigrant, Spanish-speaking Latina/os whose children participate in bilingual education/migrant programs.

U.S. borns [Latina/o parents] are the ones that get involved. Bilingual education/migrant [parents] don’t usually go to PTA or other things. They do go to Math night or Reading night. I tell the campus staff to make sure someone welcomes them [Latina/o parents] in their own language when they walk into campus. This is basic, but I had to tell the person from the school, send the information in the native language, and have someone visible there that they know. There are different rates of participation of mothers and fathers. If they are involved in their kids schools the kids do well academically. The ones involved are more educated in México and the women don’t come very proud of what they were. The more educated or with degrees in México [they] have jobs

that pay a bit better and tend to get more involved. The stay at home moms are very involved. Those that didn't have education have the hardest time. They are usually the ones that don't want bilingual education. (Field Notes 1/16/2004, Administrator)

This administrator saw U.S. born Latino/a parents as a group highly involved in the schools and implied that as such they did not require attention. In contrast, immigrant Latina/o parents were acknowledged to come from different educational backgrounds in México resulting in different types of U.S. employment. These characteristics are then identified as having a significant impact on the level of parent involvement in schools for immigrant Latina/o parents. As in the first excerpt, it is those Latina/o parents that are considered to not have an education that are viewed as having the greatest difficulties. In addition, as in an earlier excerpt, this administrator views Latina/o parents as needing their cultural values acknowledged through the presence of personnel familiar to Latina/o parents to greet them at events in their own language. This view of Latina/os as needing Spanish and a personal connection to feel comfortable at an event is one that immigrant Latina/o parents I met at various Sonoma ISD parent involvement activities acknowledged as important to them. Some U.S. born Latina/os on the other hand, were uncomfortable with these school efforts to accommodate immigrant Latina/o parents' linguistic needs. As one U.S born Latina mother said to me,

...To me it's like hey you're over here now you know and you run into people that don't want to learn the English. But it's like hey you know you're here on this side now you should learn to communicate. (Betty Interview, 2/28/2004)

I found these comments to point to Latinas/os as not being a homogenous group. Latina/os had diverse views of themselves as a community with aspects of the community aligned with the internalized dominant mainstream views about them.

Sonoma ISD school personnel had their own particular perceptions and images of Latina/o parents. Their decisions about the kinds of parent involvement opportunities and how they were structured for Latina/o parents were directly based on these images and perceptions. In the next two sections, I look at Sonoma ISD personnel's efforts at parent involvement and specifically at their efforts for Latina/o parents.

### ***SONOMA ISD PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES***

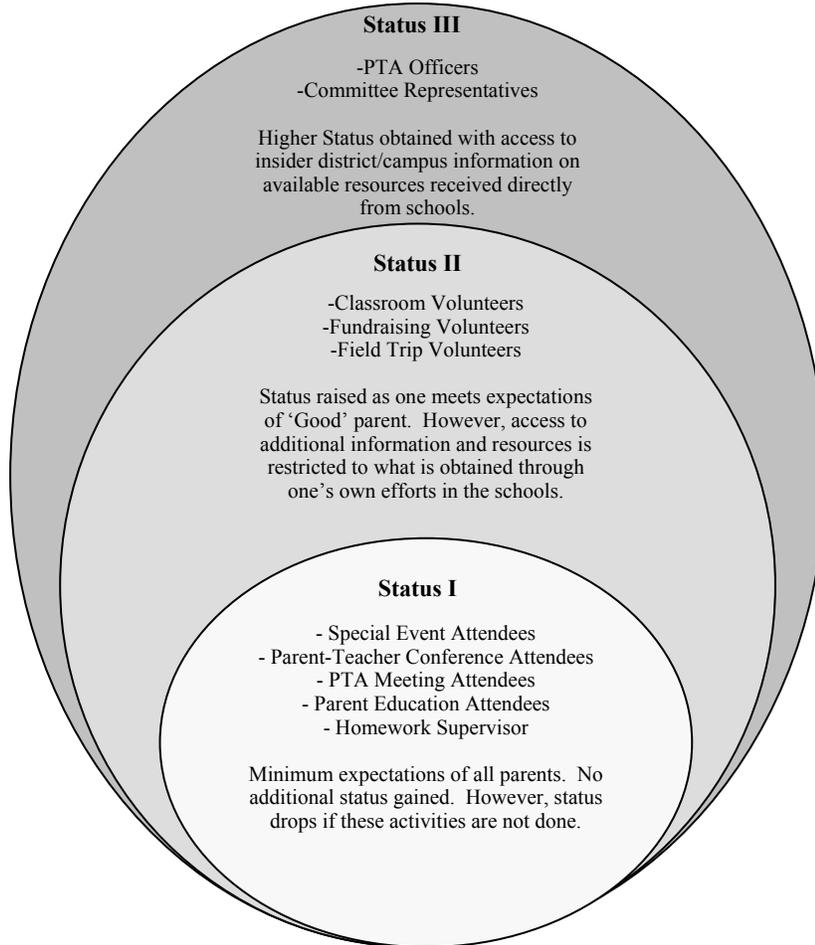
Within Sonoma ISD, there are many parent involvement opportunities offered. However, not all parent involvement opportunities have the same status. There are some opportunities that provide higher status and more access to campus/district resources.

#### ***The Politics***

In Sonoma ISD I found what I classified as three status levels of parent involvement opportunities with Status I opportunities having the lowest status and Status III opportunities the highest (See Figure 2). I offer this description of the status levels of parent involvement opportunities in Sonoma ISD based on my analysis of the observations of parent involvement activities, my interviews with school personnel and administrators, and finally my interviews with the mothers. Status I opportunities were those that all parents were expected to participate in (i.e., special events, parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, parent education trainings, homework). There was no additional status gained by participating. These were simply activities that parents were expected to participate in by school personnel as evidenced by the written reminders provided to parents about the importance of their participation. However, a parent's

status dropped if they did not participate in these Status I opportunities. According to the Campus Parent Involvement Directors, it was within these Status I parent involvement opportunities that non-participating parents were identified, labeled as ‘at risk’, and tagged for intervention or remediation activities. In addition, any parent who was identified as ‘at risk’ due to other factors (i.e., Spanish-speaking, economically disadvantaged) was offered Status I remedial parent involvement opportunities coordinated through the Campus Parent Involvement Director.

**Figure 2. Parent Involvement Roles and Their Status**



For example, the parent education trainings were remedial activities that had lower status within the school and were a standard part of the parent involvement opportunities offered to parents of children enrolled in bilingual classes for both primary campuses. I considered these trainings remedial because their focus was on ‘fixing’ parent’s deficit skills with an assumption that there were deficits to fix. A parent’s status was only raised, meaning she was in good standing with the Campus Parent Involvement Director, if he/she was completing the school-directed remediation and becoming the ‘new and improved, good’ parent they were training them to become. At the parent education trainings I observed and those described by the mothers I talked to, parents did not have access to any decision makers. I found this to be particularly true in those parent education trainings contracted to be done by individuals from outside the district, which happened to be most of them.

Status II opportunities were those that were expected of any ‘good’ parent (i.e., Status I parent involvement opportunities plus volunteering for classrooms, fundraisers, special events, or field trips). These opportunities were associated with an elevated status for parents that participated. They were the parents labeled as “good” parents. However, this status only provided parents access to the school information and resources they happened to overhear or stumble upon. Therefore, often despite a very visible presence in the school, parents involved in this type of parent involvement opportunities, had limited access to persons with power in the district/campus unless they had achieved ‘problem-maker’ status. ‘Problem-maker’ status had an elevated status in that they had access to persons in power in the district/campus to listen and respond to their complaints. However, in my observations it appeared that their power within the inner

circle of district/campus politics was restrained by district/campus personnel's control over their access to parent decision-making/leadership positions. For example, Anna, one of the case study mothers, was a mother that teachers cautioned other teachers about. She was visible, made surprise visits to her son's classroom, and questioned school policies. Her status was elevated in the sense that when she complained, people at the school listened and accommodated her wishes. However, despite her visibility at the school, her expressed desire to participate, or her awareness of the political access participation in these committees would give her, she had not been invited to participate in leadership roles within campus or district level committees.

Status III opportunities were those available to a limited number of parents often selected by the persons with power in the district/campus. For example, committee involvement, a Status III parent involvement opportunity, elevated selected parents to central roles in the district that allowed them access to district/campus insider information and resources before it was available to the public. This meant that in many instances parents involved in Status III opportunities perpetuated their elevated status by being able to access many resources and opportunities that were offered by Sonoma ISD on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The issue of parent selection was central because it determined who had access to the Status III parent involvement opportunities; meaning those with the most status in the schools. School personnel at all levels described a similar parent selection process whereby being at the right place at the right time with the right attitude played a major role. It was here that the politics of parent involvement within this figured world became evident. One administrator described it this way,

At evening meetings, we get to know families. There are some that really stand out. But we also go with what the teacher tells us. We look for parents that are knowledgeable of the district and interested. They are contacted through the teacher who gets parents involved. (Field Notes, 1/16/2004)

Due to the parent selection process used by Sonoma ISD, parents who fill the slots are not necessarily representative of most parents and are not those parents who have achieved 'problem-maker' status and would challenge the school district. They tend to be those who fit Sonoma ISD's image of the 'ideal' involved parent and who are known not to 'rock the boat.' For example, Ms. Franklin was an English monolingual Latina who was educated, married to a white man of German ancestry, participated in every event and volunteered whenever she was needed. Her children did well in school and she was on personal terms with most of the school personnel including the principal, the Campus Parent Involvement Director, and many teachers. According to the Campus Parent Involvement Director, when requests came in for a parent representative to a committee, she was one of the first ones they considered because they always knew they could count on her.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, despite being mothers who were highly involved in their children's school, none of the case study mothers were selected for committees. Each of the Spanish-speaking case study mothers participated in the parent education sessions offered through the bilingual education teachers and one of them was also offered an opportunity to participate in the district level parent education sessions. What I believe are the reasons for this I will discuss further in the next three chapters that highlight three Latina mothers' individual lived experiences in Sonoma ISD.

### ***Levels of Parent Involvement Opportunities***

Within Sonoma ISD there are regional, district, campus, and classroom levels of parent involvement programs and activities. Each of these levels offers different types of opportunities.

***Regional Level Parent Involvement.*** The state of Texas is divided into twenty regional education service centers that provide training and technical assistance to assigned groups of local school districts that are located within their geographic region. In an effort to promote sharing across local districts in the region, trainings and committees have in some cases been combined. This results in some regional parent involvement opportunities for a limited number of local district parents. For example, in the case of Sonoma ISD, during the 2003-2004 school year, the Migrant Parent Advisory Committee went from a local district committee to a regional committee with slots for only two local Migrant parents to attend. This particular Status III parent involvement opportunity presents some issues for local parents. In addition to there being a limited number of slots available for parents to participate, the location was one-hour outside the city of Sonoma which presented another barrier. Although transportation was provided by Sonoma ISD, it still required parents to obtain child care and take more time either from work or home responsibilities. This had two outcomes. First, it was more difficult to recruit parents because it required a more significant commitment. Second, it limited the input of a wider group of migrant parents.

***District Level Parent Involvement.*** At the district level, the parent involvement opportunities in Sonoma ISD revolve around serving as a representative on decision-making committees and attending trainings organized through collaborative partnerships

with local community partners. The district level committees all have specific requirements regarding committee composition, especially strict parent representation guidelines. Some of the committees are the District Parent Advisory Committee, District-wide Educational Improvement Council; and the Parent Committee of the Special Budget Review Initiative. These parent involvement opportunities were considered Status III opportunities. In practice, these committees have limited slots for parents and offer parents limited impact on decisions made regarding policies these committees choose to endorse.

In Sonoma ISD, the overall district approach to parent involvement has shifted in recent years from one that was locally controlled to a model whose central feature is the contracting out of parent involvement activities to other community agencies. This raised some issues around parent access. For example, the district-wide bilingual parent meetings were contracted out to be done in collaboration with Sáenz Health District. Sáenz had received a grant to provide monthly parent education to Spanish-speaking parents of young children. In their agreement with Sonoma ISD, they provided the district with fifteen slots available on a first-come, first-serve basis for interested district parents. A flyer was sent through classroom teachers to bilingual classrooms about the parent education trainings. The program required parents to commit to attend the entire series of trainings. Dinner and child care was provided during the parent education trainings conducted in Spanish (Field Notes, 1/16/2004). The result was a Status I parent involvement activity with a limited number of parents having access to participate. In addition, the content of the trainings were geared toward remediating parents' perceived limited skills as a parent. Participation in these Status I parent involvement opportunities

served to move parents to the status of ‘good mother’ meaning the parent was working towards becoming an ‘ideal parent’.

***Campus Level Parent Involvement.*** There is a lot of communication that is occurring from the schools to parents through various forms of paperwork at the campus level. As was evidenced in district level activities, campus level parent involvement activities are contracted to an outside agency who houses a staff person at each local campus. This agency is Communities In Schools (CIS). The mission of CIS is to help ‘at risk’ youth stay in school and prepare for life. The Campus Parent Involvement Directors accomplish this by providing the following six components on each served campus: educational enhancement, supportive guidance/counseling, health & human services, enrichment activities, parental involvement, pre-employment and employment services (CIS website). At the two primary campuses from which I recruited mothers, CIS is the parent involvement contact. One of the challenges for local CIS Campus Directors is their multiple responsibilities beyond parent involvement. Their roles within each primary campus, although similar in description, operate differently in practice due to the skills of the CIS Campus Parent Involvement Director assigned and how much of the parent involvement responsibility has been delegated to them by the Campus Principal. For example, the CIS Campus Parent Involvement Director at Aguila Primary was a new employee who was white, English monolingual, and came from an adjacent district. This forced her to rely more heavily on existing staff and the principal within the campus, including those that were Spanish-speaking, to communicate with parents. In contrast, the CIS Campus Parent Involvement Director at Puma Primary was a seasoned employee, raised in the community, Hispanic, Spanish-speaking, and a social worker by training.

She was left to conduct her business, including home visits independently. As one of a limited number of Spanish-speaking staff on the Puma Primary campus, she was also relied on heavily for all written and oral communication to Spanish-speaking parents. In turn, Spanish-speaking parents and the principal relied on her to mediate problems that arose. However, since the CIS Campus Parent Involvement Directors were employees of a contracted agency, when tough issues arose that required confrontation of school personnel or teachers, they were left ineffective. According to school informants and Laura, one of the case study mothers; school employees did not recognize CIS Parent Involvement Directors as having any status or power to interfere in what they considered to be ‘internal school business.’

Each campus is responsible for offering parent involvement opportunities. Those offered at Aguila and Puma Primaries were relatively the same. The only exception was Aguila Primary’s dual language parent committee that was focused on monitoring the implementation of the new dual language initiative on that campus. Due to the strong promotion of this program, parents serving on this committee established this activity as a high status ‘cutting edge’ parent involvement opportunity. This was one of the few cases where it was not the school but rather the parents themselves that had established the extra status of the activity. Other parent involvement opportunities offered at Aguila and Puma Primary were: trainings for bilingual education parents, special events (science night; cinco de mayo celebration; Kite day, student performance event), PTA Board and general membership meetings, Campus Improvement Committee meetings, fundraisers, and individualized interventions for ‘at risk’ families (i.e., home visits, food distribution,

literacy tutoring). Parent involvement opportunities of Status I, II, and III were all offered at each campus.

There were some parent involvement opportunities that were particularly defining. The most significant Status III parent involvement opportunity was election as an officer to the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Attending the PTA meetings themselves was inconsequential. These meetings lasted five to ten minutes and their agendas focused on fundraising, the volunteer needs of the campus, and the annual elections of the PTA Officers. Becoming a PTA officer on the other hand was a key to the innermost workings of the district/campus. It provided those parents that were elected the most influence and power leverage of the parent opportunities available in Sonoma ISD. At the other end of the spectrum, the individualized interventions provided to what the school labeled as ‘at risk’ parents were considered at the bottom end of Type I parent involvement opportunities. These were parents that Sonoma ISD had identified as not being able to provide their children with the minimum supports that schools expected all parents to provide to their children.

***Classroom Level Parent Involvement.*** It is in the classroom directly with the teacher that this level of parent involvement opportunities was offered. Although, parent-teacher conferences, classroom field trips, classroom volunteering, homework, and daily review of student notebooks and weekly newsletters were part of every classroom’s repertoire of available opportunities for parents, how much these opportunities were promoted and encouraged of parents was up to each individual teacher. Therefore, the amount of involvement of parents in classrooms is dependent on the teacher and on the parents own initiative to gain entry into the classroom. The opportunities provided at the

classroom level were classic Status II opportunities. The parents involved at this level were known as ‘good mothers’ because they worked toward meeting school-defined parent involvement. According to the Latina mothers I interviewed who participated at the classroom level, by participating at this level they established personal relationships with direct service school personnel (i.e., teachers, cooks, librarians) and gained access to the informal campus gossip. This provided them with information about a) who had power on campus at a particular point in time, b) how situations had been resolved in the past, and c) what challenges they should watch out for. These parents were then armed with this information and used it to make decisions about how to approach the schools. We now turn to Sonoma ISD’s specific efforts to involve Latina/o parents.

### ***SONOMA ISD’S EFFORTS AT LATINA/O PARENT INVOLVEMENT***

Language intersects with power in the way a particular linguistic form is used in schools to legitimate and structure the ideologies and modes of life of specific groups. (Giroux, 1988, p.99)

With educational accountability’s parent involvement provisions and a growing population of Spanish-speaking Latina/o families entering Sonoma ISD; the district, according to district and campus administrators, felt it had to develop specific strategies to involve Spanish-speaking families. This was in order to assure that these children’s test scores kept up with the rest of the district to avoid classification as a *low performing campus* or an *academically unacceptable district*. Since U.S. born Latina/os were known to speak English, they were seen as being able to access the existing parent involvement opportunities offered by the district. This aligned with Sonoma ISD personnel’s

perception of U.S. born Latina/o parents as highly involved in parent involvement. Thus, the selected focus was placed on Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents.

To involve Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents, there were two main strategies employed by Sonoma ISD. First, they made efforts across the district to provide some key Spanish language supports within existing parent involvement opportunities and campus settings to accommodate their language needs. Second, they provided specially organized parent involvement opportunities intended to accommodate the language, learning, and social needs of Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents. These strategies presented various challenges. The biggest challenge was the physical division this created at the elementary (pre-K-fifth grade) level between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents. It often resulted in the presence of two tracks of parent involvement opportunities. One track was largely frequented by English speakers including English monolingual and bilingual Latina/o parents. This was the track that consisted of the existing core parent involvement opportunities offered to all parents in Sonoma ISD as discussed earlier in this chapter. The second track was the one frequented by Latina/o Spanish-speaking parents. This track included the various parent education meetings and special programs organized in Spanish by bilingual Sonoma ISD teachers or bilingual outside contract personnel. This division meant that there were few occasions when English speaking and Spanish-speaking parents met and interacted. This often served to only further perpetuate the status quo of white, English-speakers maintaining power in the schools and a status hierarchy among Latina/os in the community based on language.

### ***Existing Parent Involvement Opportunities and Supports***

There was some broad Spanish language supports put in place throughout the district. These included providing the Spanish translation of the District Elementary Handbook for parents, supplying Spanish translations of important school notices, hiring an office staff member at every campus that was Spanish/English bilingual, employing bilingual teachers that provided bilingual education and migrant services, and offering English/Spanish interpretation services by request. Although the listed efforts may sound impressive, in actual practice, these efforts were tenuous. The translation and interpretation services were available sporadically and the quality varied depending on the level of Spanish proficiency of the person providing the services. Therefore, there were a number of miscommunications between Sonoma ISD school personnel and Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents. One school staff person reported an incident that almost left all the children with Spanish-speaking parents out of the school Christmas play.

There are some problems with parents getting the information especially like an example is one of the special areas. Music was having the kids practice for the Christmas play. A letter was sent out in English to parents so that they could give their permission to participate in the Christmas play. Well, the permission forms from all but two of the bilingual students did not come back. When the teacher asked the students about it they just said their parents had not signed it. The teacher assumed that it was because of religious reasons. I know these families and I know that there are only two families who would object on religious reasons because the rest are mostly Catholics. Well, the day before the event I walk in and notice that most of the bilingual kids are sitting on the floor just watching as the rest of the students rehearse for the play. When I asked the music teacher, she told me that they had not received permission probably for religious reasons. I got on the phone and called the parents and they told me they didn't understand the information sent out and that they had assumed their children were in the play and were planning to attend the next day. It was such a mess. (Field Notes 1/14/2004)

In addition, the recruitment of bilingual school personnel remained an ongoing challenge and thus bilingual personnel were in short supply. Due to these shortages, Sonoma bilingual personnel had overburdened schedules which made them difficult to access by Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents. The other consequence of a short supply of bilingual personnel was the presence of a large percentage of staff that was English monolingual. These English monolingual staff depended on bilingual staff to perform their job responsibilities as they related to serving Spanish-speaking children and their parents. On one campus, the English monolingual principal had delegated all issues related to Spanish-speaking parents to a Spanish-speaking staff person. Although she was kept apprised of any concerns or issues that arose with Spanish-speaking parents, she left all direct communication and conferences with Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents to the staff person and the bilingual teachers.

What began to emerge over the months I was involved in Sonoma ISD was a pattern of existing core parent involvement opportunities being offered in English with Spanish interpretation being an afterthought, if thought of at all. In March/April 2004, a children's Spring play was held at each campus that included children from all the Kindergarten or first grade classrooms across all the program models (i.e., regular, bilingual, dual language classes) available on each primary campus. Although well attended by Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents who watched their children on stage and photographed them, the entire play was conducted in English with no interpretation into Spanish available.

...the program was getting started. The theme for the first grade performance was bugs. There were different groups of children dressed as different insects. There were ladybugs, lightning bugs, butterflies, and ants. All of them had a role. They each did a skit and then sang. ...I wondered whether the bilingual kids were participating because the whole program was in English. As I looked around I recognized in the audience some of the Spanish-speaking parents I'd met at other events. There was no Spanish. I didn't hear a single Spanish word the whole time I was there. (Field Notes, 3/2/2004)

As I looked around at these same parent involvement events, I began to notice that when parents were recognized for their assistance with the play or with fundraising efforts, Latina/o parents were not visible.

... I noticed that all the parents that were manning the fundraising booth and most of the other parents that stayed behind...were all non-Latinos. ... there was a thank you given to all the parents that helped put up and develop the props for the program, they asked all those parents to stand up to be thanked. Once again, the parents that rose were not Latinos. (Field Notes, 3/2/2004)

During the various parent involvement events I attended at both campuses, immigrant Latina/o parents were in the background, around the edges, present but invisible because in most cases they attended these events to witness their children perform since they could not communicate or be understood at these events. The Latina/o parents who were seen and recognized at these parent involvement opportunities were those who were English speaking, articulate, and were involved in activities that directly supported the needs of the school (i.e., developing a school website, fundraising, contacting other parents). These Latina/o parents did not mingle with the immigrant Spanish-speaking parents. It was evident that language, in this case English, was being used as a tool for defining status and power and creating divisions between those with power and those without (Walsh, 1991), including within the Latina/o community itself.

### ***Specially Organized Parent Involvement Opportunities and Supports***

The second strategy was to develop specific parent involvement opportunities geared toward Latina/o Spanish-speaking parents. The creation of these separate Spanish opportunities allowed focused attention on meeting the needs of Spanish-speaking parents. Since Spanish-speaking parents were catered to at these separate events, I observed that making language accommodations within the mainstream core parent involvement opportunities offered by Sonoma ISD seemed to be less of a priority.

There were several parent involvement opportunities, supports, and programs specially organized to cater to Latina/o Spanish-speaking parents. First, Sonoma ISD maintained the obligatory cultural celebrations which are added to each year's school event calendar recognizing Mexican independence celebrations (i.e., Dieciséis de Septiembre [16<sup>th</sup> of September], Cinco de Mayo [5<sup>th</sup> of May]). Second, Sonoma ISD offered Spanish parent education trainings through contracted services. The content of these trainings was focused on parent remediation as it taught parents parenting skills that ranged from providing nutritious meals to how to read to their children. These were trainings that had low attendance and often asked parents to commit to attending a series of trainings over most of the school year. Third, Sonoma ISD through its bilingual teaching staff designed and offered Spanish parent education trainings twice a year. These had a similar objective as the trainings provided through contracted services. However, the bilingual teachers integrated affirming messages and advocated for the maintenance of Spanish.

[Referring to the dual language program]... donde “anglosajones [están] queriendo aprender español para tener mejores trabajos.” [...where the Anglos are wanting to learn Spanish to have better jobs.] She mentioned it as a way to affirm the value of learning Spanish. ... There were many instances throughout the training where the bilingual teacher made statements of solidarity with the parents and seemed to paint an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ scenario pressing parents to participate so as to increase their competitiveness with the Whites and the value of Spanish. The training was all in Spanish, extremely interactive, connected to their specific children’s needs and to real life issues, and was hands-on with many opportunities to practice the skills they were being modeled. (Field Notes 4/5/2004)

These were by far the best attended and most well-received trainings for Spanish-speaking Latina/o parents. However, these were the least supported by the rest of the campus. The responsibility for these trainings was completely delegated by administration to the bilingual teachers on each campus. For example, in one April 2004 training, I arrived to participate and had not been informed of the specific room in which it was to be held. When I went to the front office to inquire, they told me that they had no idea what I was talking about since that was something completely separate from them. The bilingual teachers set up the training, conducted the training, and cleaned up after the training. The responsibility had been completely delegated to the bilingual teachers and no one else within the campus took any responsibility for the event. In fact not one person from the school staff or administration even stopped by before they left for the day to check on the bilingual teachers or to help set-up the training room. This was in contrast to other parent events that were not targeted to Spanish-speaking parents where the principal and support staff often made an appearance or participated.

What emerged in these events was a pattern of delegation of responsibility for Spanish-speaking Latino/a parents’ parent education remediation to contracted providers and to bilingual teachers and school personnel. In most of the Spanish parent

involvement opportunities, the emphasis was on remediating Spanish-speaking immigrant Latina/o parents' perceived deficits. Sonoma ISD had a perception that many of these parents were willing to do anything for their children but that they were not sufficiently educated to know what they needed to do. This perception directly guided Sonoma ISD's approach to the content and structure of these parent involvement events.

Among the most promising parent involvement opportunities and supports offered by Sonoma ISD were those offered in relation to the development of a dual language education program on one of the primary campuses. Three years ago, Mr. Smith was hired as a new principal. He was from outside Sonoma and came with a personal and professional history that valued the development of Spanish and English. Within one year he had garnered support to develop a dual language program on his campus. To give you a sense of the atmosphere created at this campus it is important for me to describe my observations. During my visits to Aguila Primary campus, I was struck by the presence of English and Spanish throughout the campus. When I walked into the campus office, the staff was often speaking English. However, when Mr. Smith arrived his presence filled the room and often he questioned staff in Spanish and encouraged their practice of Spanish. If he faced someone that spoke Spanish, he quickly entered into a fluent conversation with them in Spanish. As I walked through the campus halls with him, he greeted the children we passed by first name. The parents I had spoken to all expressed their 'love' of this principal. They also expressed their comfort level in talking directly with him when problems arose. Despite the positive climate created by the principal, toward Spanish, it remained a constant struggle to maintain English and Spanish on equal terms. I watched as Mr. Smith made great efforts to model for the

parents and children present the maintaining of this balance between English and Spanish during a dual language parent meeting.

I did notice that as Mr. Smith was doing his presentation or announcements to the crowd, he began trying to translate back and forth. He would do it in English and then do a summary in Spanish but it was very difficult for him to keep up with what was going on with the agenda that he had for the meeting and then also do the translation. There were too many tasks at once. The Spanish version of the meeting was a brief summary of an extensive discussion in English. It left many details out. (Field Notes, 5/20/2004)

Despite his efforts, he was successful only in acknowledging Spanish. His use of English as the main language of communication served to model to those present that in the end it is English that counts. Spanish was relegated to a supporting role.

## Summary of Part II

In Part II of this dissertation, I traced key events in the socio-historical context of Sonoma and Sonoma ISD up to the present and illustrated how political issues and power relations were largely negotiated around issues of race and language. These events included Sonoma ISD's history of language education, as well as the past and present political negotiations between Latina/os and the power elite of the community of Sonoma as manifested in school policies and practices. Within these discussions, I highlighted the ways in which Spanish and Latina/os are situated in these contexts, often maintaining them in positions of unequal political power. I then moved the discussion into Sonoma ISD's parent involvement and explored how the discourse of parent involvement is framed in Sonoma ISD. I suggest that the 'parent involvement discourse' established is one that offers conflicting messages: parents are the solution and parents are the problem; and perpetuates parent involvement based on white, middle class values as described by Epstein (1995) and reinforces the hegemony of English (Shannon, 1995; Gramsci, 1971). I then explored how Latina/os and Spanish in particular were viewed and treated within the school context. In most cases, school personnel's descriptions of Latina/o parents conjured up images of a homogenous, immigrant Spanish-speaking Latina/o parent community that failed to consider the high U.S. born Latina/o population. Finally, I reviewed what parent involvement opportunities were offered in Sonoma ISD to all parents and specifically to Latina/o parents. What was evident was that the way school personnel viewed and positioned Latina/o mothers and fathers guided the types of parent involvement opportunities offered to them. The understanding I gained of the community and school history and context, then sets the stage as I move the discussion

into the lives of our three case study mothers of Mexican origin, Esther, Laura, and Anna in the next three chapters. There I will share how they enact their agency as Latina mothers through their everyday parent involvement in and out of Sonoma ISD.

**PART III**

**PORTRAITS OF AGENCY IN THREE LATINA MOTHERS**

## **PART III**

### **PORTRAITS OF AGENCY IN THREE LATINA MOTHERS**

In the next three chapters, I introduce three mothers of Mexican origin: Esther, Laura, and Anna. Within each of these case studies, I showcase the complexities in these mothers' interactions with schools where the institutional fault lines of race, language, and gender intersect and move back and forth from home to school and impact their lives. These institutional fault lines shape our perceptions of ourselves, each other, and the events around us. For these mothers of Mexican origin, who each come with their own histories, interactions within this world of parent involvement evoked tensions, emotions, and struggles for agency that impacted the way they garnered resources and expressed their language ideologies. Through each case study, I offer distinct lessons about Latina mothers' struggles for agency within the figured world of parent involvement and the connection to Spanish language maintenance.

Each mother's narrative highlights the unique way they each approached life and exerted agency. I provide a subtitle for each case study to highlight this core approach as a way to frame the overall case study. In order to hold each mother's voice front and center, I step back to allow the narratives to speak for themselves. However, as I explained in Chapter 3, due to the close relationship that I established with the three mothers, it was difficult at times to keep the insider knowledge I had gained about each mother from slipping into the narratives. Each case study begins with each mother's voices as they share defining anecdotes about themselves. The case study is then divided into three sections that loosely align with the research questions. The first section

focuses on their personal background. It looks at these mothers' acts of agency within their personal histories and in the face of the historical race and language issues of the school/community that form the backdrop of their interactions in schools. The second section moves into parent involvement. It describes how each mother enacts agency within her daily lived experiences within parent involvement in and out of school. It also continues to highlight the intersections with the historical race and language issues of the school/community. The third section of each case study shares each mother's expressed language ideologies and how each of them authors her role and that of schools in Spanish language maintenance. Finally, I offer a cumulative summary.

## CHAPTER 6

### ESTHER GÓMEZ: No Porque Soy Mujer No Puedo [Just Because I am a Woman Doesn't Mean I Can't]

En mi casa me enseñaron a que no porque soy mujer no puedo, no puedo hacer esto. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

...at home, they taught me that just because I am a woman doesn't mean I can't, I can't do it.

Yo aquí...yo pienso que yo aquí no sé. Una suposición, si un día yo me tuviera que dejar de mi esposo, o nos deja o lo dejo verdad uno nunca sabe. Yo no creo que yo necesite de nadie para salir adelante. Yo sé cortar zacate, yo sé limpiar casas, yo sé limpiar corrales en los caballos, con los caballos. Creo que yo puedo hacer de todo. Y si no puedo, lo intento. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Here I...I think that here I don't know. (Just as) a supposition, if one day I had to leave my husband, or he left us, or I left him right. One never knows. I don't think I'd need anyone to get ahead. I know how to cut grass, I know how to clean houses, I know how to clean horse stables, with the horses. I believe I can do everything. And if I can't, I will attempt it.

Yo no sé si soy buena mamá o soy mala mamá pero hago lo posible por hacerlo. No me considero un persona muy, muy inteligente pero creo que dado el caso...creo que yo sabría qué hacer o cómo solucionarlo o a dónde buscar ayuda. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

I don't know if I'm a good mother or a bad mother but I do whatever is possible to do it. I don't consider myself a very, very intelligent person but I believe that given the situation...I believe I'd know what to do or how to resolve it or where to find help.

Pues yo creo que uno nunca es buena madre. Todo el tiempo hay problemas...que a veces uno no sabe cómo enfrentarlos. No sé yo si sea buena madre. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

Well, I believe that one can never be a good mother. There are always problems...that sometimes one doesn't know how to confront. I don't know if I'm a good mother.

In these excerpts, Esther authors herself as a strong, resilient woman while simultaneously highlighting the tensions she often felt as a Latina mother in the United States. Faced with the daily problems and challenges of being a mother, Esther was not

willing to accept that she was a ‘good’ mother for it was something she considered unachievable. As she noted above, “I don’t think you can ever be a good mother.” Yet, she was also not willing to denounce herself as a ‘bad’ mother. She was simply a mother doing everything possible to be a mother whatever that entailed. For Esther, this meant meeting both the minimal expectations of the school and those of her Mexican upbringing and family. Esther navigated these tensions through acts of agency that allowed her to maintain strength in the face of her daily demands.

Esther is a thirty-four year old woman born in México now living in the United States (U.S.). She is married, has two daughters ages fourteen and five, and works cleaning houses. During our *pláticas*, Esther shared her experiences of what it means to be a Latina mother in the U.S. Throughout, she describes sexism as the biggest obstacle in her life and organizes her life story around its presence. Her struggles for agency in the face of the tensions and emotions of the gender roles she enacts provide the unifying themes through which this case study is presented. In her narratives, Esther illustrates how gender embeds every aspect of her life including the parent involvement she participates in and carries out inside and outside of Sonoma ISD.

In the sections that follow, I will describe Esther’s personal background in México and her current situation in the United States to highlight the complex issues in her personal history that often surfaced in her parent involvement decisions and actions. Esther’s case study then moves into Sonoma ISD, as we follow the parent involvement she participates in both in and out of school. Finally, Esther’s case study then discusses her personal outlooks toward herself as a Latina mother, education and schools, and the maintenance of Spanish.

## ***PERSONAL HISTORY***

### ***Family & Educational Background***

In a town in México called San Luis Potosí, Esther was raised with her mother, her father and her five brothers and sisters. She was socialized early to the expectations of Mexican patriarchal roles. As the oldest girl, she was called on to act as a mother to her siblings making tortillas and taking care of household chores. She describes the atmosphere and her responsibilities in the home as she was growing up.

Y todo el tiempo, “Esther haz esto, Esther carga al niño, Esther vete al molino.” Ya sabe que en México uno coce el maíz y va al molino y saca la masa y viene a la casa y hace las tortillas. Un tiempo, mi mamá estuvo trabajando en Monterrey. Creo que por más de un año. Y era yo la que tenía que encargarme de mis hermanos, hacer de comer antes de irme a la escuela.... (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

And all the time (it was) “Esther do this, Esther carry the baby, Esther go to the mill.” You know that in México one cooks the corn and you go to the mill and get the dough and you come home and make tortillas. During a time, my mother was working in Monterrey. I believe that it was for more than a year. And I was the one that had to take charge of my siblings, prepare a meal before I left for school...

Esther’s father did not have a strong presence in the home. As Esther watched her father disappear from her life and her mother work to support her family, she learned important lessons about self-sufficiency and the role of fathers, which would later influence the *consejos* (lessons) she shared with her daughters.

Esther attended school in México until she met her husband Juan at age sixteen, who was her boyfriend at the time. She moved in with him and stopped going to school having completed what she equated with a middle school education in the United States. Faced with the poor economic circumstances present in their town, within three months of moving in with Juan, he decided to come to the United States. Esther decided to come

with him. As Esther continued to tell the story, she haltingly described their crossing in 1987 into the United States under the wheels of an eighteen-wheeler:

Cuando nosotros cruzamos la frontera, ummm.... pasamos abajo en las.....como se dice.....abajo en las llantas de una traila...ah.... (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)	When we crossed the border, uhmm...we crossed underneath, in the...what do you call them? .....underneath the tires of a trailer [eighteen wheeler]....ah...
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Seventeen years later, Esther conveyed sheer terror as she communicated about this event. This was the only time she talked about this incident. The danger she had faced in crossing served as a deterrent to any attempts to return to México and re-cross to the United States. There was too much to lose, especially following the births of her oldest daughter in 1989 and her youngest in 1999. Esther saw opportunities in the United States available to her daughters who were born American citizens. Thus, she dedicated her efforts to building their futures no matter what sacrifices were required from her and Juan.

### ***Current Life Circumstances***

Esther and Juan have remained undocumented for the seventeen years they have lived in Sonoma. Over these years they have made repeated attempts to apply for residency with no success. Now, in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, Esther considered it more difficult to obtain residency. Yet, she remained hopeful that it would happen one day. During her time in Sonoma, Texas, Esther faced ongoing economic, marital, and emotional hardships. According to Esther, economically they went through several periods where they barely made ends meet. She describes one period of five years in

which she lived in conditions in the U.S. that she likened to what she would have had in México.

Viví en...casi cinco años creo, en un lugar que está aquí en el Fair Grounds que se dice. Vivíamos como ahhh....como si viviéramos en México verdad. Porque no teníamos baño, no teníamos ahh....nada; Solamente un cuarto y una estufa pequeña para cocinar. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

I lived....for almost five years I believe, in a place that is here in what are called the Fair Grounds. We lived there ahhh....as if we lived in México. Because we didn't have a toilet, we didn't have....ahhh....anything; only one room and a small stove to cook.

Although Esther implied that her life here had at times been equivalent to the poverty she experienced in México, she never questioned her decision to cross the border. Today, although their situation has improved economically, the recent purchase of a home and an accompanying new mortgage payment was a mixed blessing. According to Esther, first, it was a symbolic milestone of the future Esther felt they were building for their daughters. However, with the additional payment, they were struggling to pay the bills even with both parents working long hours most days of the week. In our conversations, Esther began to share some of the problems she was experiencing in her marriage. In the telling of her story, Esther emphasized struggles with the dominant ideologies about gender that she encountered when fulfilling her roles as depicted in Mexican patriarchy of the dutiful wife and mother.

Diecisiete años y como dicen aquí sigo. No sé cuánto tiempo vamos a aguantar ¿verdad? Pero, por lo pronto aquí estamos todavía. Siempre....siempre hemos tenido así problemas. No nada más....no es de horita...es de siempre. No es...no es nada nuevo. Por eso también cuando nos juntamos, no nos casamos luego,

Seventeen years and like they say, here I continue. I don't know how much time we are going to last. Right? But, for now here we still are. Always.....always we've had problems. Not just.....it's not just now....its always. It's....it's nothing new. That's also why when we got together, we didn't get married right

luego por lo mismo ¿verdad? Que uno no sabe si la va a hacer junto o no la va a hacer. Y como quiera nos casamos y como quiera los problemas siguen. No...no hizo ninguna diferencia. ...nos casamos aquí. Apenas tenemos...como ocho años casados. Casados, casados...ocho años. Juntos...diecisiete años. Pero casados apenas ocho años. ...“Me hubiera esperado o no me hubiera juntado o.” Pero, como dicen ‘el hubiera’ no existe. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

away for the same reason. Right? That one doesn't know if you're going to make it together or you're not going to make it. And we got married anyway and the problems continue anyway. It didn't... it didn't make any difference. ...We got married here. We just have...about eight years we've been married. Married, married... eight years. Together...seventeen years. But married just eight years. ....I would have liked to have waited or I shouldn't have gotten together or. But, like they say, the 'I should have' doesn't exist.

Esther goes on to describe Juan's jealous behavior towards her. She recognizes it as uncalled for and irrational. Yet, she admits that it is something that cannot be changed making it more difficult for her emotionally.

Tengo un marido tan difícil que...ni modo. Ya lo tengo ni... ¿qué puedo hacer? Anda como mucho muy...tiene tiempo que anda muy celoso...por todo me cela a mí. No sé, pero, le digo yo a...a mi cuñada le digo ni que...tuviera un año viviendo con él. ¡Tengo diecisiete años! Le digo ¡ya es mucho! Además, ni que tuviera quince años. ...Además, tengo hijos. Yo no...yo no me veo en esa situación. Eso se lo dejo para las muchachas que tienen quince, veinte años. Pero yo ya...ya pasé. Pero, no se saben los hombres a veces quiénes son. Y no hay cómo cambiarlos. Por lo menos este asína es...el mío. Un hombre muy difícil. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

I have a husband that is so difficult but...too bad. I already have him...what can I do. He's been like very...it's been some time that he's been very jealous...for anything he gets jealous. I don't know. But, I tell...my sister-in-law I tell her it's not like...I've been living with him for one year. I have seventeen years (living with him)! I say: that's too much! Also, it's not like I'm fifteen years old. Also, I have children. I don't...I don't see myself in that situation. That I leave for the girls who are fifteen, (or) twenty years old. But I already...I already passed that. But, you don't know who men are sometimes. And there is no way to change them. At least this one is that way....mine. A very difficult man.

Esther goes on to share how her working long hours was contributing to his behavior. However, she especially did not understand his jealous behavior when he understood the trying economic situation they were currently in. Esther's frustration with Juan's mixed messages about what he wanted from her left her feeling frustrated because it seemed that no matter what she did he was unhappy with her.

[Se disculpa por la mala palabra que va a usar] "Chinga, un día quisiera...un día sentarme" le digo, "y no tener qué pensar en qué voy a hacer. Sin preocuparme, sin... pero no sé que piensa él. Me imagino como que me miraba todo el día en la calle. Pues a ver cómo me va este fin de semana, a ver si me halla todavía aquí. I: So, ¿él quisiera que nomás estuviera aquí en la casa? Esther: No....ni....no sé si nomás quiere que me esté aquí. Pero, no lo entiendo. Si no trabajo, me llama huevona. Si trabajo o... Es una persona que no se le...no se le puede dar gusto. Siempre busca algo. Y siempre ha sido así comoquiera. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

[Apologizes for use of a cuss word] Damn, one day I'd like....one day to sit down' I told her, 'and not have to think about what I'm going to do. Without worry, without....but, I don't know what he thinks. I imagine that would see me all day out on the street. Well, we'll see how it goes for me this weekend; we'll see if he still finds me here. I: So, he'd like you to be only at home? Esther: No....(actually) not....I don't know if he only wants me to be here. But, I don't understand him. If I don't work, he calls me lazy. If I work or.... He is a person that you can't ....that you can't make happy. He is always looking for something. And he has always been like that anyway.

This dynamic conflict between fulfilling the role of a traditional Mexican wife and mother by being home and attending to her family balanced against the role of working wife and good mother imposed on her through the necessity of work and the requirements of school, was a theme that filtered its way into almost every aspect of Esther's everyday life. It was centered on issues of Mexican patriarchy where Esther was negotiating between the demands of the traditional Mexican patriarchal roles she was raised with and those roles she was being introduced to in the United States and improvising responses to fit both.

For Esther, her marriage problems were especially difficult to face because of the loss of her connections with her family. Despite seventeen years in the U.S., the pain of not returning to México flowed to the surface when she acknowledged she had not been able to return to México since their arrival.

Después nos vinimos. Pero, pa' mí fue difícil porque tengo muchos años que no veo a mi mamá, no veo a mis hermanos, no... todo eso es presión sobre mí. A mí se me hace que no tengo familia. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

Later we came over. But, for me it was difficult because I have not seen my mother for many years, nor I have I seen my brothers and sisters, nor....all that is pressure over me. To me it seems that I don't have any family.

This sense of loss was compounded by the limited support she felt from Juan's family. Juan and Esther had come to the Sonoma area to be close to Juan's siblings and cousins who already lived here. However, in the bustle of each family striving for daily survival, there was little time to spend with family. In addition, when they did spend time together, Esther describes her husband's family as,

No se puede contar con ellos. Más bien nunca se han portado muy bien. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

You can't count on them. Really they've never behaved well.

This led to Esther often feeling isolated. It was when problems arose that this feeling of isolation peaked as she felt she had no one to consult for advice on how to approach problems, especially when it came to her daughters. This was despite succeeding in gathering a significant social network around her that provided access to additional social and cultural resources she would not have had available otherwise. I suspect the reason was that the advice and resources they offered were based on those valued in the dominant, mainstream U.S. society and Esther was hungry for a deeper connection that mirrored the Mexican values she had been raised with.

### ***Key Social and Cultural Resources***

As discussed in Chapter 1, social and cultural resources only become social and cultural capital when they are activated and used in a particular situation or circumstance. Thus, their activation depends on the context and circumstances in which they are used. However, to facilitate discussion, I discuss them as social and cultural resources/capital. This is not meant to imply that they are synonymous terms. Rather, it is meant to point out how resources can quickly transition into capital in any given moment.

Esther had built a strong social network that gave her access to considerable social as well as cultural resources. It is these resources that on many occasions have provided the economic safety net for the family and allowed Esther access to information and opportunities. The first major source of social resources was the many women that employed her to clean their houses. This was a group of women that Esther had worked with for between six and seventeen years. Many of these women had watched her daughters grow up and had deep bonds with Esther. These social resources offered Esther significant access to other social and cultural resources.

Besides the physical gifts bestowed on her and her family, her employers also answered her questions of how to accomplish tasks she was unfamiliar with such as buying a house or setting up a computer. These were examples of resources that her social network provided access to. Esther was not afraid to ask for help, a characteristic she valued since she had found doors open to her when she made the attempt.

In addition, the cumulative social capital these women provided over time resulted in the accumulation of cultural resources (knowledge) in Esther, which she was

then able to begin to use to navigate the systems and institutions she faced on her own.

She describes the help she has received from these women who respected her as a person.

[Una de mis clientas] Ella me ayudó con la compra de la casa y me ayudó con todo y, so, yo he tenido muy, muy buenas personas aquí que en todo me han ayudado. [Las mujeres para quienes he trabajado] No me han discriminado porque yo soy de México o porque mi piel está más oscura que las de ellas. Ellas siempre...siempre me han dado la mano en todo lo que han podido. Entonces le digo...aquí mi vida ha sido, más que difícil, ha sido fácil. Porque...pues he tenido ayuda de todos. Porque si mira mi casa aquí todo lo que hay es dado. Nada yo he comprado. Todo es dado hasta la cama donde duermo. Le digo yo todo lo que tengo aquí, todo me lo han dado. Me dicen, “¿quieres esto?”. Les digo, “Sí”. Bueno le digo sí hay cosas que yo sé que a mí no me quedan o que si yo no uso le digo se lo doy a alguien más que le sirva. Pero tampoco lo voy a tirar. Pero, mi casa está llena de puras cosas dadas. Todo me lo han dado. Porque a veces viene gente y me preguntan, “¿Dónde compraste eso?”. Le digo, “Yo no lo compré,” le digo, “Me lo dieron.” (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

[One of my clients] She helped me buy the house and she helped me with everything, and, so I have had very good people here that have helped me in everything. [The women I have worked for] They haven't discriminated against me because I'm from México or because my skin is darker than theirs. They have always....always given me a hand in every way they have been able to. Then, I tell you.....here my life has been, more than difficult, its been easy. Because...well I've had the help of everyone. Because if you look at my house, here everything there is, has been given. I haven't bought anything. Everything is given, even the bed I sleep in. I tell you, everything I have here; everything has been given to me. They ask me, “do you want this? I say “yes”. Well, I say, if there are things that I know that will not fit me or that I won't use I tell them I will give it to someone else who can use it. But I'm not going to throw it away either. But, my house is full of things given to us. Everything has been given to me. Because sometimes people come over and they ask me, “Where did you buy that? I tell them, “I didn't buy it.” I tell them, “It was given to me.”

One specific form of cultural capital was acquired with the help of her network of employers. This linguistic capital was her English proficiency. When Esther and Juan had arrived in the United States both were monolingual Spanish speakers. Esther learned

quickly that English was a necessary skill in the United States and was encouraged to learn it by her employers.

Aprendí que cuando uno vive en este país, tiene uno que aprender. Porque todo el tiempo andaba buscando quien me interpretara o ...porque en México yo cuando estuve en la...en el último año de escuela, daban clases de inglés, ¿verdad?, según. Pero nada más, como le enseñan a decir ventana, o puerta o...pues con eso nada le ayuda. Y pues cuando yo llegué aquí la señora con la que yo empecé a trabajar, con la que tengo ya todo este tiempo trabajando, ella hablaba español. Pero, después empecé a trabajar con otra y ella no hablaba español nada, y me decía, “Tienes que aprender.” Le digo: “Pero no puedo”. Dice: “Sí puedes”. Dice: “Mira más televisión en inglés, o júntate con gente que habla inglés.” Le digo: “Pero no tengo tiempo tampoco.” Pero, poco a poco he oído palabras (que) se me han quedado, y pues horita ¿verdad? me puedo...no digo que puedo hablar perfectamente pero me puedo comunicar. Trato. Ya la señora, ya ninguna me habla español ahora sí todas me hablan inglés. Le digo, pues trato le digo he tratado más que por ....ahmmm....no por lujo sino porque lo necesitaba. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

I learned that when you come to live in this country, you have to learn. Because I was always looking for someone to interpret for me or...because in México when I was in the...in my last year in school, they gave English classes, right, according to them. But they only taught you how to say window or door or...well, with that it doesn't help you at all. And well, when I arrived here, the lady that I started working with, the one that I have had all this time working with, she spoke Spanish. But, later I began to work for another one and she didn't speak any Spanish and she would tell me you have to learn. I told her: “but I can't”. She said: “yes, you can”. She said: “watch television in English or get together with people that speak English”. I would tell her: “but I don't have time either”. But little by little I heard words, I've remembered them, and now I can...I don't say that I can speak it perfectly but I can communicate. I try. Now the lady, now none of them speak to me in Spanish. Now all of them speak to me in English. I've told you, well, I try I tell you I've tried more for...ahmmm....not as a luxury but because it was needed.

The acquiring of conversational English meant Esther was able to increase her clientele, she was able to communicate with her oldest daughter's teachers, and could understand some of what her daughters said in English to each other and their friends. This cultural

resource provided access to social resources (i.e., teachers, banks, employers) that she might have had difficulty accessing otherwise.

Another social resource was Juan's parents, whose yearly visits from México provided an infusion of Spanish into the home and renewed cultural connections to México. They represented the only connection Esther's two daughters had directly to México and was viewed as the vehicle by which both girls would be able to go and spend time in México to re-connect with Mexican culture. This had occurred only once with the oldest daughter, but additional visits were being discussed during the time of my interviews; although, they were not expected to occur in the near future. The hope was that as the girls spent more time with their grandparents here in the U.S. and improved their Spanish they would be more willing to take the journey to México without their parents. These social and cultural resources then offered Esther a wide arsenal from which to draw on to activate as capital when navigating her parent involvement in and out of Sonoma ISD. The next section details Esther's parent involvement activities and when and how Esther's personal history filtered into her experiences.

## ***PARENT INVOLVEMENT***

### ***Parent Involvement as Gendered***

Esther had main responsibility for parent involvement in her family. During interviews, she stated, "Siempre voy yo/I always go" (3/20/2004) making clear that she and not her husband was the one who took care of school parent involvement. For Esther this was a source of tension with her husband as she struggled to convince him that he shared responsibility for their daughters.

Horita, uhm...el problema que yo tengo con él es que...él dice que son mi responsabilidad. Que son mujeres, que sólo yo puedo hablar con ellas. Le digo (que) no porque son mujeres nada más yo puedo hablar con ellas; ¡tú también! Horita con ella le digo: “¿no nomás porque es mujer? Le digo: ¿tengo que decirle yo las cosas? Tú también puedes.” (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Right now, uhm...the problem that I have with him is that...he says that they are my responsibility. That they are women, that only I am able to talk with them. I tell him: “Not just because they are women only I can talk with them. You can too! Right now with her I tell him: “Just because she is female? I tell him: Do I have to tell her everything? You can too.”

Despite repeated attempts to get him involved, his participation in Sonoma ISD parent involvement was rare. His approach mirrored the traditional patriarchal ideas about the role of women as sole caretakers of children and family promoted in his and Esther’s upbringing. However, although Esther did not question her own role in childrearing, she did challenge his limited role. At home, Esther had been able to get him to have some interaction with his youngest daughter, but his relationship with both children was mostly hands-off. In the following excerpt, Esther responds to her daughter’s inquiries about the lack of her father’s presence at a school event.

Y Esperanza dice, “¿Y mi papi no vino?” Le digo, “No. Tu papi no vino.” ...No pues es que como quiera le digo, los niños no son nada más de uno, también son de ellos. Le digo, ellos también tienen que...a enseñarse a contar con él también no nada más la mamá. ...Pero, su papá no es muy dado a ir conmigo a ninguna parte...con esas cosas de l’escuela.... Le digo, “Pues todo el tiempo soy yo la que voy, la que firma, la que habla aquí, habla allá y él casi no.” Le digo: “de perdida acompañarme.” (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/8/2004)

And Esperanza says, “And my daddy didn’t come?” I tell her, “No. Your daddy didn’t come.” ...No, it’s just that I tell him the children are not only mine, there are also theirs. I tell him, they too have to...learn to count on them too not just the mother. ...But, their father is not one to go with me anywhere...with those things with school. I tell him, It’s always me that goes, the one that signs, they one who talks here, talks there, and he rarely does. I tell him, “at least accompany me.”

Therefore, it was Esther who coordinated her children's educational efforts, attended school events, reviewed paperwork, and navigated the educational activities to be done at home. However, her husband, Juan maintained final decision-making on extracurricular activities Esther suggested for the children. With this gendered division of labor in mind, we now look at Esther's parent involvement in and out of Sonoma ISD.

### ***Participation in Sonoma ISD Parent Involvement***

As we consider Esther's parent involvement we begin by looking at her participation in the general parent involvement opportunities offered by Sonoma ISD. These include those events or activities that do not occur on a daily basis such as parent-teacher conferences, special events, PTA meetings, and parent education trainings.

***Parental Agency.*** Although Esther participated at some level in most of the parent involvement opportunities mentioned above, I will focus on examples from her interactions in Parent-Teacher conferences and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). I selected three specific examples from each of these two areas (Parent-Teacher conferences and PTA) to illustrate how she exerted her form of agency within parent involvement in Sonoma ISD. Table 2 provides an overview of these two areas of parent involvement and titles for each of the three examples provided for each area. This is followed by Esther's narratives for each of the specific examples. Next, I discuss how these examples illustrate Esther's agency.

**Table 2. Examples of Esther’s Agency in Two of Sonoma ISD’s Parent Involvement Opportunities**

<i>Parent-Teacher Conferences</i>	<i>Parent Teacher Association (PTA)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinating Parent Involvement</li> <li>▪ Following Teacher’s Directions</li> <li>▪ Getting Husband Involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attending PTA Meetings</li> <li>▪ Deciding Not To Return to Meetings</li> <li>▪ Becoming a PTA Member</li> </ul>

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Coordinating Parent Involvement

Esther: Me dan....siempre me mandan un papel y me dan una hora. Si puedo ir, voy. Y si no, cambio la fecha. Pero la mayor parte, voy. ...No le hace que llegue tarde, ¿verdad?, pero siempre voy. Verónica: Y cuando va a esas reuniones, ¿se las hacen en inglés o en español? Esther: En inglés. A veces me está alguien traduciendo. Yo uhum.....yo entiendo...casi la mayor de las cosas pero no....algunas veces no puedo hablarlas. No digo que hablo mucho, pero trato. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Esther: They give me...they always send me a paper and they give me the time. If I can go, I go. And if not, I change the date. But, most of the time, I go. ...It doesn’t matter if I arrive late, right, as long as I go. Veronica: And when you go to these meetings, are they done in English or Spanish? Esther: In English. Sometimes someone is translating for me. I...uhum...I understand....most of the things but I can’t....sometimes I can’t say them. I’m not saying that I speak a lot but I try.

Following Teacher Directions

En la última junta que tuve con la maestra ella me dijo que le ayudara porque ella trae allí en su fólder, trae sus números, trae el abecedario, trae sílabas y ella me dice que le lee.....que se le lea un libro por quince minutos o si [la niña] quiere más. ...pero ella trae en el fólder trae pegado lo que ella tiene que repasar para que el próximo año sea mejor o para que no se le

In the last meeting I had with the teacher she told me to help her because she has there in her a folder, she has her numbers, she has her alphabet, she has syllables, and she tells me to read to her....that we should read her a book for fifteen minutes or if she wants more. ...but she has in her folder, she has attached what she has to review so that next

olvide lo que ella aprendió durante el año. ...Pero, eso es lo que me dijo la maestra a mí, que le leamos por quince minutos, que escribamos las sílabas o que los enseñemos a hacer listas como cuando hacemos la comida o como cuando estamos cocinando leerle las etiquetas del...de lo que traen las cajitas, o cosas así fue lo que ella me dijo. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

year is better or so that she doesn't forget what she learned during this year....But, that is what the teacher told me, that we read to her fifteen minutes, that we write the syllables or that we teach them how to make lists like when we prepare a meal or when we are cooking to read her the labels of...of what is on the boxes, or things like that was what she told me.

### Getting Husband Involved

Él no sabe muy bien firmar y él tampoco,...creo que nada más estudió dos años de escuela. ...o sea no sabe escribir bien. Pienso yo también que por eso a veces le dice Esperanza, “¿Papi me lees un libro? y sí se lo lee pero....ah...como que se tarda para decirle las palabras pero trata...bueno, horita trata. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

He doesn't know how to sign and he doesn't...I believe he only studied two years in school. ...in other words, he doesn't know how to write well. I also think that that is why sometimes Esperanza says, daddy read me a book and he reads it but....ah.....like he takes a while to say the words but he tries.....well, now he tries.

### Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

#### Attending PTA Meetings

Entendemos palabras, una frase, pero no lo entendemos todo. Y mucho menos cuando están hablando tan rápido. Y además, la que estaba hablando está hasta allá y uno esta acá mero atrás y no se alcanza a oír. Yo se los digo por experiencia porque no (se) entiende lo que está hablando (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/8/2004)

We understand words, a phrase, but we don't understand everything. And much less when they are speaking so fast. And also, the one that was talking is way over there and we are way in the back and you can't hear. I tell you from experience because you can't understand what they are saying.

## Deciding Not To Return to the Meetings

Yo a esas [juntas de PTA] casi no voy. No. Le digo, casi el...casi todo lo dicen en inglés y.... ni se les entiende a veces y...a esas casi no voy. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/8/2004)

To those [PTA] meetings, I rarely go. I tell you, almost....almost everything is said in English and...you can't understand them sometimes and...to those I almost never go.

## Becoming a PTA Member

Sí. Lleno papeles que soy miembro por todo el año. Bueno, cuando llena el papel creo que le ponen para...si usted quiere ayudar en...eventos que tienen o vender o si....si puede ayudar con dinero. Es lo que yo pongo. Porque le digo, yo no estoy disponible todo el tiempo. Así que yo no les puedo ayudar en programas que tienen. Yo me pongo de voluntaria nada más si necesitan comida. ...Pero, miembro para mí es que usted es parte de eso por todo el año. Ya sea yendo o siendo voluntario. Pero le digo, yo no...yo no voy muy seguido. PTA no es mucho de que hablen de sus niños. Es más que hablan de lo que juntan en todo el año de los... ¿Cómo se dice? Cuando juntan dinero. Y la última del año es cuando dicen que tanto dinero se recaudó. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

Yes. I fill out papers that I'm a member for the year. Well, when you fill out the paper I believe that they put you in something for...if you want to help in....events they hold or sell or if....if you can help with money. That's what I do. Because I say, I am not available all the time. So, I can't help them with the programs they have. I only sign up as a volunteer if they need food. But, being a member to me is that you are part of that for the year....be it attending or being a volunteer. But I tell you, I don't....I don't go very often. PTA is not much about talking about your children. Its more about them talking about what they were able to collect that year of the....what do you call it? When they collect money? And at the end of the year is when they announce how much money was raised.

Esther has adopted some particular ways of interacting with her daughter suggested by school personnel through her parent-teacher conferences. Her desire to do all she can to assure her daughter's success makes her willing to accept and incorporate this way of being with her daughter into how she coordinates family life and the roles she wants her husband to take. In this case, he complies at the insistence of his young daughter. But in most parent involvement events that involve participation outside of the

home, Esther has been unable to obtain his cooperation with her requests. Therefore, Esther is left to both coordinate and participate in these events by herself as she works to meet the school's expectations of parent involvement.

In PTA events, Esther's agency is showcased first as a 'non-English dominant mother' who chooses to attend a PTA meeting. But, when she finds herself trying to make meaning of what she cannot hear or understand in English at the PTA meetings, Esther decides to rarely attend these meetings. As she explains that there is no reason to attend if you can't understand what is being said. She decides that she is better off staying home. Esther had determined that PTA was something she should be involved in as the school provided regular reminders of meetings and promoted membership. As an efficient 'good' mother, Esther exerted agency by determining the minimal level of involvement she could do in PTA and choosing to participate consistently at that level. For Esther, this meant becoming a PTA member and signing up to provide requested donations of money or food. Esther expresses her agency when she chooses to participate in PTA by paying the membership dues and making requested donations but also choosing to not attend PTA meetings. She negotiates her role within this organization and chooses in what ways she will limit her participation. Just because the school asks her to be a part of PTA, she does not automatically accept or decline everything that PTA offers but rather is empowered to find her own level of involvement that efficiently meets the school's minimum demands.

***Language Factors.*** One factor that Esther made clear had facilitated her involvement in parent teacher conferences had been her access to bilingual teachers.

Al principio las dos han estado en clases bilingües. Así que me he podido comunicar con las maestras. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

Ay, y cuando pues....que nos hacen que dizque tenemos junta en la escuela....son a donde yo procuro ir porque a...yo creo que la maestra es la que le da más información de sus niños que...o que la principal o los demás. La maestra es la que está con ellos diario. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/8/2004)

At the beginning both have been in bilingual classes. So, I have been able to communicate with the teachers.

Oh, and well when....that they make us that we supposedly have a meeting at the school....those are the ones that I try to go to because....I believe that the teacher is the one that gives you the most information about the children than.... than the principal or the rest of them. The teacher is one that is with them everyday.

Esther viewed teachers as the most important persons she could talk to as they had direct knowledge of her daughters. Her entrance into schools began with her daughters entering bilingual classes. This gave Esther access to the teacher due to the teacher's ability to speak and understand Spanish. However, Esther quickly realized as she received notes from school that were in English, attended school events in English, and faced U.S. born Latina/os who refused or couldn't speak Spanish to her, that learning English was a skill she was going to have to learn.

He aprendido más inglés pero....porque algunas veces no siempre hay personas que le pueden ayudar a traducir o explicarle, comunicarse con otra persona que no habla español. En eso sí cambie porque sí aprendí. Porque muchas veces me tocó que...pues yo no le entendía a la maestra o ella no me entendía a mí y...en ese sentido si cambié...que aprendí. Aprendí que en este país si usted no entiende un poco de inglés...me ha tocado que algunas personas que parecen mexicanos o son México-americanos...me hay tocado que ellos dicen no hablo español o me

I've learned more English but,...because sometimes there wasn't always somebody that could help you translate or explain, (or) communicate with another person that doesn't speak Spanish. In that respect, I did change because I learned. Because many times I had it happen that....well, I didn't understand the teacher or she didn't understand me and...and in that sense I did change....I learned. I learned that in this country, if you don't understand a little bit of English....It's happened to me that some people that look Mexican or are Mexican Americans....It's happened

dicen: “I don’t speak Spanish”. Y aunque usted les mire que ellos son de color como nosotros, ellos dicen que no hablan español. ...Y por ese sentido ahmm....yo tuve que aprender. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

where they’ve said they don’t speak Spanish or they tell me: “I don’t speak Spanish.” And even though you see that they are the same color as we are, they say they don’t speak Spanish. ...And in that respect ahmmm....I had to learn.

This realization pushed Esther to change and act on her social network’s offer to teach her English as described earlier in this chapter. Without the insistence and support of her social network, Esther would not have learned English. According to Esther, she was unable to attend traditional ESL classes or study on her own due to her demanding work schedule. Thus, it was her social network of employers that provided the vehicle through which she was able to achieve some English oral proficiency. She became an English-speaker. It was a fact that she often justified as occurring not as a luxury but due to necessity.

As Esther, continues participating in parent involvement opportunities, she narrows which ones are important for her to attend and worth her valuable time.

Bueno, yo nada más asisto cuando son conferencias con los padres o que la maestra me manda llamar por sea problemas con Esperanza. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

Well, I only attend when they are conferences for the parents or that the teacher calls me in because of problems with Esperanza.

Yo asisto ...cuando tiene programas en l’escuela de.....programas que hacen que de Cinco de Mayo, o cosas así yo trato de ir. ...yo he ido...los programas que hacen los niños que cantan o....que creo que cantan o hacen como un teatro. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

I attend...when they have programs in the school of...programs that they do for the 5th of May, or things like that, I try to go to....I’ve gone to....the programs that the children do where they sing or...that I think they sing in or that they make like a play.

Despite the programs being mostly in English, Esther attends them to make sure her daughters know that she cares and is interested in them. According to Esther, because her husband does not attend, she feels even more obligated to make sure she is present at her daughters' special events. In her efforts to fulfill her role as 'good' mother as defined by Sonoma ISD, Esther looks for parent education trainings to attend that teach parents how to help their children. For Esther, the school had only offered her one parent education training in the 2003-2004 school year which was offered automatically as a result of her child being enrolled in the bilingual education program, a program oriented toward remediation. The training was conducted in Spanish by the campus bilingual teachers and focused on teaching children how to read. She was not invited to participate in any of the other parent education trainings conducted by the district. For Esther, she was participating in enough Status II parent involvement opportunities to not get tracked by the CIS Campus Program Director in charge of parent involvement as in need of these trainings.

Language was repeatedly an issue that Esther noted in her parent involvement. Esther describes facing forms and parent involvement activities whose meanings she isn't always sure of. Although she is able to speak and understand some English, it is not enough to be able to completely decipher school memos and other information being presented to her. For written memos, she improvised by asking her older daughter about the information contained in the memo and then reviewing it to pick up key words to see if it seemed to match what her daughter had told her. However, although this had worked, she was always left feeling uncertain about what she was signing. As Esther stated,

...nunca sabe uno lo que está firmando. Tiene que...saber uno lo que está firmando ¿verdad? (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

...you never know what you are signing. You have to...you have to know what you're signing, right?

Esther was minimally involved in all the right parent involvement activities offered by Sonoma ISD and worked to mediate the constraints she faced as a Spanish-speaker. She balanced her work schedule with the demands the school placed on her to participate at events that were on campus during work hours. Yet, it was the extension of school demands to the home combined with the pressures already present in her home life that had Esther teetering on the brink of losing control of the precious balance between the competing demands of school and the Mexican values she preserved. In the next section, we explore the dynamics present and the agency Esther exerts within day-to-day parent involvement.

### ***Day-to-Day Parent Involvement***

Esther describes her days as long and fairly predictable. I begin by sharing Esther's own descriptions of her typical day. In this way, I preface the discussion that will follow of the many ways she is involved with her daughters at home. This includes school prescribed ways, in addition to the non-privileged forms not often recognized by schools but which research scholars have begun to document (Diamond, 2001; López, 2001; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; González, 2001).

## Un Día Típico//A Typical Day

En la mañana me levanto temprano porque (a) Carmen la llevo a las siete veinte a la escuela y ya después....llego como a las siete y media y a las ocho y media llevo a Esperanza y ya me voy yo también. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/8/2004)

In the morning, I get up early because I take Carmen to school at seven twenty and then later....I return at seven thirty and at eight thirty, I take Esperanza and I go ahead and leave too.

Tengo que estar trabajando todo el día. ...si me pagan bien pero pues limpio, a veces limpio dos casas en un día y...cuando salgo, pues salgo cansada. Llegas del trabajo y a ver qué haces de comer, a lavar, o a recoger. Algunas veces no tengo tiempo ni siquiera de sentarme. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

I have to be working all day. ... They do pay me well for cleaning, sometimes I clean two houses in one day and....when I leave, well, I leave tired... You return from work and have to see what to cook, (then) to wash, or to pick up. Sometimes I don't even have time to sit down.

Yo trato....trato de ayudarlo (a mi esposo) también. ...porque yo sé que él también trabaja bastante. Y algunas veces si yo no le ayudo, él también llega tarde a la casa. Y usted sabe, ...cuando usted trabaja mucho, llega cansada a la casa, no tiene ganas ni de que le hablen. Y le digo, pues mejor le ayudo, luego así llega temprano. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

I try....try to help him [my husband] too. ...because I know he also works a lot. And sometimes if I don't help him, he also arrives home late. And you know, when you work a lot, you arrive home tired, you don't even feel like being talked to. And I tell you, well its better if I help him that way he will arrive early.

Y pues mi esposo, él ayuda trabajando y nos manda el dinero, pero el....el nomás llega y se sienta. El no se preocupa por si uno tiene que comer o qué vas a hacer. El no....nomás espera la comida y ya. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Well my husband, he helps by working and sending us money, but he....he just arrives and he sits down. He doesn't worry about if we have anything to eat or what to fix. He just....just waits for the food and that's it.

Showcased in this typical day are Esther's overlapping roles and responsibilities to her children, her job, her husband, and her home. She is the 'energizer' mother and wife that just keeps going and going. In addition to these activities she is involved in all day

everyday; Esther comes home to also fulfill the parent involvement activities the school prescribes for the home. As Esther states,

Yo realmente no...a la escuela no voy tan seguido, ¿verdad?, pero siempre le ayudo con su tarea,...hago lo que yo puedo aquí en la casa. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

I really don't...go to the school very often. But, I always help her with her homework,...I do what I can here at home.

Therefore, at the end of the day, Esther arrives home to prepare meals, attend to her husband, and prepare her daughters for school the next day. This entails reviewing school folders for notes, behavior scores, and homework.

As in every other parent involvement opportunity Esther participates in, language emerges as an issue that affects the confidence she feels in her ability to help her daughters at home with schoolwork.

Esperanza horita está en clase bilingüe. Casi la mayor de la parte es...es español. Y en eso yo no tengo problema en ayudarle. Pero si ya se brincan al inglés, allí sí no. No sé cómo ayudarle porque algunas veces aunque yo entienda las palabras, en español, dice otra cosa. No es lo mismo. Y yo le digo eso y a la mejor yo le digo como yo sé, y no es lo que me está tratando de preguntar. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Esperanza is now in a bilingual classroom. Almost all of it is...is in Spanish. In that, I don't have a problem helping her. But, if they go ahead and jump to English, then I can't help. I don't know how to help her because sometimes even though I understand the words in Spanish, it says something else. It's not the same. And I tell her that And maybe I tell it the way I know it, and it's not what she was trying to ask me.

Hay algunas veces que Carmen me pregunta alguna cosa en inglés y le digo yo...sí entiendo, pero yo no lo entiendo todo. Algunas palabras no las entiendo. Y si ellos preguntan algo, ¿Cómo le va usted a explicar esto si ellas no entienden bien español y yo no hablo bien inglés? (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

There are sometimes that Carmen asks me something in English and I tell her....I do understand, but I don't understand everything. I don't understand some words. And if they ask something,...How are you going to explain this if they don't understand Spanish well and I don't speak English well?

Esther communicates her confidence in her ability to help her daughter when classes are mostly in Spanish. However, she questions her ability to correctly interpret what may be asked of her daughter in homework assignments that are in English. This concern undermines her confidence but she continues her attempts to help her daughters with their homework despite it.

When Esther begins to review her youngest daughter's school folder, she looks for the skill areas mentioned by the teacher that the children are being drilled on at school in preparation for testing.

Le digo [a Esperanza] “¿Qué es este número?” Dice,...me piensa y luego empieza a contar desde uno otra vez. Le digo, “¿así cuándo vas a acabar?” Uhm...pero hay algunos que sí...sí todavía no los identifica bien. Pero, uhm...las sílabas...se las sabe casi todas. Así como le digo, no me acuerdo en que áreas me dijo la maestra dónde necesita más ayuda. Pero dijo que...varias las había pasado...pero no todos. Pero dijo que...a final de este año les iban a hacer otros pa' ver qué tanto habían aprendido de lo demás que les faltaba. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/8/2004)

I tell [Esperanza] “What is this number?” She says,...she thinks and then she begins to count from one again. I tell her: “That way, how are you ever going to finish?” Uhm...but there are some that she still can't identify well. But, uhm...the syllables...she knows almost all of them. Like I said, I don't remember in what areas the teacher told me she needed more help in. But she said that...she had passed several...but not all of them. But she said that...at the end of this year they were going to do some others to see how much she had learned from the rest that she was missing.

Esther wants her daughter to succeed. Therefore, she readily complies with the school's request to review these skills, so that her daughter can pass the test at the end of the year that proves she is doing well in school. She also monitors her daughter's behavior rating each day through colored stars. Her daughter has come home with an occasional green star meaning there have been some minor behavior incidents in class.

Pero no,...dice que se porta bien. Pero, nomás de vez en cuando trae el verde [marca de comportamiento]. Pero, dice que porque plática o me manda decir que...que estaba haciendo. ...Pero, no...supongo que no han sido tan graves porque no me ha mandado llamar. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

But no,....she says she behaves. But, only once in awhile is when she brings the green [behavior mark]. But, she says it's because she's talking or they let me know what.....what she was doing. But, no. I suppose that they haven't been too serious because she hasn't called me in.

Esther is not too concerned since she hasn't heard from the teacher. However, she sits with her daughter, asks her why she got the green star, and responds with *consejos* to her daughter about the importance of listening to the teacher and being well-behaved. It is in moments like these that Esther's own ways of being with her daughter intersect with the school-dictated forms.

Esther utilized *consejos* as a pedagogical tool for imparting moral lessons, advice, and communicating cultural knowledge. For Esther, it was *consejos* that she utilized to promote and reinforce her daughters' compliance with school prescribed educational demands and home defined ideas of *educación*. Esther defined this distinction between school education and *la educación* much like Valdés (1996; Valenzuela, 1999) did in her discussion of how the ten Latina/o families she studied raised their children.

La educación para mí, creo que es estudiar una carrera. ...No creo que la educación sea nada más estudiar... Creo que la educación debe venir desde la casa hasta....a la escuela. Creo que todo es junto, la familia y la escuela. La educación va entre dos. No creo que la educación nada más se las den en l'escuela. Para mí, creo que también en la casa. La escuela creo que es más enfocarse...a un estudio...a enseñarle, y la casa ayudarles, pero la educación aquí en la

To me, an education, I believe, is to study a career....I don't believe that an education is only studying. I believe that an education should come from the home out to....the school. I believe everything is together, the family and the school. An education is between two. I don't believe that an education is only given to them in school. To me I believe that it is also in the home. The school I believe that it's more about focusing...on one area of study....to teach them..., and the

casa es...enseñarles a ser responsables, ...enseñarles buenas maneras, a portarse bien en la escuela, con los demás, o en la calle, en las tiendas o un empleo donde trabaje. Creo que la educación es...enseñarles a ser buenas personas. Y la escuela un poco también pero más lo que la escuela se enfoca es en el estudio. ...si un día le llega (a) faltar su mamá, su papá, o...se encuentra sola, tiene una educación y sabe que puede agarrar un buen empleo, sabe que puede salir adelante sola. Creo que para mí, eso es la educación. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

home helps them. But an education here at home is teaching them to be responsible,...to teach them good manners, to behave in school, with others, or out in the street, in the stores, or in a job where they work. I believe that an education is...teaching them to be good persons. And the school a little bit too, but the school focuses more in studying. ...If one day her mother, her father are missing or...she finds herself alone,...she has an education and she knows that she can get a good job. She knows that she can get ahead alone. For me, I believe that is an education.

For Esther, school education is mostly about book learning used to gain a career and become self-sufficient. *La educación* is received at home and encompasses the moral education of her children to become responsible citizens. Therefore, when school was conveying moral messages that contradicted the moral lessons of home, Esther provided *consejos* to mediate the effects of the school's messages and elevate the home's moral lessons. For example, Esther agreed with the school's message that education and a career were important. However, Esther did not agree with the messages she felt were being conveyed that valued certain careers over others simply because they were higher paid, and shared the following *consejo* with her oldest daughter,

Le digo a Carmen, le digo échale ganas hija porque dice que quiere ser pediatra. Le dije un día, le digo: "¿quieres ser pediatra porque se gana buen dinero o porque tú quieres hacerlo? Dice: "porque quiero hacerlo". Le digo: "pues ojalá." Porque tampoco quiero que ella agarre...una profesión porque le dicen aquí vas a ganar dinero. Le digo: "si

I tell Carmen, I tell her give it your all, hija because she says she wants to be a pediatrician. I tell her, one day, I tell her, "You want to be a pediatrician because they make good money or because you want to do it? She says because she wants to do it. I tell her: "Well hopefully." Because I also don't want her to take a profession because they tell her that

vas a agarrar algo es porque a ti te va a gustar y porque lo vas a hacer de corazón. No nomás porque aquí [en los Estados Unidos] le dijeron que aquí se gana dinero y ya.” (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

you’ll make money there. I tell her, “If you are going to take something it’s because you are going to like it and because you are going to do it from your heart.” Not just because they told her here [in U.S.] that this is where you can make money and that’s it.”

Within this *consejo*, she emphasizes the value of knowing and following what gives you joy and not the allure of material things, like money. The *consejos* varied based on the age of her daughter. *Consejos* to the youngest daughter like those described earlier, centered on paying attention to elders and playing nicely with others. The *consejos* to her oldest daughter centered more on life lessons that were often embedded with resistance to the gendered notions of being a Latina woman Esther had lived and were given often in the presence of the youngest to be overheard as part of her moral education.

Y a veces le digo yo a Carmen, le digo, “ojalá y tú sí te esperes mucho tiempo.” No...que no le vaya (a) pasar lo mismo que a mí a los dieciséis años...casada y no tenía hijos. Pero, de todos modos. Ya no puede salir. Ya no puede ir libremente pa’ ninguna parte sin que le digan, “¿A dónde fuiste? ¿A dónde vas? O que le den regañada o... Le digo, “Ojalá y ella...ellas se esperen mucho tiempo. Que la piensen muy bien...con quién se van a juntar o con quién se van a casar. (Esther Gómez Interview, 5/15/2004)

And sometimes I tell Carmen, I tell her, “Hopefully and you’ll wait a long time.” No...that the same thing doesn’t happen to her that happened to me at sixteen...married and...I didn’t have children. But, in any event. One cannot go out. You can no longer come and go freely anywhere without them telling you, “Where did you go? Where are you going? Or that they scold you or...I tell you, “I hope that she...they wait a long time. That they think about it well...with whom they are going to get together or who they are going to marry.

Esther’s *consejos* ranged from lessons about appreciating what you have to valuing being bilingual and working hard. She shared these *consejos* as a cornerstone of *la educación* of her daughters at home steeped in Esther’s own personal history.

## ***LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND SPANISH LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE***

Over the course of the weeks we spent together, Esther shared the above narratives that expressed her agency as a Latina woman and mother grounded in her personal history and in the circumstances she found herself in the present. She also expressed narratives that allowed a glimpse into her language ideologies about Spanish, its role in her children's life, and what she perceived to be her role and that of schools in its maintenance.

Esther displayed a body of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs about learning and using English and Spanish each of which she associated with having its own benefits. English, now present across most contexts of her life in the U.S., opened the door to opportunities and ensured passage through the various medical, educational, and employment situations she faced. Speaking English was a necessity. Esther also considered Spanish equally important, although for different reasons.

Español...es el idioma que nosotros traemos de México...y...es algo que uno no puede cambiar ni debe cambiar porque...es el idioma con el que ellos pueden comunicarse...con su gente que se quedó en México. Y por ejemplo, cuando vienen los abuelos de Esperanza, ellos no hablan inglés. Ellos no entienden inglés. Tiene que hablarles español. Y por, ...es la raíz de uno y es algo que uno no debe...ni puede, ni debe cambiar. ...es algo indispensable igual que saber inglés. Pues es el idioma que nosotros traemos, el que nos heredaron las personas que nos van dejando y ...es algo que debe quedarse entre nosotros. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Spanish...it's the language that we brought from México...and...its something that one can't change, nor should change because...its the language with which they can communicate...with their people that stayed in México. And for example, when Esperanza's grandparents come, they don't speak English. They don't understand English. They have to talk to them in Spanish. And for,...its ones' roots and its something that one should not...could not, should not change...it is something as indispensable as knowing English. Well it is the language that we bring, the one that was inherited from the persons as they leave us and...its something that should stay among us.

For Esther, Spanish was an inheritance to be cherished. She recognized the power of Spanish for maintaining connections with family in México and thus with their cultural roots. She also recognized its importance for getting better paying job opportunities, but only as a supplement to English proficiency as she describes here in the context of a *consejo* she shares with her oldest daughter about the value of being bilingual.

...si agarras un empleo por decir en HEB, en cualquier tienda o en cualquier lugar, necesitas hablar español. Le digo y es mejor para ti porque tienes más oportunidades de agarrar un empleo, le digo porque hablas dos idiomas. Es mejor que si hablas uno solo. No digo que si agarras un solo idioma no le van a dar el empleo pero tiene más oportunidades si tiene los dos. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

“...if you get a job let’s say in HEB, in any store or any place, you need to speak Spanish.” I tell her, “and it’s better for you because you have more opportunities of getting a job”, I tell her “because you speak two languages. It’s better than if you only speak one. I’m not saying that if you have only one language they are not going to give her the job, but she has more opportunities if she’s has two.

Esther shares this *consejo* because she has witnessed her daughter’s loss of Spanish proficiency and does not want her to become like other Latina/os she has seen that no longer speak or understand Spanish.

Carmen ella estuvo en clases bilingües,...pero después que agarró el inglés se le olvidó el español. ...conozco gente de nosotros mismos que no hablan el español ni lo entienden. [Carmen]...Si habla con nosotros y sí, sí nos puede contestar pero si usted le pregunta el significado de lo que quiere decir, no sabe. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

Carmen, she was in bilingual classes,...but after she got English she forgot Spanish. ....I know people of our own that do not speak Spanish nor do they understand it. [Carmen] ...She does speak with us and yes, yes she can answer but if you ask her the meaning of what she wants to say, she does not know.

Esther, within her *consejo*, also guides her oldest daughter to choose to continue with her high school Spanish class as a way to revive her existing Spanish skills and foster her Spanish literacy.

Y dijo que ‘Sí’, que va a seguir con las clases [de español]. Le digo, “sígueme.” Le digo, “porque tienes que aprender no nada más hablarlo” le digo “sino saber lo que dicen. Porque no es...el chiste no es nada más hablarlo,” le digo, “tienes que saber el significado de las cosas o a la mejor tienes que también aprender a sentarte a escribir una carta.” (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

And she said, “Yes,” that she was going to continue with the [Spanish] classes. I tell her, “continue.” I tell her, “because you have to learn, not just how to speak it” I tell her, “but also to know what they are saying. Because it’s not....the trick is not just to speak it” I tell her, “you also have to know the meaning of things or maybe you also have to learn to sit down and write a letter.”

Therefore, Esther clearly communicates her expectation that her daughters develop Spanish language and literacy abilities. When I asked Esther to describe her view of what efforts were needed to attain Spanish language maintenance, she described a clear separation of responsibilities between schools and parents; with parents having primary responsibility for maintaining Spanish.

Creo que nosotros de padres el seguir hablándoles español porque si nosotros no se lo hablamos ellas no lo van a hablar. Creo que eso depende de nosotros...en sus padres que lo sigan manteniendo. Porque horita la escuela después de que pasan el cuarto grado, ya no les enseñan español. O sea ellas van a pura clase de inglés. Entonces ya, ya no es...eso ya no depende de la escuela. Creo que depende de nosotros en que ellos lo sigan manteniendo. Si nosotros no le hablamos español ella no va a hablar o lo va a dejar de hablar. Creo que eso es obligación de nosotros que ella lo siga manteniendo. Que no le de

I believe that us as parents continuing to speak to them in Spanish because if we don’t speak it to them, they are not going to speak it. I believe that that depends on us...in her parents continuing to maintain it. Because right now the school after they pass to the fourth grade, they don’t teach them Spanish. In other words, they are in pure English classes. Then, its not....that doesn’t depend on the school. I believe it depends on us for them to continue to maintain. If we don’t speak to her in Spanish she will not speak it or will stop speaking it. I think that is our obligation for her to continue maintaining it. That it not

vergüenza en seguirlo hablando. Porque yo no creo que alguien se tenga que avergonzar porque habla español o porque sus papás hablan español. Entonces ya...eso ya sería de nosotros de padres de familia seguir...hacerlos que ellos lo sigan manteniendo. O sea ya no depende de la escuela. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

embarrass her to continue speaking it. Because I don't think one should be embarrassed because they speak Spanish or because their parents speak Spanish. So then, that would be our, as parents, to continue...to make them continue to maintain it. In other words, it is no longer the responsibility of the school.

For Esther, since she did not have frequent interactions within Sonoma ISD, the impact of the interactions she did have in the schools were not felt strongly in the short term. Rather, they accumulated over time beginning with those she had with her oldest daughter in Sonoma ISD and which then guided her decisions with the youngest.

Her experience in the schools exposed Esther repeatedly to English events and to her oldest daughter's loss of Spanish after five years of attending the bilingual education program. She realized that Spanish was not going to be maintained through the school alone. That it would be up to her and Juan to support Spanish at home. With their long work hours, their interactions with their daughters centered on helping them with their homework. The youngest, Esperanza, was in bilingual education classes which facilitated Esther's ability to work with her in Spanish. Esther proudly recounted her youngest daughter's recent accomplishments focusing on her increased Spanish proficiency.

Al principio, Esperanza sabía más inglés que español. Horita sabe mucho más español. Pero, la mayor parte ella habla...español aquí con nosotros. ...ella no lo hablaba, español. Sí sabía pero no mucho. Ahora sabe más. Y habla los dos. Entiende los dos. Mira televisión en inglés...pero habla español. Entiende

In the beginning, Esperanza knew more English than Spanish. Now she knows a lot more Spanish. But, the majority of the time she speaks...Spanish here with us. ....She didn't use to speak it, Spanish. She did know it, but not much. Now she knows more. And she speaks both. She understands both. She

los dos. No sabe escribirlo bien todavía verdad pero sí lo habla. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

watches television in English...but she speaks Spanish. She understands both. She doesn't know how to write it well yet, right, but she does speak it.

Esperanza, the youngest, watched as Esther was able to convince her older sister to take a Spanish course in high school. Esther's youngest daughter now benefits from her previous experiences as she consciously makes choices that will expose both daughters to more Spanish. Esther is optimistic about the maintenance of Spanish and her daughters' chances of becoming bilingual:

Yo no creo que ellas van a tener barreras por hablar los dos idiomas. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

I don't believe that they are going to have barriers to speaking the two languages.

### ***SUMMARY***

Esther authored herself as a capable and independent woman. Esther's personal background was shaped by the Mexican cultural values she was raised with that emphasized women's roles as caretakers of the home and of their children. This created tensions with the current demands on her as a Latina mother living in the U.S. under undocumented status. Dynamic tensions were created as Esther simultaneously worked to fulfill the role of a traditional Mexican wife and mother by being home and attending to her family balanced against the role of working wife and good mother imposed on her through the necessity of work and the requirements of school. This theme filtered its way into almost every aspect of Esther's everyday life. Esther was negotiating between the demands of the traditional Mexican patriarchal roles she was raised with and those roles she was being introduced to in the United States and improvising responses to fit both.

When Esther entered general parent involvement within Sonoma ISD she found she could make choices about attending the parent involvement opportunities offered and through progressive experiences in those events chose which to prioritize in the future. It was often issues of language and time that most impacted her participation decisions. Due to job related time constraints, Esther enacted agency by becoming an ‘efficient’ parent for school parent involvement. She mostly attended those events that were directly related to her daughters’ education. Esther gave priority to those activities where language was not an obstacle. However, she attended all activities in which her daughters were participating even if they were in English. She decided to participate in all activities directly related to her daughters’ education. For other parent involvement events she found the minimal level of participation requested and provided that level. Due to parent involvement opportunities that were mostly held in English, Esther also became ‘selective’ determining which events were a waste of her time due to their inaccessibility.

For Esther, since she did not have frequent interactions within Sonoma ISD, the impact of the interactions she did have in the schools were not felt strongly in the short term. Rather, they accumulated over time beginning with the experiences she had with her oldest daughter in Sonoma ISD. These beginning experiences with the school then guided her decisions with her youngest daughter and impacted the choices she made for the home parent involvement activities she focused on with her daughters. When Esther realized that her oldest daughter was losing her Spanish, she simultaneously concluded that Spanish language maintenance was only going to happen through the home’s efforts. Esther, as with all the case study mothers, enacted agency using her social and cultural resources/capital, and the cultural tools of *consejos* to mediate efforts and messages from

the school that were in tension with the priorities she had set for her daughter's *educación*, such as the value of Spanish. For example, Esther established an environment where Spanish continued to play an important role and was actively being maintained. Esther used *consejos* as a means to help her daughters understand the importance of the Spanish language: “Español es nuestro idioma. Lo heredamos. Es parte de quienes somos, ¡nuestras raíces!” [Spanish is our language. We inherited it. It is part of who we are, our roots!](Esther's Interview, 03/20/2004).

Esther defines herself as a capable woman: “No Porque Soy Mujer No Puedo [Just Because I am a Woman Doesn't Mean I Can't].” She wants to be independent and at the same time she needs to balance the tensions between what is expected from her at home and at her daughters' school. She wants to be a good wife and mother. She is living the tensions between the school expectations of a good mother and the Mexican cultural expectations set by her family and her husband. Esther's acts of agency had served to mediate these conflicting demands into a delicate balance which Esther worked to maintain.

Esther described herself as not having any close friends that she felt she could share her intimate concerns with. Her efficient level of involvement in the school offered her no opportunities to forge friendships and establish additional social and cultural capital within this setting. Thus, although Esther had access to significant social capital through her network of clients she worked for, Esther remained emotionally isolated. During the last three pláticas we had, Esther told me how she was feeling: “Ya no aguanto más! Tal vez usted ya no me encuentra cuando vuelva. ¡Ya no puedo más!” [I

can't stand it anymore! Perhaps you won't see me again when you come back. I can't do it anymore!"] Esther was on the edge.

## CHAPTER 7

*LAURA LUNA:  
Vuelvo A Empezar  
[I Begin Again]*

Me considero una persona sencilla que ha aprendido poco a poco y a veces duramente lo importante que es la vida y aprovecharla a cada instante que las cosas más sencillas en la vida son las que en realidad importan. ... He aprendido a valorar lo importante que es ser una persona de bien en todos los sentidos. (Laura Luna Journal Entry 2/28/2004)

Nosotros tenemos 10 años aquí en los E.U. [Estados Unidos]. Tal vez se diga fácil 10 años. Pero, no ha sido fácil. En primer lugar porque llegas a un país desconocido donde encuentras muchas barreras entre ellas el idioma y el estar aquí ilegalmente y batallar con los trabajos por ser ilegal. Pero, ...al pasar el tiempo te das cuenta que estás solo por que estás tan lejos de tus seres queridos, de tu tierra que son tal vez motivos suficientes para darte por vencido y esta es una de las maneras más duras que me ha enseñado la vida de valorar lo importante que es la familia. (Laura Luna Journal Entry, 2/28/2004)

[mis hijas]...yo las nombro que son mis cuatro más maravillosos descuidos que he tenido en mi vida. Ahora, ellas representan todo en nuestras vidas como he dicho me considero una persona que toma muy en cuenta los valores de la gente. Por ello, trato de enseñar a mis hijas ser unas niñas

I consider myself an ordinary person that has learned about the important things in life little by little and sometimes in a hard way and that has learned to make the best of each of the little things in life, which are the ones that really matter the most. ...I have learned to value the importance of being *una persona de bien* (a person that acts in a righteous way) in a complete sense.

We have been in the U.S. for 10 years. It sounds easy, but it really hasn't. First because when you arrive to a foreign country you find many barriers. Among them, language, being illegal, and dealing with jobs as an illegal alien. But, ... as time goes by, you realize that you are far away from the loved you left back home, and that you are on you own. This could be enough to make you quit. This is a hard way to learn in life the important value of *la familia* [family].

[my daughters]... I called them the four marvelous mistakes I have made in life. Now, they are everything in our lives. As I have mentioned before, I consider myself someone that gives careful consideration to the values people have. That is the reason why I try to teach my daughters to be

responsables desde la importancia que es ser una buena hija, como buena estudiante, buena hermana, buena amiga. Que es importante sembrar cosas buenas para cosechar buenos frutos. (Laura Luna Journal Entry, 2/28/2004)

responsible girls, starting with the importance of being good daughters, good students, good sisters, and good friends. (I teach them that) it is important to sew good deeds to harvest good fruit.

In the excerpts above, Laura authors herself as a person who took life and family for granted in México until she faced the loneliness, foreignness, and struggles of undocumented life in the U.S. She describes these hardships as often bringing her to the brink of giving up while simultaneously teaching her the value of embracing each moment life offers, and the importance of family. It is these lessons which pervade her interactions with her husband, daughters, and school. For Laura, it is family that drives her choices and it is issues of citizenship that frame her struggles within her daily life. Laura described that for her, being a ‘good’ mother involved being an overall good person, demonstrating good deeds in every area of her family’s life, and teaching her daughters respect, responsibility, and the elements of leading a good life. The examples Laura provides of her parent involvement show her active agency at home and in school in support of the goals she described. The narratives above showcase her as a dedicated, responsible, and moral mother and teacher who is simultaneously struggling to maintain stability and exert her voice in the face of the uncertainty that her undocumented status places on her.

At thirty-two, Laura has been married to her husband, Julián for fifteen years. She has four daughters: fourteen, twelve, eight, and five years of age. Ten years ago, Laura left Acambaro, Guanajuato, México to join her husband in the United States (U.S.). Until a couple years ago, Laura had stayed home raising her daughters while her husband

worked. Now, Laura does seasonal work cleaning hotel rooms and houses to provide supplemental income to the family. Laura is a storyteller. It is her natural way of being with her daughters, husband, and anyone else she is around. The oral narratives she shared with me were rich with the dialogic exchanges and the emotion one might overhear if you were a fly on the wall listening in on intimate conversations. Filling her stories are Laura's acts of agency driven by the struggles and moral lessons and wisdom gained from life experiences as a Latina woman and mother raised in México and now living as a person with undocumented status in the U.S. In an effort to maintain her voice front and center, I allow Laura herself to recount as much of her story as her excerpts allow. However, I would like to note that due to the space constraints of this dissertation; her narratives are reduced to excerpts that belie the depth of her stories.

In the sections that follow, Laura describes her personal background in México and her current situation in the United States which highlight issues in her personal history that often surfaced in her parent involvement. Laura then tells us about the parent involvement she participates in and out of Sonoma ISD. When Laura's youngest daughter has an incident on the school bus, it sparked a series of improvisational acts of agency from Laura as she struggled to seek action and resolution to this school bus incident that compromised her daughter's safety and raised conflicts with the messages of moral behavior she was promoting at home. This incident and the agency it sparked in Laura are discussed next to provide a vivid example of how her interactions in parent involvement at school influenced and in this case changed an aspect of Laura's parent involvement at home. Next, Laura discusses her language ideologies and her views

toward her role and that of schools in Spanish language maintenance. Finally, I provide a cumulative summary highlighting the key lessons Laura's case study offers.

### ***PERSONAL HISTORY***

Vuelve a empezar,  
aunque sientas el cansancio,  
aunque el triunfo te abandone,  
aunque el error te lastime,  
aunque un negocio se quiebre,  
aunque una traición te hiera,  
aunque el dolor quemé tus ojos,  
aunque una ilusión se apague,  
aunque ignoren tus esfuerzos,  
aunque la ingratitud sea la paga,  
aunque la incomprensión corte tu risa,  
aunque todo parezca nada,  
vuelve a empezar.

Begin again,  
even if you feel tired,  
if success has abandoned you,  
if mistakes hurt you,  
if a business has gone bankrupt,  
if treason hurts you,  
if pain burns your eyes,  
if an illusion blows away,  
if your efforts are ignored,  
if ingratitude is your pay,  
if lack of understanding stops your  
laughter,  
if everything seems nothing,  
Begin again.

(The poem above was read by Laura in an interview on 4/6/2004. Her mother sent it to her. It symbolizes Laura's source of strength and the mantra of her life.)

### ***Family & Educational Background***

Laura's life narratives are filled with hardships confronted. As I talked with Laura, the strength depicted in facing and overcoming hardships appeared as a regular theme not just in the narratives of her life but in those of her parents. As Laura narrated her stories, the emotions that were just under the surface often came out as tears as she relived with me some of the challenges she had survived including the witnessing of her father's hardships while working in the U.S; her crossing the U.S. México border; and the fear and economic uncertainty she lived with everyday. The point of Laura's stories was

not the hardships. The point of her stories was being able to live through them and move forward to build a life. The poem her mother had sent her was a painful reminder of this.

Me cuesta leerlo [el poema]. ...porque todo eso, es todo lo que yo he hecho y me ha costado mucho trabajo, todo eso es lo que he hecho, he tratado de dejar atrás todo lo malo y volver a empezar. (Laura Luna Interview, 4/6/2004)

I have trouble reading it [the poem]. ...because all of that, its all the things that I have done and it has cost me a lot of effort, all that is what I have done. I have tried to leave behind everything that is bad and begin again.

Yet, it was this message that she considered to be the source of her strength. It gave her the courage to continue when all she wanted to do was give up. This is her philosophy of life: Begin again! ¡Vuelve a Empezar!

Laura was raised in México. She has five sisters and three brothers. While Laura was growing up, her father decided to go work in the U.S. to provide for the needs of the family. Thus, her father lived far away from the family yet he traveled frequently to visit them; sometimes as often as every other 10-15 days. Throughout, he sent money home and Laura's mother raised the children, maintained the household, and managed the budget. Laura describes her mother as a 'strong' woman which she attributes to the circumstances resulting from her father's journeys to the U.S.

Pero mi mamá es una persona muy dura, muy fuerte, no dura, muy fuerte. Yo siento que las mismas circunstancias de estar sola todo el tiempo con nosotros la hizo así. Y mi papá era más nostálgico...y mi mamá no, mi mamá era hasta la fecha, hasta la fecha es bien seria, es muy fuerte. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

My mother is very tough, very strong, (Well,) not tough, (but) very strong, quite...well, I feel that because she was on her own, circumstances made her like that. And my father was much more nostalgic, more... My mom to this day, to this day is very serious, she is very strong.

According to Laura, over the years, she has adopted her mother's strength and appreciated its presence in her own life. It is when she recalls her father's hardships and his advice that Laura is unable to contain a wellspring of emotion.

Me dolió mucho y de una manera nunca estoy conforme como se fue él...¿verdad? Él sufrió mucho aquí. Él batalló mucho con el idioma. Él no sabía manejar. Él aunque estaba residente legal aquí iba a la tienda y aún tenía que llevar su tarjeta. Él con todos esos miedos. Él...a pesar de que él era legal aquí, él traiba más miedos que ni nosotros. Entonces, fueron muchas experiencias con él y en la forma en que aunque él estaba aquí...que se supone que aquí es una mejor vida, él sufrió mucho aquí. Y él me dijo una cosa. Él me dijo, "Hija, si Dios te da licencia de terminar tu casa en México este...no dejes de hacerla tu casa." Él me la empezó. Él dejó todo a medias. Y este...y dijo, "No vayas a dejar de echarle ganas a tu casa" dice, "Y el día que Dios te dé licencia, termínala. Regrésate. Porque aquí..." dice, "Estados Unidos, te va a matar" Dice, "Porque aquí es pura nostalgia. Y la nostalgia te mata." Y eso es cierto. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

It was very painful for me and in a certain way I will never be at peace with the way he died... truly. He suffered a lot here. He struggled a lot with the language. He didn't know how to drive. Even though he was a legal resident here, when he went to the store he would still take his green card. He had so many fears. He... in spite of being a legal resident here, he had more fears than we do. So, there were too many experiences he endured because of the way he was living here [in the U.S]. He told me one thing. He told me, "Daughter, if God permits you finish your house in México then... do not keep yourself from finishing your house." He started it for me; he left it half way through. And... and he said, "Don't stop putting effort into your house" and he said, "When God allows, finish it. Return because here..." he said "The United Stated will kill you. Here, one gets very nostalgic, and that nostalgic feeling kills you." And that is (very) true.

It is now that she is in the U.S. facing the same struggles, that Laura describes finally coming to understand how hard it was for her father and her mother to live between two countries and two cultures. Laura's own journey into the U.S. would not begin for several years, but the events leading up to it began while she was dating her husband, Julián.

[contándole a su hija mayor] ...Desde que éramos novios, él se vino para acá [Estados Unidos] y cuando él estuvo acá le dije, “sabes que, que están vendiendo unos..., fíjate le dije a tu papá, están vendiendo unos terrenos acá,” le dije, “¿no quieres comprar un terreno?” y él dijo “sí” (Laura Luna Interview, 3/23/2004)

Y él se vino y me dejó con cien cincuenta [pesos]. ¿Qué hice con esos cien cincuenta? Yo fui y me surtí de dulces. Y yo empecé a vender. Y yo luego, luego con la idea de que yo sé que a eso venían a tardarse por acá. Yo dije, “Yo no voy a estar esperanzada a que él me mande. ¡Lo siento mucho pero no! Y yo empecé a hacer mi lucha allá. Yo vendí gelatinas. Yo vendí dulces. Y empecé yo a tener pa’ estar comiendo. Yo no estaba esperanzada. Pues yo sabía que no había agarrado trabajo pronto y todo. Pero, de alguna manera... Yo a él no le hacía saber que yo tenía dinero. Dije, “Yo no me voy a levantar a él esa obligación.” Entonces él apurado, apurado, apurado acá...hasta que empezó a mandar dinero. Pero, yo nunca le dije a él. “Yo me puse a hacer esto, yo me puse a hacer el otro...” (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

[contándole a su hija mayor] ...yo trataba de no fallarle a tu papá, yo a tu papá lo tenía con la obligación de irse a trabajar y de arrimar lo que ganaba, porque él miraba que yo cumplía, y así se empieza en el matrimonio. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/23/2004)

[recounting it to her oldest daughter] ...ever since we were dating, he would come over here [United States] and when he was over here I told him, “You know what, they are selling some..., look I told your father, They are selling some lots over here,” I told him, “Don’t you want to buy a lot?” and he said, “Yes.”

He came over here and he left me with one hundred and fifty [pesos]. What did I do with those one hundred and fifty pesos? I went and stocked myself up with candies. And I began to sell. And I then, then with the idea that I know that they come to take time over here. I said, “I am not going to be waiting for him to send me. I am sorry but no. And I began to make my own efforts over there. I sold gelatins. I sold candies. And I started to have enough to be able to eat. I was no longer waiting. Well, I knew that he hadn’t been able to get a job quickly and everything. But, somehow... I never let him know that I had money. I said, “I am not going to lift that obligation from him.” Then, he struggled and struggled over here,...until he started sending money. But, I never told him, “I made myself do this, I made myself do the other thing...”

[recounting it to her oldest daughter] ...I tried not to fail your father. I had your father with the obligation to go to work and to send what they earned...because he could see that I was fulfilling [my commitments to him] And that’s how you start a marriage.

In recounting her story, Laura authors herself as a resourceful entrepreneur and from the beginning of her marriage constructs herself and her marriage as one of mutual obligation and support within the roles they had each agreed to carry out. Within one month of getting married, Laura was pregnant with her first child. About a year after the birth of her first child, Laura had her second. Then, after three years of marriage, Julián decided to return to the United States to work. Laura describes her fears as she faced the possibility of Julián making a life without her in the U.S.

Duró un año y 8 meses [sin visitarnos] porque se accidentó aquí. Entonces luego duró conmigo menos de un mes. Y en ese mes pensé dije, “año 8 meses sin vernos viene por menos de un mes. Él va a hacer vida allá.” Y yo hablé con él y yo le dije que me quería meter a estudiar porque yo me casé a los 17 años. No acabé de estudiar y debido a que él venía para acá y como uno oye todas las historias de cómo se vienen se quedan acá y todo. ...yo pensé “No. Yo no voy a estar esperando que me mande dinero o que pueda venirme a ver porque debido a que no tenía papeles.” Este dije “yo me voy a meter a estudiar y voy a hacer...” Yo pensaba estudiar computación. “...Yo TENGO que sacar adelante a mis hijas.” ...Él nunca fue irresponsable y siempre mandó dinero y todo pero como fue tan poco el tiempo que nos vio se me hizo así. Entonces hablé con él y dijo no...no te metas a estudiar y te voy a traer para acá. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

He lasted one year and 8 months [without visiting us] because he was in an accident here. Then, he was with me less than one month. And in that month, I thought, “A year and 8 months without seeing each other. He comes for less than a month. He’s going to make a life over there. And I spoke to him and I told him that I wanted to go back to school because I got married when I was 17 years old. I didn’t finish studying and since he was coming over here and since one hears the stories of how they come over and they stay over here and everything. ...I thought, “No. I am not going to be waiting for him to send me money or that he be able to come and see me because of him not having papers.” I said, “I am going to go back to school and I’m going to...” I planned to study computers. ...“I have to get my daughters ahead.” ...He was never irresponsible and he always sent money and everything. But, since the time he spent with us was so little, it seemed that way to me. So then I spoke to him and he said, “No. Don’t go back to school and I am going to bring you over here.

Laura's response to the possibility that Julián may not always return was to move towards greater self-sufficiency. Laura expressed having only two regrets: getting married at the young age of 17 and not continuing her education past the equivalent of her freshman year in high school. So, when presented with the possibility of having to make a life without Julián in México, Laura develops a plan to go back to school and shares it with her husband. As Laura exerts her agency confronting this situation, she gains power in the relationship. In the end, Laura reports that Julián got the money together to cross her and his two daughters within two months of their conversation.

The journey to cross the U.S.-México border illegally is recalled by Laura as being filled with dangers. Laura has crossed twice. The first time was when she came over with her two oldest daughters. The second time was seven years later after the death of her father in México in which she describes nearly drowning as she crossed the Rio Grande River to return to the U.S. Each time Laura recalls the events of border crossings, she swears that if she ever has to go back again, she will not return. Laura reflects on the inner strength needed to make the journey and continue crossing.

A veces no sabe uno de dónde le salen las fuerzas porque yo soy...en un sentido soy...cobarde. Pero, yo no sé en ese momento de dónde agarré fuerzas para regresar. ...Yo no regreso. No porque me esté yendo mal aquí. Simplemente por los peligros al pasar. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

Sometimes one doesn't know where our strength comes from because I am...in a sense I am...a coward. But, I don't know how I got the strength in that moment to return. I won't return. Not because it is going bad for me here. Simply because of the dangers in crossing.

The first time Laura crossed the border into the U.S, she describes coming with her two daughters. Julián had paid a *coyote* (illegal smuggler of people into the U.S.) three

hundred dollars to bring him, his wife and two daughters safely over. Laura recounts the series of experiences that she reports haunted their daughter's memories.

Yo llevaba mis dos niñas....A mí me agarraron con mis dos niñas. ... [primero], nos dejaron en una casa abandonada. El calor a cien dieciocho. En la casa, pues sin ningún servicio. No había agua. Y nosotros por el miedo de que nos fueran a agarrar. Entonces, este, ya pues, se empezó a desesperar mi esposo, y ya mis hijas se empezaron a enmugrar todas del sudor. Entonces dijo mi esposo, "Sabes que, que nos vamos a tener que salir porque ya no regresaron por nosotros." Nos quitaron trescientos dólares y nos habíamos quedado sin carro. Dijimos, "¿Y hora cómo le hacemos para regresarnos?" Pues ay, mi esposo lloró. Yo me tuve que hacerme la fuerte. Mi esposo lloró. Y yo decía, "¿Pues qué hago? Ni modo de ponerme a llorar con él." Yo le decía, "Pues lo bueno es que estamos bien. Mira total si no se puede nos vamos a regresar." [ya después]...Brincamos. Pero, nos agarraron atrás de un, como esos botes de basura, atrás de un bote. Fue una cosa bien fea. Allí fue donde mis hijas se, se traumaron, porque llegamos a ése y nos escondimos. Y llegaron como cuatro patrullas con nosotros y con pistolas y todo y haciendo ruidazo en el bote. "Salgan. Salgan para fuera. Ya los vimos." Y cuando nos descubrimos del bote, todos apuntándonos con las pistolas. Entonces mis hijas decían, "Bueno, ¿pues que hicimos? ¿Qué hicimos?" Y se, eso fue lo que se les grabó bastante a ellas. ....y hasta...Yo me acuerdo que ya cuando teníamos mas de un mes aquí a dentro, la más

I had my two daughters with me...They caught me with my two daughters....[first], they left us in an abandoned house. The heat was one hundred and eighteen. The house, well without any services. There was no water. And us because of our fear of them catching us. Well, then, my husband started to get desperate, and my daughters were already starting to get covered in sweat. Then, my husband said, "You know that, that we are going to have to leave because they never returned for us." They took three hundred dollars and had been left without a car. We said, "And now how do we do it to return?" Well, then my husband cried. I had to be strong. My husband cried. And I said, "Well, what do I do? I can't start crying with him." I would tell him, "The good thing is that we are fine. Look in the end if we can't do it we are going to return." [Later] we crossed over. But they caught us behind a..., like those garbage cans, behind a can. It was a horrible thing. That is where my daughters were traumatized, because we arrived there and hid. And then about four patrol cars arrived for us and with guns and everything and making a lot of noise by the can. "Come out. Come out. We already saw you." And when we came out of the can, they all pointed at us with their guns. Then my daughters were saying, "Well, what did we do? What did we do?" And, well that is what they remember vividly.....and...I remember that when we had already been here inside

chiquita que yo traiba...era un miedo oír el helicóptero. Quedó mal. Quedó mal la niña. Pero, ya se les olvidó. Se les olvidó. Pero, no...es bien... (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

for more than a month, the youngest one that I brought...there was such fear when she heard a helicopter. She was badly affected. The girl was badly affected. But, they've already forgotten. They've forgotten. But, it's not good.

Laura constructs herself as the strong wife and mother as she struggles to move beyond her own fears to console her husband and children in the face of these traumatic border crossings. Of the six sisters in her family, she is the only one that has crossed over to the U.S. As time passes, she reflects on her initial reasons for coming to the U.S.

Mis ganas, ganas de venir pa' acá no eran... Mis únicas ganas eran de estar con mi esposo y ...que mi esposo no se perdiera de mis hijas y mis hijas de su papá. No eran las ganas de venir al norte a trabajar, a...no eran esas ganas. Por esas ganas no vine. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

My desire, my desire to come over here was not....My only desire was to be with my husband and...that my husband not lose out on his daughters and my daughters of their father. It was not a desire to come to the north to work,...it wasn't that desire. I didn't come for those reasons.

Once Laura described how she and her daughters had successfully crossed into the U.S. illegally, she reflected on the living conditions that at that time had awaited them.

Viví un año en Los Ángeles. Allá nos fue mal y yo le dije a mi esposo, "Yo necesito regresarme porque yo estaba mejor donde yo vivía en México que aquí". ...y él dijo, "No. ¿Cómo te vas a regresar? No vas a regresar sin dinero sin nada. ¿Cómo te vas a regresar?" Le dije yo, "Si no me quieres regresar, entonces vamos para Tejas donde está mi papá." ...Entonces tengo del '97 aquí. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

I lived in Los Angeles for one year. It went bad for us there and I told my husband, "I need to return because I was better off where I lived in México than here." ...and he said, "NO. How are you going to return? You are not going to return without money, without anything. How are you going to return?" I told him, "If you don't want to send me back, then let's go to Texas where my father is." So then, I've been here since '97.

With that ultimatum, Laura, Julián and the children moved to Sonoma, Texas to begin the next chapter in their lives.

### *Current Life Circumstances*

After ten years in Sonoma, Laura and Julián remain undocumented. Laura shared with me the daily fears and challenges she felt due to her undocumented status. This is the single biggest issue that impacts all aspects of her life, including her parent involvement as I will discuss later in this chapter. Among the other areas their undocumented status impacted were employment, emotional well-being, trust of others and sense of security, housing options, and their ability to maneuver in the community. In the following excerpts, Laura describes the overall sense of insecurity and emotional upheaval that their undocumented status created and illustrates her agency through her negotiation of the tensions that arose.

#### Overall Sense of Insecurity

Nosotros, el no tener una licencia, todos los días, no hay un día en que yo...estoy con el pendiente de que mi esposo no llega, que lo va a parar la policía, que lo van a meter a la cárcel o que lo van a deportar. De que gracias a Dios, encuentra trabajos buenos, y que va a pasar el día en que lo vuelvan a chequear. Y vamos a empezar. Que no estamos seguros. Pero siempre con la esperanza de que aquí hay trabajo y de que él es una persona que le gusta luchar. Y que si va a pasar, otra vez, no le va a quedar de otra que seguir adelante. Volver a buscar otro trabajo. Pero eso nos, a veces, nos baja mucho el ánimo. Porque a veces sentimos que estamos ya bien cuando nos vuelve a pasar las cosas y tenemos que empezar de abajo otra vez. Y nunca hemos logrado estabilizarnos por completo. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

For us, not having a [drivers] license, everyday, there is not a day that I don't ...that I'm not worried about my husband not arriving, that the police might have stopped him, that they are going to put him in jail or that they are going to deport him. Thank God, he finds good jobs, and that the day will come when they will check him again...and we are going to start again. That we are not secure. But always with the hope that here there are jobs and that he is a person that is willing to struggle. And that if it is going to happen again, there will be no other alternative but to continue on. To continue looking for another job. But that does sometimes lower our spirits a lot. Because sometimes we feel that we are finally doing well when things happen again and we have to start from the bottom again.

### Emotional Upheavals

Es bien duro, es bien duro porque él tiene muchas ganas pero...es duro poderse aguantar cuando llega, plática, y uno no puede....decir...en ese momento lo que uno siente. Tiene que hacerse fuerte. Y de la manera en apoyarse uno al otro, para otra vez empezar. Y nosotros tratamos de hacer lo más posible de que mis hijas no estén sintiendo todo esto. Que tengan una vida lo más normal posible. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

“Aquí no sirve llorar.” Le dije yo [a mi hija]. “¿Tú crees” le digo yo, “que tu padre cuando viene y trabaja y lo corren de un trabajo, él llega y tú crees que se vale llorar? Mejor nos hacemos fuertes porque con llorar no vamos a salir adelante.” Le digo, “Aquí, en el lugar donde nos encontramos, nomás es de echarle ganas” le digo, “de todo el tiempo que es salir adelante. La gente que no trae eso en la mente, mejor se queda donde está.” Le dije yo, “Porque el día de mañana con lágrimas y con todo no vas a solucionar nada.” (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

A pesar de todo, todo el tiempo he tratado de estar bien, todo el tiempo, tratando de, estar, positivamente, así sea la peor cosa, verle el lado bueno, tratar de tener la paciencia y de seguir lo mejor [camino], más por que está uno en donde está. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/23/2004)

It is very hard, it is very hard because he has lots of desire but....its hard to hold it in when he arrives, talks, and one can't ...say...in that moment what one is feeling. One has to be strong. And in some way support one another to once more begin again. And we try to do everything possible so that our daughters don't feel all of this. That they have a life that is as normal as possible.

“It doesn't help to cry here.” I told her [my daughter]. “Do you think” I told her, “that your father when he comes and he Works and they fire him from a job, he arrives and do you think that he can cry. Its better that we make ourselves strong because crying we are not going to get ahead.” I tell her, “Here, in this place that we find ourselves in, it is only about us giving our all” I tell her, “all the time it is about getting ahead. The people that don't have that desire in mind, its better that they stay where they are.” I tell her, “Because one of these days, with tears and everything you are not going to resolve anything.”

In spite of everything, I have always tried to be well. I have always tried to, be positive, be it the worst thing, I try to see the positive side. I try to have the patience and to follow the best [path]...and more because of where one is.

Laura, in the excerpts above, illustrates the tensions between having a normal life in an unstable situation, of being strong and simultaneously feeling defeated, between protecting her daughters from the hardships they face and yet wanting to teach them to be strong and resilient. Laura exerts her agency during these moments by activating her inner cultural resources gained from her parents' enduring strength in the face of adversity. She draws from their refrain "vuelve a empezar/begin again" and finds the positive in the situation, draws on her faith, and focuses on the strengths she and her husband have to continue moving forward.

Laura also offers and draws on the mutual support and partnership available in her marriage (a topic I will discuss further in the next section) to remain strong as they both jointly fight to shield their daughters from the hardships they face and project as normal a life as possible for them. Laura and her husband also simultaneously prepare their daughters for these hardships through their sharing of *consejos* and *experiencias de la vida*. This was particularly important at critical times when they saw their daughter's veering off course from the moral heading they were imparting to them at home. These are the basis of the home parent involvement activities that pervade the way they relate to their daughters which I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter.

Laura's own employment situation was also insecure. After arriving in the U.S., it took Laura seven years to start working. She had been working seasonally cleaning rooms at a local resort hotel. However, the year of our *pláticas*, Laura had received notice that they were strictly checking social security numbers prior to employment. Thus, Laura was left to seek private homes to begin cleaning independently. Laura lived in Sonoma's west side in an apartment complex frequented by undocumented persons

from México. The rents were high, the maintenance nonexistent, and drugs and alcohol were known by Laura to be used and abused in the apartment parking lot after dark. During the year of our *pláticas*, Laura and her husband were able to purchase an older trailer to live in. This was considered a major step towards creating stability and a normal life for her daughters.

Unlike Esther, Laura had a strong marriage and family life which provided emotional support and strength for her to confront and overcome the hardships that cycled through her life due to her undocumented status. Laura remained hopeful that one day they would be able to obtain legal residency. She reflected on how close she had been to beginning the process right before her father's death, when he had agreed to begin the paperwork on her family's behalf.

A lo mejor por el tiempo [que hemos estado aquí], porque mi única oportunidad era mi papá. Entonces cuando mi papá se enfermó, salió la ley y mi papá, ya estaba en México, “ahora que regrese hija, luego, luego vamos a mandar para agarrar la multa y para meterte los papeles” y mi papá ya no regresó. Falleció...la única esperanza en nosotros es el tiempo, y mis hijas el estudio. ...para que si quieren un día tener sus papeles, no dejen de echarle ganas al estudio, es la única manera que a lo mejor ustedes van a lograr algo aquí. Y con eso las tengo, y nosotros tal vez por el tiempo. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

Maybe because of the time [that we've been here], because my only opportunity was my father. Then, when my father got sick, the law passed and my father was already in México, “When I return daughter, right away we are going to send off to pay the fine and submit your papers” and my father didn't return. He died...the only hope for us is time and for my daughters their education. So that if they want to one day have their papers, they should not stop putting their all into their education. It is the only way that perhaps you will be able to accomplish something here. And with that I have them and for us perhaps because of the time.

As a legal resident himself, he had already assisted two of Laura's brothers in arranging legal paperwork so that their families could come to the U.S. legally. However, despite

her two brothers living in Sonoma as legal residents, they had so far been unwilling to sponsor Laura and her family.

A mí me duele por ser mis hermanos, ...todo el tiempo he estado sola, en lo económico, en lo moral, en todo, en todo tiempo. Cuando mi hermano le quiso arreglar [los papeles] a mi cuñada. Yo trabajaba, yo duré un año de mi dinero pagándole la renta, pagándole la comida, pos le prestamos un dinero para que se arreglaran, hasta ahorita él no se acuerda. Nosotros, no podemos pedirle el dinero. Nosotros no vamos a pedirle el dinero. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

It hurts me because they are my brothers....I have always been alone, economically, spiritually, in everything, at all times. When my brother wanted to fix my sister-in-law's papers, I lasted a year. I worked, I lasted one year of my money paying his rent, paying his food, we even lent him some money so that they could get settled. Up until now, he doesn't remember. We, we cannot ask him for the money. We are not going to ask him for the money.

Laura talked about the pain of feeling unsupported by the very family she went out of her way to help and spend time with to regain a sense of connection to her family in México. Therefore, Laura focused her primary efforts on maintaining positive relations with her own husband in support of the children.

Laura and Julián had been married for fifteen years, ten of which had been while they resided in the U.S. Since the beginning of their relationship Laura describes setting the ground rules, meaning the behaviors she expected in the relationship. These included respect, responsibility, and a sense of obligation to the family.

Primero me hice yo responsable y luego yo le hice...yo cada que puedo le hago saber [a mi esposo], "Tu negocio no nomás es trabajar...es ayudarme con las niñas." Entonces él llega y yo platico con él de lo que debo de platicarle... "Sabes que...va pasar esto, va pasar esto." (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

First, I became responsible and then I made him....I, everytime I can, I let him [my husband] know, "Your business is not only to work...it's also to help me with the girls." So then he arrives and I talk with him about the things I should be talking to him about..."You know that...this is going to happen, this is going to happen."

Mi esposo no tiene amigos. Tiene amigos pero no para andar con ellos. Fines de semana son pa' nosotros. Siempre hemos...entonces él dice, "Yo no tengo amigos fines de semana. Yo cumplo con mis labores en mi casa y tratamos de que ellas [mis hijas] sean igual. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

My husband does not have any friends. He has friends but not to hang out with. Weekends are for us. We have always....so then he says, "I have no friends on weekends. I fulfill my household duties and we try that our daughters do the same.

Laura was quick to bring any of Julián's missteps up and provide him with *consejos* that included the reasons it was important to meet the ground rules of proper behavior expected from any responsible parent.

Y mi esposo...yo se lo he inculcado, y de alguna manera a veces allí es donde nos unimos los dos y... A veces...él nunca me lo ha quitado. Yo a veces él me dice, "¿A dónde vas?" "Voy a comprar una dispensa y ve que empiezo a echar bolsas diferentes en cada..."agárrate un carro tú y yo" "¿Y pa que dos carros?" Le digo, "Ya nos vamos a separar de lonche tú y yo" Y empezamos a bromear. Y luego ya le digo, "Llévame a tal dirección" "¿Y hay pa qué?" "Tu llévame y ya" le digo. Nunca me dice pa' que lo haces o...No. Él se queda callado y él hace lo que yo le digo. Y es una cosa que todo el tiempo lo hemos traído nosotros. Y yo aunque él no me traiba se lo trato de inculcar y así logramos cosas buenas con él. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

And my husband...I have instilled in him, and in some way there is where we both sometimes get closer and...Sometimes...he has never taken it away from me. I sometimes...he tells me, "Where are you going?" "I'm going to buy a donation and he sees that I begin to put different bags in each..." "Grab yourself a cart for you and for me." "And for what do we need two carts for? I tell him, "We are now going to separate our lunch you and I" and we begin to joke around. And then I tell him, "Take me to such and such address." "And for what?" "You take me and that's it," I tell him. He never asks me, "Why do you do it?"...No. He stays quiet and he does what I ask. And its one thing that we have always done together. And me, even though he may not take me I try to instill it in him and that way we accomplish good things with him.

Julián is narrated by Laura as a willing student who learned with her help to do good deeds and prioritize his family above friends or any vices he might be tempted toward.

Laura and Julián had established clear divisions of labor that were flexible but that allowed each to contribute at different times in household duties.

Mi papá era bien machista. Él [mi esposo] ponía frijoles, hacía café, o hacía unos taquitos de papa, y este, él a las ocho, ocho y media me decía, “levántate a almorzar.” ”Invita a tu mamá [le decía a miya], para almorzar.” Él ya tenía el almuerzo listo. Los fines de semanas, entonces mi papá a veces pasaba y mi papá no decía nada. Pero, a mi me decía, “ya ni la friegas gorda” dice, “le dices que haga todo. ¿Cómo le dices a Julián que haga todo esto?” A veces él (mi esposo) llega a oír y decía, “Suegro, fines de semana ella no hace nada. Los fines de semana son para ella y yo soy él que cocino y en las tardes nos vamos a misa y comemos afuera, pero fines de semana ya no hace nada. La semana es ella, pero sábado y domingo soy yo.” (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

My father was a male chauvinist. My husband would put on beans, would make coffee, or he would make us some potato tacos and he would at eight, eight thirty he would tell me, “Get up for breakfast.” (He would tell my daughter) “Invite your mother to have breakfast.” He already had breakfast ready on weekends. So then my father would sometimes go by and he wouldn’t say anything. But to me he said, “Come on.” he says, “You tell him to do everything. How can you tell Julián to do all of this?” Sometimes, he (my husband) gets to hear and he says, “Father-on-law, weekends she doesn’t do anything. Weekends are for her and I’m the one that cooks and in the afternoons we go to mass and we eat out. But weekends she doesn’t do anything. The week is her but Saturday and Sunday it’s me.

Julián was described by Laura as having faced teasing and questioning from other Latino men, including Laura’s own father, for the roles and responsibilities he accepted at home.

O sea que la gente espera que el hombre diga, “No, a mi no me mandan en mi casa.” y este [mi esposo] es todo lo contrario, este hasta lo grita. ...Y él dice todo lo contrario, entre sus bromas él dice todo lo contrario, y en la casa no es que yo mande, es que nos respetamos, simplemente, no se hace lo que él dice, se hace lo que nos guste hacer. Y cada quien dice, nos conocemos bien y cada quien sabe hasta donde. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

In other words people expect that the man say, “No. Nobody tells me what to do in my house.” And this one [my husband] is the opposite. He even shouts it out....And he says the complete opposite, in between his teasing he says the complete opposite. And in the house it is not that I am in charge, it’s that we respect each other. Simply, we don’t do what he says, we do what we like to do. And each one says, we know each other well and each one knows up to what point to push the other.

However, Julián continued to prioritize his family obligations, encouraged by Laura.

Yo voy a lavar. Nada más es de que llegue el barrigón [apodo de mi esposo] temprano. [Me dicen,] “Ay mujer, sabes manejar. ¿Por qué no vas tú?” Le dije yo, “Es que son cosas que todo el tiempo lo hemos hecho juntos y no porque me haya enseñado a manejar” le dije “lo voy a hacer yo sola”, y dije “él tampoco quiere”. Le dije “hasta la fecha nos verán en la tienda, yo puedo estar necesitando cilantro, lo que tú quieras, y yo sé manejar y ahí tengo el carro pero estamos acostumbrados a ir hacer mandados juntos, a ir a lavar juntos, a irnos a misa juntos”, le dije yo “y no voy a dejar de hacer las cosas porque yo ya las se hacer.” Le dije “que si son cosas que podemos hacer juntos y estamos acostumbrados” le dije yo, “no le voy a levantar la obligación que él tiene. Ni al rato voy a estar quejándome como tú de que no hace nada, que quiere que todo le haga, y yo no voy a hacer eso.” Le dije “tengo quince años casada y” le dije, “los quince años ha sido así. No es de horita. No es porque tú veniste y él se quiere lucir. El así es todo el tiempo.” (Laura Luna Interview, 4/6/2004)

I am going to wash. It's only a matter of waiting for 'Big Belly' [my husband's nickname] to arrive early. [They tell me] “Oh woman, you know how to drive. Why don't you go?” I told them, “It's that these are things that we've always done together and just because I've learned to drive” I told them, “am I going to start doing it by myself.” And I said, “He doesn't want me to either.” I said, “up until now you will see us at the store, I might be needing cilantro or whatever else and I know how to drive and there I have the car but we are used to going and running errands together, and going to wash together, and go to mass together” I said, “and I'm not going to remove the obligation he has. Nor am I going to later on be complaining like you that he doesn't do anything, that he wants me to do everything, and I'm not going to do that. I said, “I've been married for fifteen years and” I said, “for fifteen years it's been like that. It's not just now. It's not because you came and he wants to show off. That's the way he is all the time.

Laura exerts agency in her relationship with her husband to maintain the stability of her family. In her narrative, Laura recognizes that good habits have been established and that she has to maintain them if she doesn't want Julián to develop habits that may be detrimental to the unity of the family, from which she draws strength as I will discuss further in the next section.

### ***Key Social and Cultural Resources***

Due to Laura's undocumented status, she depended mostly on her husband, and occasionally on extended family. These were Laura's social resources. Laura's circle of support was small. Beyond her husband, the sources of her social networks were members of her extended family. The members of the extended family in the U.S. were a source of emotional support and a legal vehicle by which her youngest daughters could visit México when they went on visits during the year. Laura's extended family in México was also a source of emotional support and an affirmation of their continued connection to their home country of México.

Ahora hablo por teléfono pa México y hable con quien hable no dejo de decirles que los quiero mucho, que se cuiden y que los quiero mucho. Cosa que antes, allá, los años que estuve nunca se los dije. Y ahora no dejo de decírselos porque siento la necesidad de decírselos. Uno siente la necesidad de conectar con su país... (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

Today I call México and I talk to whoever I talk to I don't forget to tell them that I love them very much, that they take care of themselves, and that I love them very much. Something that before in the years that I was there I never told them. And now I don't forget to tell them because I feel the need to tell them. One feels the need to connect with one's country.

There were also the cultural resources that stemmed from her internal character, life experiences, and emotions which propelled her toward exerting agency in difficult situations. It was this resilience that was Laura's single most important resource. Laura describes narratives that offer glimpses of the cultural resources she utilizes in her everyday life to guide her actions and those of her family towards those that direct them towards the moral heading of being good persons and as survivors. The family inheritance of *consejos*, in addition to being a pedagogical tool in the home, was a deep source of cultural capital that gave her the will to continue exerting agency in her life.

“Mejor nos hacemos fuertes porque con llorar no vamos a salir adelante.” Le digo, “Aquí, en el lugar donde nos encontramos, nomás es de echarle ganas.” Le digo, “de todo el tiempo es salir adelante. La gente que no trae eso en la mente, mejor se queda donde esta. ...Le dije yo, “Porque el día de mañana con lágrimas y con todo no vas a solucionar nada.” (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

“Its better if we make ourselves strong because crying we are not going to get ahead.” I tell them, “Here, in the place we find ourselves in, it’s only about giving it your all.” I tell them, “All the time it’s about getting ahead. The people that don’t come with that in mind, it’s better if they stay where they are. I tell them, “Because some day with tears and everything you are not going to resolve anything.”

It was this internal strength that Laura activated in times of hardship, problems, or other pressing circumstances. It is what allowed Laura to take further action in the first place. This is what I refer to as emotional capital, what I consider a form of cultural capital. Finally, there was the linguistic capital that Julián had developed through his employment. As a result of his improved English skills, he was able to get better jobs and expand his social resources to create a network of friends that on one occasion provided a loan for the Lunas to purchase their first home, a used trailer. This was the first time the Lunas were going to be living by themselves without a person they were sponsoring or supporting during their relocation to the U.S., including several members of her own family. Thus, it represented a significant step toward providing a stable living situation for her daughters.

All of these resources combined to offer a pool of cultural and social resources available to be activated whenever the situation required it. However, the emotional resources were the most critical because Laura narrated herself as facing a life of hardships due to her life situation. Therefore, to exert agency during these situations and hardships, Laura had to first activate her emotional capital in order to confront the

hardship/situation to exert agency. In the next section, I begin to discuss Laura's parent involvement in and out of Sonoma ISD.

### ***PARENT INVOLVEMENT***

For Laura, parent involvement was not just her school-based activities but also the home-based efforts she carried out to support her four children. Therefore, to provide a more complete picture of Laura's parent involvement, it is important to examine Laura within both of these contexts. The first section begins by framing parent involvement around how Laura and her husband Julián negotiate their roles as parents and around the parent involvement opportunities Laura participated in within Sonoma ISD. I then present Laura's descriptions of her day to day parent involvement in the home. Finally, I present an example of the intersections between home and school parent involvement. In this case, Laura discussed an incident that emerged during the course of our *pláticas* related to her youngest daughter's bus ride home. It became a central incident after which Laura's *consejos* and definition of the role of school's shifted. It highlights Laura's acts of agency, the responses it generated from school, and the changes it brought about for Laura and her family.

#### ***Parent Involvement as Gendered***

Laura and her husband, Julián, approached parent involvement in much the same way as they approached other aspect of their lives. They considered it a joint responsibility. Although Laura had primary responsibility for the children and was the coordinator of the family's comings and goings, she always involved Julián in the

decision-making process and Julián always participated at home and when he was available, he participated in school. Due to the uncertain aspect of his employment situation, Julián's schedule varied. However, when parent-teacher meetings were scheduled with the teacher, he would go pick up Laura and they would come to the meetings together. Occasionally, when he was unable to get out of work on time, he attended these meetings with the teacher on his own because he didn't have time to pick up Laura.

Ha habido ocasiones en que yo [Laura] soy la que no puedo ir porque él no tiene chanza de venir por mí y él se presenta. Y él presenta y él llega y me dice todo lo que dijeron y los dos estamos así. Los dos este...tomamos las decisiones. Cuando yo tengo que...ayudar en algo o trabajos...él siempre me anda ayudando. Él... Todo...o sea él nunca me dice, "Ay, ¿Para que te pones a ayudar en cosas...?" (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

There have been occasions en which I [Laura] am the one that can't go because he doesn't have a chance to come pick me up and he presents himself. He attends and he arrives and tells me everything they told him and we are both like that. We both....take decisions. When I have to....help with something to work....he is always helping me. He...always....in other words he never says.... "Oh, why do you agree to help with things...?"

No matter who ends up attending the parent-teacher meetings, each updates the other about the matters discussed with the teacher. If decisions need to be made, they make decisions together and present a united front to their daughters. As Laura discussed, Julián's priority, as was Laura's, is the well-being of his daughters.

Su primer cosa es que sus hijas estén bien. Dijo él, "Hemos vivido con lo que hemos podido y nos hemos enseñado a vivir así. Pero todo el tiempo primero viendo el bienestar de mis hijas." (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

His first priority is that his daughters be fine. He said, "We have lived with what we could and we have learned to live that way. But always first looking after the wellbeing of my daughters."

As such, he made efforts to spend time with his daughters and to participate in their education both at home and at school. When their daughters came home and began working on their homework; the oldest daughter, Julián, and Laura divided themselves up so that each one worked directly with one of the remaining daughters. This was a nightly ritual within the Luna family on school nights.

The way each relates to their daughters is different but between the two of them it creates a balance. For example, when one parent is being ‘kinder’ the other parent acts with more authority.

Su papá ha sido bien paciente con ellas y... todo el tiempo las consintió mucho. Tiene los aspectos de estar con ellas y anda miya, tú quieres un panecito, y lo que ellas quieren, él está allí para hacer lo que ellas quieren. Es un hombre.... Yo no. Yo hice esto, hay esto, ¿quieren o no quieren? Ya decían pues sí y comían. Pero estando él, hasta se encajaban a pedir sus antojos cada una. Y a veces digo yo, no, es lo que yo le digo a la mayor, le digo a mí no me ha ido mal y gracias a Dios cuento con él que me apoya cien por ciento. Y aún así, hasta hoy día no dejo de reconocer hasta hoy día que es bien difícil ser mamá. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

Their father has been real patient with them and has treated them....he always spoiled them. His traits are to be with them and “there daughter, do you want a little bread?”, and whatever they want, he is there to do whatever they want. He is a man... Not me. “I made this, there is this, you want some or not?” Well then they said well yes and ate. But with him they would each bug him to ask for their cravings. And sometimes I would say no. It’s what I tell the oldest, I tell her, It has not gone bad for me and thank God I can count on him to support me one hundred percent. And even then, up until now I don’t stop recognizing the fact that it is very difficult to be a mother.

Laura reflects with her oldest daughter on the help that Julián provides acknowledging that despite his support she finds the mother role to be a difficult one. By doing this, Laura calls attention to Julián’s contributions. Julián also shares responsibility with Laura for providing *consejos* to his daughters. His words supplement the *consejos* and *experiencias de la vida* already shared with their daughters by Laura.

Les digo, “mira ustedes de antemano saben como estamos aquí. Y usted sabe la razón por la que estamos aquí. Yo me vine para tener una mejor vida aquí con ustedes. Para que ustedes tengan un mejor futuro. Y si ustedes van a empezar a querer tener sus novios, no hay ninguna necesidad de estar tanto tiempo lejos de mi padre. Y si este sacrificio lo estoy haciendo, es para que ustedes tengan mejor vida. Vamos a regresarnos para México. ...Ahí me deciden, o deciden que van a la escuela o se quedan aquí en su casa a aprender a hacer bien comida, aprender hacer bien quehaceres, para que no me las regresen [después de casadas].” (Julián Luna during Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

I tell them, “look you since beforehand have known how we are here. And you know the reason why we are here. I came to have a better life here with you. So that you all have a better future. And if you all are going to want to start having boyfriends, there is no need to be so far away from my father for so long. And if I ma making this sacrifice, it I so that you all have a better life. We are going to return to México. ...There you can decide, or you decide that you are going to school or you stay here in your house to learn to cook well, to learn to do housework well, so that they don’t return you [after you get married].”

His *consejos* focus on the responsibility that his daughters have to work towards a better future. Otherwise, there is little point in the sacrifices they have made. Laura subtly guides Julián by providing him with her own appropriate *consejos* that reinforces the ways she expects Julián to behave with his daughters.

Si no va a respetar, que no espere respeto. Y yo todo el tiempo, como horita que están creciendo los niños y él a veces pierde la paciencia y le dice cosas. Yo le digo, “no esperes...”, yo le recuerdo, porque él sufrió con su papá. Yo le recuerdo, “Así como no te gustaba que tu papá fuera así, tu estás siendo igual,” le dije yo. “Y aunque tú eres el papá, tú eres el mayor y tú eres todo y tú te sientes con derecho de mandar y hacer de tus hijas”, le dije “eso no te da derecho a faltarles el respeto. Quieres que te respeten, pos respétalas sean la edad que sean, quiero que las respetes.” Y constantemente estamos con eso

If he is not going to show respect then he shouldn’t expect respect. And I always..., like now that the children are getting older and he sometimes loses his patience and says things to them. I tell him, “Don’t expect...” I tell him, I remind him because he suffered with his father. I remind him, “Just like you didn’t like your father to be the way he was, you are being the same.” I told him. And even though you are the father, you are older and you are everything and you feel like you have the right to order and do to your daughters...” I told him, “that doesn’t give you the right to be disrespectful to them.” If

cuando se le van, se le van las cabras con ellas y todo y una de las cosas buenas que tiene es que escucha, que escucha. Por lo menos este, reconoce un rato y vuelve hacer las cosas pero lo vuelve a reconocer, no es una persona de que, “ah pos voy a hacer esto porque, pos ahorita que se le quite se lo voy a hacer” No es así, no es así, esa es una cosa muy buena en él, y siento que la mayor sacó eso de él. Que escuchan y tienen tiempo pa’ pensar. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

you want them to respect you, then respect them no matter what their age. I want you to respect them.” And we are constantly with that when he loses his...when he loses his temper with them and everything. And one of the good qualities he has is that he listens, he listens. At least this one, he understands for awhile and he does things again but he understands it again. He is not a person that “Oh well I’m going to do this because well right now to get him I’m going to this to him.” He’s not like that, He’s not like that. That’s one real good thing about him and I feel that the oldest one [daughter] got that quality from him. They listen and they have time to think.

Laura makes clear that she is committed toward a joint approach to parent involvement and reinforces *consejos* directed specifically toward guiding Julián toward fulfilling the values and priorities that are established such as mutual respect and responsibility.

### ***Participation in Sonoma ISD Parent Involvement***

Laura’s participation in the general parent involvement opportunities offered by Sonoma ISD included periodic events or activities such as classroom volunteering, campus volunteering, volunteering for field trips, attending parent-teacher conferences, organizing special events, attending PTA meetings, and participating in parent education trainings. Laura continued to describe issues of family and immigration status as those that most impacted her participation decisions. Laura was highly involved in the school-based parent involvement activities offered by Sonoma ISD. Unlike Esther, Laura was involved in just about every activity except for PTA meetings. Laura expressed the same

reasons Esther did for deciding not to attend PTA: they were not relevant and were inaccessible due to language barriers. Of the activities she was involved in I have selected to focus on her narratives of her work as a classroom volunteer since this is where she invested most of her time in school parent involvement.

***Classroom Volunteering.*** Laura believed that direct, in person meetings were the best way to communicate with the school. As a regular weekly volunteer in her daughter's classroom, she relied on these personal contacts rather than phone conversations to take care of any issues that arose.

Entonces, yo hasta horita, nunca he tratado de arreglar las cosas por teléfono. Siempre voy.... Y como todo el tiempo he estado de voluntaria no ha sido mucho problema para mí eso. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

Then, I until now, I have never tried to work things out over the phone. I always go ... and since I have always been a volunteer it hasn't been a problem for me

It was these volunteer efforts that she felt allowed her to monitor how her daughters were doing as well as monitor the actions of their teachers.

Con la primera niña yo fui con la idea de que por mi hija...por mi hija. Yo fui con esa idea. Dije, "Yo por mi hija yo voy a estar allí y yo voy a salir adelante por mi hija." ...la niña llegaba y hacía comentarios de que ella quería participar y que a veces se le hizo un lado por no saber el idioma...y ella sabía contestar...pero en español. ...Yo decidí como le digo....al principio fui porque yo sentía mal que mi hija llegara y me digiera, "No me dan la oportunidad de contestar." Yo por eso decidí. Yo dije, "Mija no tiene que sentirse así. Mija no... uno ya sabe que llega a algo diferente, que va a batallar con

With my first daughter I went with the idea that it was for my daughter....for my daughter. I went for that reason. I said, "I am going to be there for my daughter and I am going to get ahead for my daughter." ...my daughter would arrive and make comments that she wanted to participate and sometimes she was ignored for not knowing the language... and she knew how to answer ...but in Spanish. ...I decided like I tell you ...at first I went because I felt bad that my daughter arrive and tell me, "They don't give me the opportunity to answer." That is why I decided. I said, "My daughter you don't have to feel

algo diferente. O sea que uno ya lo trae en mente y aparte de que lo trae uno en mente escucharlo de ella era peor. Era peor. Yo decía, “Yo tan siquiera, como dice ella, ...señas o yo me valía de mi esposo porque mi esposo lo habla también. Y yo decía, “Yo donde quiera que vaya yendo con mi esposo yo estoy segura. Pero mi hija iba sola a l’escuela.” Y decía, “Mija es la que está sola allí. Mija es la que está sintiendo todo” y yo no quería eso. Yo no quería eso. Decía yo, “Mija tiene que saber.” Y al principio fui por ella, por ella. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

that way. No daughter...one knows that we arrive different, that you are going to struggle with something different. Meaning that we already have it in mind. And apart from having it in mind hearing it from her was worse. It was worse. I would say, “At least I would use symbols or I would rely on my husband because he speaks it [English] also. And I would say “Everywhere I go with my husband I am safe. But my daughter would go alone to school.” And I would say, “My daughter is the one alone there. My daughter is the one feeling everything. I didn’t want that. I didn’t want that. I would say, “My daughter has to know.” And at the beginning I would go for her, for her.

Laura’s initial reasons for becoming a volunteer were to be a support to her daughter. This decision to volunteer to provide emotional support for her daughter was an intentional act that illustrated her agency. Laura went to school to be a familiar face in a sea of unfamiliar territory as her oldest daughter began school for the first time in the U.S. However, Laura’s reasons for volunteering in the classroom changed over time as Laura illustrates in the following narrative.

Ya los otros años que estuve de voluntaria era en general. Ya...hay veces que no me toca trabajar ni con ellas. Voy a l’escuela y me paso las horas y yo no las puedo ver. No es a trabajar con mis hijas, trabajo con más gente. Pero mis hijas, “Ay, mi mamá esta allí y mamá vino y mi...” Y pa’ ellas es el simple hecho de...como le decía a ella...el simple hecho de estar allí es un impulso de ella portarse bien porque allí está su mamá (se ríe). De querer echarle ganas este...a algo

Other years that I was a volunteer it was in general. Now...sometimes I don’t get to work with them. I go to school and spend hours and I don’t get to see them. It isn’t working with my daughters, I work with other people. But my daughters, “Oh, my mother is here and my mother came...” And for them it was the simple fact that ...like I would tell them...the simple fact that I am there is an impulse for her to behave herself because her mother is there (she laughs). To feel like doing

porque su mamá va a l'escuela...porque nos miran allí. Y dije, "Ya no era ni tanto trabajar con mis hijas. Ya era ayudar en general." (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

her best...because her mother is at school...because they see us there. I said, "Now it's not because I work with my daughters. It was helping out in general."

Laura describes her realization that when she volunteered now, she was no longer doing it to help her daughters. Now she volunteered just to help at school. Her presence in the school alone, now served to motivate her daughters. In the following excerpt, Laura describes a typical day volunteering in the classroom,

...son clases bilingües y yo voy y leo español. Yo voy y yo llego y encuentro la hoja, la maestra me escribe todo en español lo...desde que yo llego lo que...los trabajos que les tengo que enseñar. Este...los sonidos de las letras...son cosas simples que yo pueda ayudar. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

...they are bilingual classes and I go and read in Spanish. I go and I arrive and I find the page, the teacher writes everything in Spanish... since I arrive...the work I have to teach them. ...the letter sounds...they are simple things that I can help with.

In the telling of her stories about volunteering in a bilingual classroom, she describes utilizing and offering her Spanish skills in that setting and her voice is filled with confidence.

Estoy de voluntaria y al principio lo empecé a hacer por estarme involucrando y estar un poco más pendiente de mis hijas. Pero ya últimamente no solamente mis hijas. Es una satisfacción ya general poder decir puedo hacer por alguien más algo y lo estoy haciendo y que vayas a las escuelas y cualquier niño me reconozque y eso es bien bonito" le digo. "No, es una cosa bonita y eso no le cuesta a uno. Es algo gratis que se puede dar y no necesita uno pagar por darlo. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

I am a volunteer and at the beginning I wanted to get involved and be more in touch with my daughters. But lately not only with my daughters, it's a satisfaction in general being able to say I can do something for someone else and I am doing it. And to be going to school and any child recognizing me and that is very nice" I tell her. "No, it is something very nice and it doesn't cost us anything It is something free that can be given and one doesn't have to pay to give it."

Through the accumulation of positive volunteering experiences, Laura has developed into an advocate for classroom volunteering. Now, Laura readily offers advice to other mothers who begin to complain about how their children are being treated at school.

[hablando con un grupo de madres] Dijeron que la maestra, que era muy cruel con los niños. Dijo, “fijese que, que llegué y que tenía a no sé quién y a no sé quien llorando. Y exigiendo, ‘¿pues que dice aquí? ¿Qué dice aquí?’ dice. Ya cuando acabé de escucharlas, yo les dije, “tu única solución es ir y póngase de voluntaria en el salón unas horas. Una hora, unas dos veces por semana por lo menos.” Le dije, para que así usted esté pendiente de su hijo.” Le dije yo, “y...así pues puede estar mirando lo demás” le dije yo “y si en realidad la maestra es como ustedes dicen que es, la maestra delante de ustedes no va a hacer nada.” Dije, “por lo menos van a evitar que se esté aprovechando de los niños.” (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

(talking to a group of parents) They said that the teacher, that she was very cruel with the children. She said, “I tell you, I tell you .that she had I don’t know who and I don’t know who crying. And demanding, well, ‘what does it say here?, what does it say here?’” After I finished listening to them, I told them “Your only solution is to go and become a volunteer for a few hours. One hour, twice a week at least.” I said, and...so that way you can see and if it’s true that the teacher is the way she is. The teacher won’t do anything in front of you.” I said, “At least you will prevent her from taking advantage of the children.”

As an advocate for volunteering and an experienced classroom volunteer herself for her three oldest daughters, Laura within her narratives describes her disappointment at the poor response she has received from her youngest daughter’s school about volunteering.

Yo me apunté desde que empezaron las clases. Vinieron y me investigaron el récord pero nunca me llamaron. Nunca me llamaban. La señora decía, “Ay, es que me da pena con usted.” Que no le dé pena. Yo con todo y pena lo siento mucho, necesito la ayuda y necesito que cooperen aquí. Y es lo que yo vengo diciendo que todo tiempo dicen, “pero si no

I registered since the classes began. They came and investigated my record but nobody called me. They would never call me. The lady would say, “It’s that I feel embarrassed with you.” They shouldn’t be embarrassed. Me, with all the embarrassment in the world, I’m very sorry, but I need the help and I need your cooperation here. And it’s what I am telling you

pueden” Pues claro que toda la gente quiere decir pues no, no puede. O sea, ellos mismos hacen que los padres sean irresponsables. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/20/2004)

[Dice la maestra] “Entonces puedo contar con usted el lunes” Dije, “Sí, está bien” y dice, “¿Está segura que usted tiene transporte?” Le dije yo, “Sí” y dice, “Porque si no tiene transporte, mire no se...” lo que le digo que nos dicen a todas. Lo que yo digo es que desaprovechan, desaprovechan cosas que no deben desaprovechar. Porque de por sí hay pocos padres voluntarios. Y los pocos que están tenemos el problema del ride de esto...y digan, “No se mortifique.” Pues uno bien cómodo. Pues no se mortifica. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

that they are always saying, “But if you can’t.” But of course all the people want to say, “No. No I can’t” In other words, they themselves make the parents be irresponsible.

(the teacher said) “Then I can count on you for Monday” I said, “Yes it’s O.K.” and she says, “Are you sure that you have transportation” I told her, “Yes” and she says, “Because if you don’t have transportation, look don’t...” What I tell you that they tell all of us. What I say is that they don’t take advantage, they don’t take advantage of the things they should take advantage of. Because as it is there are few volunteers. And the few there are we have the problem of a ride...and to say, “Don’t worry.” Well one very comfortably, well we don’t worry.

In the telling of these events, Laura showcases the kinds of statements school personnel tell her when she offers to volunteer. These were things that Laura considered to be ways in which the school provided easy outs for parents to have an excuse not to participate. She contrasts the responses she receives at Puma primary school with those she has received at her older daughter’s schools.

Yo veo la manera de tratar las cosas muy diferentes en la Puma y a la [escuela] Reagan. En la Reagan este, como se tomaba más en cuenta. El director hablaba inglés pero él pasaba y me decía, “Hola, buenos días.” Él trataba. ...hubo bastantes días que yo iba desde que empezaban las clases a las ocho y media, a la escuela tenía que estar. Y a veces salía hasta la una porque yo me hacía cargo de todo el salón. ...[Me preguntaban] “¿puede

I see things very different at the Puma and at Reagan (school). At Reagan they take you more into consideration. The principal speaks English but he would pass by and say, “Hola, Buenos dias.” He tried ...there were a lot of days when I would go since classes began at eight thirty, at school I had to be there. And sometimes I left until one because I was in charge of the whole class...[they would ask me] “Can you

usted venir?” Yo nunca me negué. Yo vería que hacía y si tenía que hacer algo pues lo siento mucho pero yo voy para allá. Entonces el director a pesar que era el director y pasaba en la oficina y no hablaba español, el director se tomaba el tiempo de ir a cada salón y saludar a la gente que estaba ayudando. O sea, de alguna manera te hacía saber que estaba enterado que estaba uno cooperando y acá no. Acá no. No sé, o sea si la directora el problema es el idioma pues tiene gente que la interprete. ....Aquí en la Puma, hasta las once y media estoy con la señora ahorita. Nadie se da cuenta que yo fui a ayudar. Y eso acá es muy diferente. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

come?” I never declined. I would do what I could and if I had do something I would tell them that I had to go. Then the principal even though he was in the office and didn't speak Spanish, he would take time to visit each classroom and greet the people who were helping. In other words he made sure he was informed of who was cooperating. I don't know but if the principal has a problem with the language he has someone to interpret...Here in Puma, I am here until eleven and no one knows I came to help out. It is very different here.

This ability to contrast her volunteer experiences with those she experienced at another school, allowed her to have a frame of reference from which she could express her perspective on the effectiveness of Puma Primary's parent involvement efforts. Laura highlights how one school provided a positive experience because the principal, although a monolingual English speaker, made the effort to say a few words in Spanish and acknowledged the work the volunteers did. She contrasts this with Puma where she feels that nobody even notices that she has been volunteering. However, she continues to volunteer because, she states, “lo hago por ayudar a los niños/I do it to help the children.”

### ***Day-to-Day Parent Involvement***

Laura's typical day varies by the day of the week and by the work commitments she happens to have been able to schedule for that day. Each day she describes getting her daughters dressed, fed, and onto the school bus. At the end of the day, Laura

describes the family coming together to eat and complete homework before preparing to go to bed. I begin by sharing Laura's descriptions of aspects of some of her days in a typical week. This then foregrounds the discussion to follow of the many layered ways that Laura is involved with her daughters at home in school prescribed ways as well as in the forms not privileged by the schools.

### Un Día Típico//A Typical Day

[Lunes] Llegué de ser voluntaria...llegué a las, casi iban a ser las dos de la tarde, llegué y me puse, recogí lo que más pude y me puse y hice una sopa aguada y que me llega Alicia, y que se me había olvidado que la otra niña salía tarde ese día. Le serví a Alicia como tenía aquí a mi sobrinita y este ya acabó de comer Alicia y corro por Mari, fui por Mari la traje y le serví a Mari la dejé a Mari y corro por Alicia pa' ir para la escuela.... Y corro con este Alicia para allá, pasé y dejé a mi sobrina y me vine con Alicia pa' la escuela. Y ahí vengo, y ya pa' cuando llegué me comí un plato de sopa y de rato llegó mi esposo y se hizo una salsa él. Llegó, ...aunque la mayoría de la gente piensa que es tiempo perdido, a veces dos o tres horas [pasamos] con ellas [ayudándoles con la tarea], con una [luego] con otra. (Laura Luna Interview, 4/6/2004)

Los sábados y los domingos nos gusta ir a las "garage sales." ...vamos a la tienda y es con mis cuatro hijas a la tienda. Vamos a lavar con mis cuatro hijas a lavar. Es con mis hijas...para

[Monday] I arrived from being a volunteer...I arrived at almost...it was almost going to be two in the afternoon. I arrived and I started to pick up what I could and started...and made some soup and then Alicia arrives. And then I had forgotten that the other daughter was getting out late that day. I served Alicia since I had my niece here and then Alicia finished eating and I ran to pick up Mari. I went to pick up Mari, I brought her and I served Mari. I left Mari and I ran to pick up Alicia to go to the school. And so I run with Alicia over there. I went by and dropped off my niece and I came back with Alicia to the school. I there I come and by the time I returned, I ate a bowl of soup and a little later my husband arrived and he made himself a salsa. He arrived...although the majority of people think it's a waste of time, sometimes [we spend] two or three hours with them [helping them with their homework], first with one and then with another.

Saturdays and Sundays we like to go to the garage sales. ...we go to the store and its with my four daughters to the store. We go to wash with my four daughters to wash. It is with my

todos lados. Entonces, todo el tiempo ha sido así de que nunca las hemos hecho menos no por nada ni por nadie. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

daughters...everywhere. So then, it has always been that way that we have never neglected them not for anybody or anything.

Common to every typical day in Laura's life is how they revolve around her four daughters' schedules and needs. On weekdays it is three to four hours of homework each evening. Even on weekends when errands and household chores are also done, her four daughters are also included. Now that her two oldest daughters are getting older, Laura expresses concern about how much longer they will want to continue doing things as a family. Laura has also been facing increased difficulty in helping one of her older daughters with her homework.

Con esta niña [Mari] yo tengo más..., es más difícil que se exprese conmigo porque ella es la que le platico que... me empieza a hablar español y me revuelve inglés. Y le digo que me hable español y tiene que pedirle a la otra que cómo se dice esto en español. Y se desespera. ... Y no la puedo ayudar mucho. Entonces yo le digo a la mayor ayúdame. Pero ya se ponen y se ayudan pero para ellas es más tardado estándome diciendo todo, entonces ya se ayudan entre ellas pero es en inglés. Entonces de ahí se platican de sus cosas y se les escucha y todo. Pero este, no...se le... a ella misma se le hace difícil a ella misma a seguir platicando de las cosas. Porque dice que ay mi mamá ni me entiende. O le tengo que decir y yo no le puedo decir. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

With this daughter [Mari] I have the most...it is more difficult for her to express herself with me because she is the one I was telling you about that....she begins to speak to me in Spanish and mixes in English. And I tell her to speak to me in Spanish and she has to ask the other one how to say this in Spanish. And she gets frustrated....And I can't help her much. So then, I tell the oldest to help me. But, they go ahead and put themselves and help each other. But for them it takes longer to be telling me everything. So, they help each other between themselves but it's in English. So then from there they talk about their things and you can hear them and everything. But, it isn't...to her it is difficult, to her...to continue talking about things. Because she says, "Oh, my mother doesn't even understand me. Or, I have to tell her something and I can't tell her.

The main issue that made this situation difficult for Laura was the language barrier that had been created between her and her daughter. What Laura shows us is her frustration at not being able to express what she wants to say to her daughter and her daughter's frustration at not being understood. She is left to rely on her oldest daughter to act as mediator and translator between herself and her second oldest daughter. According to Laura, her priority was maintaining communication and trust with her daughters.

Es el miedo a trabajar, el miedo de dejarlas...horita que están haciendo esos cambios es el miedo de descuidarlas aunque sea un poquito...no las he descuidado y han pasado las cosas así. Me pongo a pensar "Si las descuido va a ser peor." Entonces espero estar en el momento preciso cuando me necesiten...estar allí. Todo el tiempo les hecho saber que soy su amiga, a veces...este...me cuentan cosas. Ellas llegan y me dicen "Ay que los muchachos..." Nunca me pongo yo a decir, "¿Qué es eso?" Yo las escucho como si fuera una más de ellas. Hay cosas que me cuentan y me dicen "No le digas a mi papi" Yo les hago creer que no le digo, pero yo a mi esposo no le oculto nada. Yo nomás le digo, "Sabes que...pasó esto, esto, esto y ellas no quieren que sepas tú. Pero yo te lo digo y por favor nunca se los digas tú para que ellas sigan confiando en mí...que no pierdan la confianza en mí. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

That's the fear of working, the fear of leaving them...right now that they are making those changes that's the fear of neglecting them even for a little bit...I have not neglected them and things have happened that way. I start thinking, "If I neglect them it's going to be worse." So, then I hope to be there in the precise moment that they need me...I'll be there. I have always let them know that I am their friend. Sometimes they tell me things... They arrive and they tell me, "Oh, the boys..." I never let myself say, "What is that?" I listen to them as if I was one of them. There are things that they tell me, "Don't tell my father." I make them believe that I don't tell him, but I don't hide anything from my husband. I just tell him, "You know what, this and this happened and they don't want you to know. But I am telling you and please never tell them so that they will continue to trust me and they won't lose their confidence in me.

She expresses her trepidation of entering the workforce at what she considers to be a very critical time in her oldest daughters' development. Laura improvises a way to maintain

this communication while also using the information she receives in confidence to guide her husband's parenting towards his daughters.

One significant form of non-privileged parent involvement provided by Laura was *consejos, experiencias de la vida* and *su buen ejemplo*. The language barrier described above between one of her older daughters and herself was one that affected her ability to communicate the full subtleties of the *consejos* she shared with her daughters on a regular basis. It was left for her daughter to gain the full meaning of these *consejos* from her older sister's translation.

***Consejos in Day-to-Day Parent Involvement.*** For Laura being a "good mother" involved being an overall good person, demonstrating good deeds in every area of her family's life, and teaching her daughters respect, responsibility, and the elements of leading a good life. Laura worked to fulfill this mission through ongoing *consejos*, relaying of *las experiencias de la vida*, and giving *su buen ejemplo [a good example]*. Laura used these pedagogical tools as did Esther, to impart moral lessons, advice, and communicate cultural knowledge. However, unlike Esther, for Laura, *consejos* weaved their way into her natural way of relating to her daughters and her husband. She utilized *consejos* to impart knowledge on everything from how to be a good person to *consejos* on the value of education.

Ellas en ciertas ocasiones han llegado y me han dicho, las dos, "Ay, que mi amiguita, con la ropa..." Lejos, lejos de yo decirles a ellas, "no hija, tú no", les dije, "Ustedes no saben las necesidades de cada quien y a quien no le gustaría andar bien arreglada. Denle gracias a Dios ustedes que ustedes andan como andan. Y ustedes, por

They [my two oldest daughters] on certain occasions have arrived and told me, both of them, "Oh, my friend with the clothes..." Far from me telling them, "No daughter, not you" I told them, "You don't know the needs of each person and who wouldn't like to be well-dressed. You should give thanks to God that

favor, nunca pero nunca, hagan eso de hacer menos a la gente. No hagan nunca eso, porque es una cosa triste y fea.” Y todo el tiempo, esos son los pensamientos. Cada que se ofrece el tema, ahí estoy yo para hacerles ver. Hasta le he llegado ver, “nunca veas de mal modo. Cuando tengas vecinos trátalos bien. Date a querer con la gente. Sé buena gente hija. Sé buena amiga, sé buena estudiante, sé buena hija, todo. El día de mañana que te mueras,” le digo, “¿Qué [quieres que] la gente diga?, ‘ay gracias a Dios que se murió’,...” le digo, “o que digan, ‘ay, que esa muchacha, yo no sé Dios porque la recogió.’ Hasta eso, que recuerden cosas bonitas. ¿Qué te gustaría más? No, por eso... Y para que te recuerden así, ¿Qué necesitas hacer? ‘pos portarme bien’,” y así, ideas tras ideas. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/2/2004)

you are running the around the way you are. And please both of you, never but never, do that of making someone feel less than. Don’t ever do that because it is a very sad and ugly thing.” And always those are the thoughts. Every time the topic is raised, there I am to make them see, I’ve even been able to make her see to “never look at things in a bad way. When you have neighbors, treat them well. Be beloved with the people. Be a good person, daughter. Be a good friend, a good student, a good daughter, everything. One of these days that you die” I tell her, “What do you want people to say?, ‘Oh thank God she died.’” I tell her, “or that they say, ‘Oh that girl, I don’t know why God would take her’ Even that, that they remember the nice things. What would you like better? No that’s why... And for them to remember you that way, what do you need to do? ‘Well, behave myself.’ And like that idea after idea.

This was the home curriculum that Laura prioritized. She would chose to highlight those consejos that she felt her daughters needed at that particular time. As her daughters had gotten older, Laura had begun to also share more explicitly the tough *experiencias de la vida* that emphasized the sacrifices she and Julián had had to make for the benefit of their daughters.

Le digo, “Sí hija, poquito a poquito, todo lo que tienes a tu alrededor tu papá te lo ha comprado, y lo hemos hecho juntos, nadie nos ha dado nada, y hacerle ver lo que uno se batalla pero de que lo principal es ser responsable y respetarse. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/23/2004)

I tell her, “Yes daughter, little by little everything you have around you your father has bought for you and we have done it together. Nobody has given us anything.” And make her see how we struggle but that the most important things are to be responsible and to respect oneself.

Whereas, the younger daughters were shielded from these stories of struggle and sacrifice, the older daughters were deliberately told these stories in hopes that their realization of their parents' sacrifices would motivate them to correct any wayward behavior. Laura also assured that she and Julián were setting good examples.

Gente lo ha dicho y mal intencionada, porque, como le hago yo para vivir como vivo, si no tengo papeles, si mi esposo no tiene papeles y que nunca ando pidiendo dinero prestado, que aparentemente que yo vivo bien. Pero ellas no se ponen a ver que sus esposos toman, el mío no toma. Que, a mí también me gusta la cerveza y a veces de vez en cuando nos tomamos unas. Pero, como dice él a veces todo eso lo hacemos a un lado para estar bien con nuestras hijas. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/23/2004)

People have said it and with bad intentions, about why, how do I do it to live the way I live, if I don't have papers, if my husband doesn't have papers and that I am never asking to borrow money, that I apparently live well. But they don't stop and look that their husbands drink and mine doesn't drink. That, I too like beer and sometimes, every once and a while we drink some. But, like he says, sometimes we put all of that aside to be on good terms with our daughters.

In the telling of her story, Laura compares her situation to that of others and notes the deliberate efforts and choices she and Julián make to offer their daughters a good example of the kinds of behaviors they want to see from them. In our conversations, Laura often talked about her overall philosophy of mutual respect that entailed not expecting anything from their daughters that she and Julián were not willing to do themselves. This was the foundation of their home curriculum.

### ***An Example of the Interaction between School and Home Parent Involvement***

About midway through our time together, Laura began telling me about an incident that had occurred on the school bus with her youngest daughter Alicia. The exact nature of this incident was not exactly clear to Laura. Accounts had ranged from

Alicia using bad words to two first grade boys grabbing her on the bus, pulling her skirt up and touching her private parts. As time passed, it became apparent to Laura that we were talking about the later scenario, which she was deeply concerned about. However, for five months Laura had been unable to get any resolution from the school about what was being done about the incident. The following chronology provides a glimpse into Laura's agency as she describes her responses to this incident and those of the school.

**Figure 3. The Bus Incident-Chronology of Laura's Acts of Agency & School Responses**

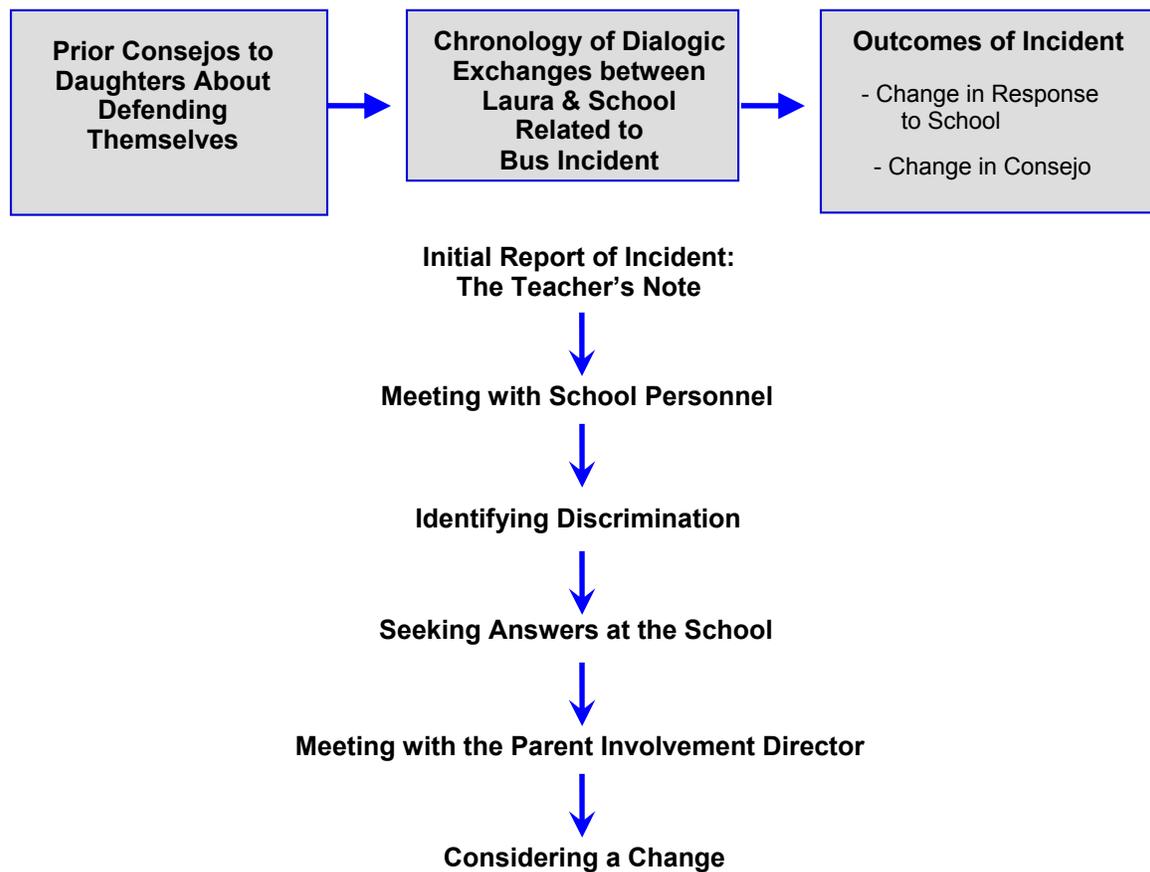


Figure 3 provides an overview of these dialogic exchanges between Laura and the school divided into three main phases: prior *consejos*, chronology of dialogic exchanges, and outcomes of the incident. In the first phase, Laura describes the *consejo* she provided to her daughters regarding how they should respond when attacked in some way before the incident occurred. In the second phase, a series of excerpts provides the chronology of events that occurred between Laura and the school after the incident: initial report of incident, meeting with school personnel, identifying discrimination, seeking answers at the school, meeting with the parent involvement director, and considering a change. Finally, in the third phase Laura describes the changes she has made in response to the incident. There was a change in how she responded to the schools and Laura revised the *consejo* she offers her daughters about defending themselves. I now provide the excerpts that provide the narrated chronology of the events shared by Laura about the incident.

#### **Prior Consejos to Daughters About Defending Themselves**

Yo les he dicho “Yo no quiero problemas.” Ellas saben que si ellas hacen algo y se defienden, como no deben de defenderse, yo las voy a regañar. Y todo el tiempo están con que no, al fin y al cabo que mi mamá se enoja, mi mamá dice que no. Ellas [mis hijas] van con eso. (Laura Luna Interview, 4/6/2004)

I have told them “I don’t want any problems.” They know that if they do something and defend themselves, I am going to scold them. And the time they say no, because at the end my mother will get angry, my mother says no. They (my daughters) go with that.

#### **Chronology of Dialogic Exchanges Between Laura and School**

##### *Initial Report of Incident: The Teacher’s Note (Figure 4)*

Hace, antes de moverme, hubo una cosa de que... el bus me habló y me dijo que la niña andaba muy inquieta, que se estaba portando mal. Entonces le digo yo “sabes que, que a la mejor una de las razones es de que a la niña le anda a veces del baño y la maestra no la quiere dejar salir al baño antes de

Before I moved, there a thing that...the bus called and told me that my daughter was real restless, and was misbehaving. Then I said, “You know what, maybe one of the reasons is that sometimes the child needs to go to the bathroom and the teacher doesn’t let her go before she boards

subirse al bus. Le digo yo, “a veces llega mojadita de su.. pantalón o llega corriendo hasta el baño.” Oh, digo “necesitas ir a hablar” dice “porque de hecho yo hablo con las maestras que tienen que hacer eso antes en el salón porque yo no me puedo parar” Digo yo “Que aunque pudieras pararte no creo que los vayas a poner a hacer en la calle, ¿verdad?” Así quedó. Entonces a los poquitos días, la maestra me mando una nota... me dijo que la firmara y que la regresara. Pero yo no se la regresé. Quería sacar una copia porque ya me pasó un problema parecido. Y no saqué copia. (silencio) Este, me pasó un problema así parecido y no saqué copia y no pude comprobar... (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

the bus. I told him, “Sometimes she gets home with her pants wet or she gets home running to the bathroom”. “Oh”, he said, “you need to go talk” he said, “because actually I do talk to the teachers and I tell them that they really do need to do that before in the classroom because I can’t stop [the bus].” I say, “Even if they could stop, I don’t think you are going to make them do in the street, right?” Well, that’s where we left it. Then a few days later the teacher writes me a note. She told me to sign it and return it. But I didn’t. I wanted to make a copy because I had had a similar problem before. And I didn’t make a copy. (silence) I had a similar problem where I didn’t make a copy and couldn’t prove it.”

**Figure 4. Teacher’s Note to Laura**

Sra. Luna : 2/6/04

En una conversación que tenía con sus compañeros del grupo escuché que ella decía que en el bus le está diciendo que se quite la ropa. Les decía diciendo lo que decía. Yo le pregunté sobre eso. le explique que no le debe de andar diciendo esas cosas ni jugando. Así que hable con ella.

Gracias  
Sra. Salinas

Fuente y Regrese

[Re-write of Teacher's Note: Sra. Luna: En una conversación que Alicia tenía con sus compañeros del grupo escuché que ella decía que Raúl en el bus le esta diciendo que se quite la ropa Alicia les decía diciendo lo que Raúl decía. Yo le pregunté sobre eso. Le explique que Raúl no le debe de andar diciendo esas cosas, ni jugando. Así que hable con ella. Gracias Sra. Salinas. Firme y Regrese \_\_\_\_\_.] // English Translation of Teacher's Note: Mrs. Luna: In a conversation that Alicia had with classmates in her group, I overheard her saying that on the bus Raúl was telling her to take off her clothes. Alicia was saying what Raúl was saying. I asked her about it. I explained that Raúl should not be saying those things, even joking. So, talk to her. Thank you. Mrs. Salinas. Sign & Return \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Meeting with School Personnel*

Entonces me habla a la casa la maestra y este... yo hablé con ella a medida; que hablé con la del bus, que la del bus habló conmigo, yo hablé primero con la del bus y le dije "oye, ¿qué está pasando en el bus? Me está mandando una nota la maestra, a lo que dice allí. Yo le dije a la del bus y me dice la del bus "Yo no estaba enterada." "Yo no estoy por enterada" le dije, "una cosa yo puedo, este yo, soy responsable de mi hija en mi casa." Le dije yo "y se supone que cuando se sube al bus y se va a la escuela, ustedes son los responsables. Ahora dime si necesitas que me vaya arriba del bus, yo me voy arriba del bus para cuidar a mi hija." No pues que ella no estaba, hasta la fecha, la última vez que yo hablé con ella me dijo "estoy esperando que me digan algo y no me han dicho nada." Entonces heh... hablo yo con la maestra y le digo que..., que con esta nota, entonces dice que ya allí lo que le dijo la niña. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

Then the teacher calls me at the house and.... I spoke to her at length; that I had spoken to the bus driver, and that the bus driver had spoken to me; I spoke first to the bus driver and I said "Hey what is happening in the bus? The teacher is sending me a note on what it said. I told the bus driver and she tells me "I wasn't informed." "I am not informed." I said, "One thing I can say is that I am responsible for my daughter at my house." I told her, "and I assume that when she is on the bus or at school, you are responsible. Now you tell me if I need to ride the bus so I can take care of my daughter." Well no that she wasn't there. Until today, the last time I spoke to her she told me "I am waiting for them to tell me something...and they haven't told me anything." Then I spoke with the teacher and I told her ...that with this note, then she says that there in the note is what my daughter told her.

#### *Identifying Discrimination*

Hablé con ella, pues, como que no les agrada mucho que uno le diga las

I spoke to her, well, like they really didn't like us telling them bad

cosas feas. ... Le pregunté pos que ¿qué había pasado siempre con lo de Alicia? Entonces este, le hice varios comentarios como que pues, que yo miraba que ellas mismas a nosotras nos decían en las juntas, ustedes son hispanos y el hecho de ustedes sean inmigrantes no inmigrantes en la situación legal que se encuentran aquí pos no deben de tener miedo. Ustedes deben de expresar sus cosas. Le dije yo, “Ustedes mismas nos han aconsejado eso” le dije yo. Ahora le dije yo “...de qué sirve que venga uno y se exprese si aquí no hay apoyo, si ustedes que pueden apoyar a uno no la apoyan” le digo yo “porque yo nada más les estoy siendo sincera” les dije, “contéstenme si no hubiese sido mi hija, [si] hubiera sido la de una americana ¿Qué se hubiera hecho? Y nada más se quedó callada, no me contestó nada, le dije. “Ahora quiere decir que entonces...,” dice mi esposo que “entonces él tiene que decirle a mi hija que se defienda, que pegue,” le dije yo “porque no fue una cosa cualquiera lo que estaban haciendo.” (Laura Luna Interview, 4/6/2004)

Es una cosa de que ya se suena como disco rallado de que dicen, hay por ser hispano, pero desgraciadamente así es. O sea, el hecho de que yo sea mexicana, eso es ser la importancia por lo que no me... me hacen mucha importancia. Porque si hubiera sido una persona de aquí de Estados Unidos, me hubiera movido cielo y tierra. Ya la directora no sé que hubiera hecho. O sea, que todo el tiempo vamos a cargar con eso. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

things... I asked her, “What happened after all with Alicia? Then, I made some comments like, that I would see that they themselves would tell at the meetings, you are all Hispanics and that the simple fact that you are immigrants in the legal situation that you find yourselves here you shouldn’t be afraid. You should express yourselves I told her, “You yourselves have advised this “ I told her. Now I told her... “ what is the use of us coming and expressing ourselves if there isn’t any support, if you who can support us won’t do it “ Now I say to her “ because I am only being sincere” I said, “ Answer me if it hadn’t been my daughter, (if) it had been an American What would you have done? And she remained silent, she didn’t answer anything, I told her. “Now it means that he has to tell my daughter to defend herself, to hit.” I told her, “...because it wasn’t just anything that they were doing.”

It’s like it sounds like a broken record when they say, Oh, for being Hispanic, but unfortunately that’s the way it is. In other words the fact that I am Mexican. That is the reason that they don’t give me much importance. Because if it had been a person from the United States, they would have moved heaven and earth for me. The Principal I don’t know what she would have done. In other words, we are always going to carry that with us.

*Seeking Answers at the School*

Entonces,...Que el niño le subió la falda a la niña. Entonces yo digo, pues ¿qué puedo hacer yo? ¿Qué puedo hacer yo? Aconsejar a mi hija que golpee cuando la toquen. ¿Y yo no quiero quejas? ¿Qué puedo hacer? Dice hija que ya se levantó y le dijo a la del bus, “me están tochando y me están agarrando adelante y atrás.” La del bus dijo, “esté en paz” y nada más la cambió de lugar. Y los niños siguieron. ...No soy de las que me gusta huir.. andar en problemas. Trato de evitar todo el tiempo, todo el tiempo trato de evitar. Pero siento que no les da, este van a decir que “hay eso pasa por que...” Como ya se cambió la niña de bus. Entonces dicen que la principal mandó, a mí todos me dijeron, o sea a mí hasta horita, la principal no me ha mandado llamar. Este, yo no he tenido una plática como debe de ser con Ms. Gámez. ...En la plática fui con la maestra, ahora que voy de voluntaria ni siquiera se ha vuelto a tocar el tema con la maestra. Entonces, eh, pienso que como ya la niña fue cambiada de bus, por eso ya se van a olvidar las cosas. No quiero parecer que estoy en contra de lo que hacen, no sé, en la forma en que trabajan ellas. Pero sí, no me gustó en la manera que en este caso, la manera en que lo hacen. ...[Le dije a la maestra, “hagan lo que tengan que hacer. Si es necesario que yo me presente allí, con los papás de quien haya sido, yo le dije que yo voy.” Pero hasta horita, hasta hoy día nada. ... entiendo que la principal no hable español pero tiene gente que la traduce. ... nosotros hemos ido de voluntarios a ayudar a trabajar en la escuela. Hemos, este, estado con ella

Then,...that the boy had raised my daughter's skirt. Then I ask myself, “What can I do? What can I do?” To advise my daughter to hit when she is touched. And I don't want any complaints. What can I do? My daughter said that she got up and told the bus driver “ They are touching me on the front and on the back” The bus driver said, “ Stay calm” and only moved her to another seat. And the boys continued...I am not the type who asks for trouble. I always try to avoid, always try to avoid it. But I feel they don't care, since my daughter already changed buses. Then they say that the principal sent for... Everyone told me...until now the principal hasn't sent for me. I haven't had a conversation like it should be with Ms. Gámez. ....I went to the teacher. Even now that I go volunteer, the topic has not even been discussed by the teacher. So then, I think that since my daughter has been changed to another bus, that is why they are going to forget it. I don't want to sound as if I am against what they do, I don't know, the way that they work. But yes, I didn't like the way they handled this incident, the way they do things... (I told the teacher, “Do what you have to do. If it's necessary for me to present myself there with the parents of whoever it was” I told her I would go. But until now, until today nothing...I understand that the principal can't speak Spanish but they have someone to translate.... We have gone to the school to be volunteers to help work at the school. We have been with the [principal] only a thank you very much and all that. Only when its

[principal] no más que hay pues muchas gracias y todo eso. Nomás que cuando se trata de trabajar de hacer un piso de madera, de acarrear madera y todo eso... (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

about working to make a wood floor, to carry lumber, and all of that....

#### *Meeting with Parent Involvement Director*

Así quedó, entonces dije, “¿yo qué puedo hacer, qué debo de hacer yo?” Dije, “No. Necesito ir a hablar...” Entonces, yo fui y busqué a Ms. Gámez. Y le dije que había pasado con este problema de la niña. Entonces Ms. Gámez ya iba de salida ese día que yo fui. Entonces Ms. Gámez quedo de venir para aca. Dijo, “yo quiero ir allá a donde su nueva casa y sirve que la conozco y todo y...” ...Entonces Ms. Gámez quedo de ir desde la semana pasada para aca. Por las razones que sean, no vino. Ayer que fui de voluntaria a la escuela, volví a pasar y preguntar por ella pero ella no fue. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

That's how it ended, then I said, "What can I do? What should I do? I said, "No. I need to go talk..." Then, I went and looked for Mrs. Gámez. She was on her way out the day I went. Then Ms. Gámez wanted to come over here. She said "I want to go to your new house and that way I can see it and everything and..." Then Ms. Gámez visit has been pending since last week. For whatever reason, she didn't show up. Yesterday when I went to school to volunteer, I went by again and asked for her but she didn't wasn't in.

#### *Considering a Change*

Horita con lo que está pasando con Alicia, hasta hoy día yo todo el tiempo a mis hijas, que no tengan problemas con alguien. Si alguien te hace algo, yo quiero que tú vengas y me digas que yo voy hacer la que me voy a encargar de arreglar todo. Pero yo no quiero que alguien venga y me diga que tú pegaste, que tú buscaste porque yo te pego a ti. Eh, todo el tiempo ha sido así hasta hoy, pero ahorita con Alicia. Digo yo, entonces tengo que decir a miya que golpee. Para que se defienda. Yo a mis hijas las he puesto a, a desarrollarse de una manera en

Right now with what's happening with Alicia, until this day I always tell my daughters to not have problems with anyone. If someone does something to you, I want you to come and tell me. And I will be in charge of taking care of everything. But I don't want anyone to come tell me that you hit, that you asked for it because I will hit you. Eh, it's always been that way until now, but now with Alicia. I say, "Then I have to tell my daughter to hit. So she can defend herself." I have raised my daughters in a way that maybe I have not given

que a la mejor no les he dado la suficiente libertad que necesitan. Pero es que es difícil. Yo no sé si va a ser para bien o para mal. No sé. Yo a veces he hablado con mi mamá por teléfono, últimamente con lo que me estaba pasando con la mayor. Le digo, “ma, yo no sé cómo hacerle.” Le digo, “es bien difícil, mis hijas no se saben defender.” Le digo yo, y me da miedo que, eh... las he protegido y no las he enseñado a defenderse de una manera que diga usted que tenga razón de defenderse o que sea justo defenderse. No se saben defender, o sea.” (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

then enough liberty. But it's difficult. I don't know if it's going to be for good or bad. I don't know. Sometimes I have spoken to my mom on the phone, lately with what was happening with the eldest... I say, “Ma, I don't know how to do it.” I say, “It's very difficult. My daughters don't know how to defend themselves.” I tell her, “and it scares me that, eh...I have protected them but have not taught them to defend themselves in a way that when you would say they have a reason to defend themselves or it's just that they defend themselves. They just don't know how to defend themselves.”

### **Outcomes of Incident**

#### *Change in Laura's Response to School*

Y debido a ese problema quiere decir que entonces como pasó esto con mi hija, de aquí en adelante mi hija va a ser libre de hacer todo lo que ella quiera y yo no quiero quejas. Entonces, mi hija va a tener todo el derecho de hacer todo lo que ella quiera y yo no quiero malas notas de mi hija. No quiero que... que me estén llamando la atención a mi hija porque entonces mi hija, ah... ¿de qué manera se va a defender? Si ellas no ponen una solución, de qué manera piensan decirle a mi hija que se defienda. Se las dicen ellas y se las voy a decir yo. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/30/2004)

And due to that problem it means that like what happened with my daughter, from now on she will be free to do what she wants and I don't want any complaints. Then my daughter is going to have the right to do whatever she pleases and I don't want any more notes about my daughter. I don't want for my daughter to be told anything because then, ah...in what way is my daughter going to defend herself? If they don't come up with a solution, in what way are they going to tell my daughter to defend herself. They will tell her and I am going to tell her also.

#### *Change in Laura's Consejo to Daughters*

Para nada sirve de que estén aquí, de que haya quienes te ayuden con los problemas le diría. Le dije yo, “No.

“It serves no purpose for them to be here, for there to be people who can help with problems”, I would tell you.

Usted sabe, usted más que nadie sabe que yo estuve muy pendiente de mis hijas. Precisamente usted”, le dije “la primera vez que me pasó algo así. Le dije yo hasta horita estoy consciente que mis hijas no se saben defender en muchas cosas, porque todo el tiempo he corriendo con la política de ustedes, no hagan las cosas pa’ atrás, dije yo pero, es en estas cosas dígame.... Yo les voy a aconsejar a Alicia para que se defiendan, y le dije, en este caso y disculpe la palabra le digo que le dé una patada. No les he platicado de lo de Alicia y ando... ando con platicarles porque les quiero decir que espero que no haiga una situación así con ella, que ésta sea la primera y la última vez, pero que en caso de que se pudiera presentar cualquier situación de estas, que aunque yo las he enseñado que no me gusta que hagan problemas, que en una situación así se defiendan con uñas y dientes y estoy dispuesta a apoyarlas, y a irme pa’ la escuela y la espero. (Laura Luna Interview, 4/6/2004)

I told her, “No. You know more than anyone that I closely supervise my daughters. Especially you,” I said, “the first time that something like this happened I told you ‘Up to now I am aware that my daughters don’t know how to defend themselves in many things because I have always gone along with your policies. ‘Don’t do anything back’ I said but its in these things tell me.... I am going to counsel Alicia to defend herself. And I told her, “in this case and forgive the word” I told her, “that she give him a kick.” I have not told about the Alicia thing and I’m going, going to talk to them because I want to tell them that I hope there is not another situation like Alicia’s, that this be the first and last time, but in case a situation like that could present itself, that even though I have taught them that I don’t like them to cause problems, that in a situation like that one that they defend themselves with teeth and nails and I am willing to support them and go to the school and wait for them.

Laura is informed of an incident on the bus involving her youngest daughter, Alicia. At first, she receives a letter from the teacher that asks for her to sign it and return it (See Figure 4). Laura recollects that in a similar situation she previously faced, a letter like this became needed documentation to support a complaint. However, she had not retained a copy of the letter and thus was unable to provide proof. Laura expressed her desire to not repeat that mistake again this time as she refused to send back the note. Laura used the knowledge she gained from her previous experience (cultural capital) to make a different choice this time. As an active volunteer who is seen on the school campus every week, Laura approaches her contacts at the school that have often

encouraged Laura to ask for their help and support. She narrates finding that when she truly needs their help to obtain an explanation of what happened to Alicia and gain resolution, no support is offered. In telling her story, Laura describes her growing awareness that the school doesn't want to hear about the bad stuff and that perhaps the refrain she had often heard about the impact of being Mexican was true. For Laura, she describes feeling that because she was Mexican they did not give her any importance and treated her differently from those that were born in the U.S. or who were white. Although she had heard about the differential treatment of Mexicans, the occurrence of this one incident and the responses she received from the school, served to confirm the history she had heard about the way Mexicans were treated. The history of race relations in Sonoma and Sonoma ISD became reality for Laura. Faced with what she perceived as discrimination, the issue of defending oneself took on new meaning and required Laura to reexamine what she needed to do for her daughters. Repeatedly in her narratives as she describes her various acts of agency (i.e., approaching the bus driver, the teacher, the parent involvement director, offering to volunteer on the bus) to attempt to resolve the situation, Laura keeps asking herself, “¿Qué puedo hacer?/What can I do?.” Although Laura continually enacted agency by volunteering, by being visible, by responding to the school's requests, she described her seeming invisibility to the people in power within her daughter's campus, particularly the principal. Laura's acts of agency were marginalized within the school setting. Thus, as she exhausted her resources and obtained no results from her acts of agency, she was left to reexamine her understanding of schools and make different choices for her daughters. In the telling of her story, Laura offers resistance as a solution. She decides that if the school cannot provide solutions, then her daughters have

a right to defend themselves however they want without any recriminations from the school. Laura also decides that if they could not take care of such a major incident, then when the school called her daughter's attention to incidents of her chewing gum or talking in class, she was not going to reprimand her at home. If the school could not be concerned about a major incident that affected the safety of her daughter, why should she be concerned about what she considered to be minor behavior infractions? Finally, after several months had passed, Laura and Julián discussed their *consejos* to their daughters about defending themselves. Following this incident, they called in their four daughters for a family meeting and announced a change in a longstanding *consejo* they had given each of their daughters: Instead of not defending themselves and relying on the adults in the situation to resolve any instances where their safety was at risk, they were told to fight tooth and nail to defend themselves in any similar situation to the one Alicia faced. They decided that since they could not count on the school to protect their daughters they were going to have to teach them how to defend themselves. This was a lesson Laura felt they had miscalculated thus leaving their daughters vulnerable. Therefore, this became another area of focus within day-to-day parent involvement in the home.

### ***LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND SPANISH LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE***

Laura talked about Spanish as a valuable asset in her family. It was a central part of the home, an environment that was steeped in Spanish.

Y en el caso mío también, es español. Solamente, cuando ellas están solas y que están he...huiré...huiré...huiré...y entran en la plática...entonces allí si se agarran [en inglés]. Pero mientras,

In my case, it is also Spanish. Only when they are alone and that they are talking, talking, and talking and they get into a conversation...then there yes they do get into it in English.

cualquier cosa que se quiere comunicar en la casa es español....español, español, español. ...En español es todo el tiempo español, español. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

Otherwise, whatever needs to be communicated in the house is in Spanish....Spanish, Spanish, Spanish. Its in Spanish all the time....Spanish, Spanish.

Despite a focus on Spanish in the home, the presence of English bleeds through. As Laura talked about her views of the role of English and Spanish, she had clear ideas about the importance of having both languages.

Bueno pues, para mí el español es primordial, el español. El inglés es importante también porque es un idioma más para...tener algo mejor en estudio y en trabajo. Para tener más opciones. Este...los dos idiomas son importantes. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

Well then, for me Spanish is fundamental, Spanish. English is important also because it is a language more for...to have something better in education and in jobs...to have more options. Well, both languages are important.

For Laura, English was the language that opened opportunities in education and employment. However, it was Spanish that was a core value. As Laura's children began entering school, Laura was exposed to the views of teachers who shared their own language ideologies and practices.

...Cuando llegamos aquí ella [mija mayor] nomás fue cinco meses a kinder. Entonces ya la pasaron a primero, pero fue bilingüe. Su maestra, la Sra. López. Entonces la maestra..... Ella [la niña] llegaba y me decía, "Mamá,...me hicieron equis pregunta y yo sabía responder. Yo levanté mi mano dice pero la maestra nunca me dejó que yo le digiera", dijo. Ella...ella lo miraba así. Ella llegó y me lo dijo así. Dijo, "ella prefirió a los niños que hablan el inglés" Entonces, ella llegaba y me decía eso y a mí se me partía el alma. A veces venían unas amiguitas y

...When we arrived here, my oldest daughter only went to Kinder for five months. Then they passed her to first grade, but it was bilingual. Her teacher, Mrs. López. So then the teacher..... My daughter would arrive and tell me, "Mama, ..that made me such and such a question and I knew how to respond. I raised my hand" she says, "but the teacher never let me tell her" she said. She...she saw it that way. She arrived and told me that in that way. She said, "She preferred the children that spoke English." So then she would arrive and tell me that and my heart would just break.

cuando ella pensaba que yo no la estaba mirando, ella hablaba el inglés. Pero volteaba y me miraba que la miraba y le daba pena y ya no lo hablaba. Entonces, con ella batallamos con la pena, con él...que vamos a echarle ganas para que aprendas el inglés para que no te hagas...no te sientas como tú dices que te hacen sentir. Fue ir con ella casi medio día a la escuela, primero pa mí me hicieron saber que era importante que se enseñara a leer primero en español. Yo no le entendía. Yo decía, “¿Si va a aprender inglés por qué tiene que leer español?” Horita ya lo entiendo y es cierto. Este... ¿Cómo va a aprender el inglés si no sabe ni a leer en español? Entonces... Cuando me dijeron eso, lo pensé, nunca respondí, y nomás hice lo que me dijeron. Nunca respondí. Yo dije, “Bueno, si ellas dicen eso, ellas saben y yo voy con ellas. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

Sometimes her little friends would come over and when she thought that I wasn't looking at her, she would speak in English. But she would turn and see me looking at her and she would get embarrassed and she would stop speaking it. So, with her we had trouble with her embarrassment. ...Let's give it our all so that you can learn English so that you don't act...you don't feel they way you say they make you feel. It took going with her almost half a day to school. First for me they let me know that it was important that she learn how to read in Spanish first. I didn't understand it. I would say, “If she is going to English why does she need to learn to read Spanish?” Now I understand and its true. How is she going to learn English if she can't even read in Spanish. So then, when they told me that, I thought, I never responded, and I only did what they told me. I never responded. I said, “Well, if they say that, they know and I'll go along with them.

Feeling their daughter's pain as they listened to her talk about her inability to participate in an English speaking classroom, Laura and Julián decided to focus on having her learn English. However, during their first meeting with the teacher, Laura and Julián received surprising news: It was important for children to learn to read in Spanish before they could learn to read in English. Although it didn't make sense to them, they accepted it in deference to the teacher who they viewed as an expert. As her oldest daughters have gone through the school system, Laura has found verification for what the teacher told her long ago.

Ella [mi hija mayor Beatriz] no quiso puro inglés en quinto grado siguió bilingüe hasta grado seis. Y eso, ya en el grado seis, se lo exigí yo. ...Le dije, "Tú puedes superar lo del idioma y lo siento mucho te vas a puro inglés. Y vas a poder superar puro inglés en grado seis." La cosa fue diferente con la niña que sigue. La niña que sigue, ella no pidió permiso para meterse a inglés. Ella firmó. Ella firmó y dijo, "Yo me voy a puro inglés." Ella tiene desde grado cinco o seis y la diferencia es que Beatriz habla mejor el español que Mari. Entonces no pienso volver a cometer el error de dejar en quinto grado puro inglés. Un año más no les hace daño y como quiera los años que siguen es inglés. Lo van a aprender. Y entonces allí me doy cuenta los dos idiomas son importantes. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

She [my oldest daughter Beatriz] didn't want to go into pure English in fifth grade...she continued in bilingual until sixth grade. And that, but when in sixth grade, I demanded it of her. ...I told her, "You can overcome the language issue and I'm sorry but you are going into pure English. And you are going to be able to overcome pure English in sixth grade." It was a different story with my next daughter. The next daughter, she didn't ask for permission to go into English. She signed. She signed and she said, "I'm going to pure English." She's been in since fifth grade and the difference is that Beatriz speaks better Spanish than Mari. So then I don't plan on committing the same mistake of allowing pure English in fifth grade. One more year doesn't hurt them and anyway the years that follow are in English. They are going to learn it. So then, that's how I discover that the two languages are important.

Laura now uses this knowledge to make choices and decisions about the education of her two youngest daughters and the length of involvement they will have with the bilingual program. Her language ideologies as expressed in her narratives continue to support the importance of both English and Spanish. Laura also expresses the important role she sees school having in the maintenance of Spanish as she describes how having one year less of bilingual education affected her daughter's ultimate proficiency in Spanish. Therefore, although Laura continues her home efforts to develop Spanish through its use in the home, letter writing to México, telephone conversations with their grandmother in México, and sending her daughters for summer visits to México; she views school as

making a real difference. Laura promotes her language ideologies to other parents who struggle with decisions about what language to support in school for their children.

Tengo por ejemplo una amiga mía. Este...ella me dice que es...que hay gente que le dice que...ella es mexicana...su hija es nacida aquí. Ella también habla bastante el inglés. Pero, habla...o sea...es mexicana. Entonces habla el inglés por cuestión de su trabajo así. Este...ella me dice que hay gente que le dice que cometió un error meter a su hija en bilingüe porque su hija habla el inglés y que lo que está pasando es que ya no está hablando bien el inglés. Entonces, me dice que le dicen y ella aparte de que dice que le dicen,...ella lo siente que sí. Entonces yo le contesté ese día le digo... Dice, “porque, pues al fin al cabo dice que dicen donde estamos viviendo se necesita el inglés.” Yo le digo...yo le contesto y le dije yo, “sí, es lo más mejor que te puede pasar que se desenvuelvan en el idioma en el que andan.” Le dije yo, “Pero, el inglés les va a entrar y lo que va a pasar es que se les va a olvidar el español.” Le dije yo, “Y sabes cual es el peor problema” le dije yo.... “que tu niña la mandas a vacaciones pa México y no va a poder comunicarse con tu mamá.” Le dije yo, “y pa el inglés tiene...si tú vas a estar toda la vida aquí...toda la vida lo tiene.” Le dije, “¿y el español...quién se lo va a enseñar después?” Le dije yo, “No” le dije, “pal inglés va a tener toda la vida pa seguirlo aprendiendo y seguir aprendiendo” (Laura Luna Interview, 2/19/2004)

For example, I have a friend of mine... She tells me that there are people that tell her that...she is Mexican...her daughter was born here. She also speaks a lot of English. But, she speaks...in other words...she is Mexican. Therefore, she speaks English because of her work. She tells me that there are people that tell her that she committed an error in putting her daughter in bilingual because her daughter speaks English and that what is happening is that she is no longer speaking English well. So then, she tells me that they tell her. And she feels that its true. So then I answered her that day, I told her... She said, “Because in the end they say that where we are living you need English.” I tell her,...I answer her and I told her, “Yes it’s the best thing that can happen that they develop with the language that they are surrounded in.” I told her, “But English they are going to get and what’s going to happen is that they are going to forget Spanish.” I told her, “And you which is the worst problem” I told her, “that you send your daughter to México for vacations and she won’t be able to communicate with your mother.” I told her, “And for English...if you are going to be here the rest of your life, they have all their lives.” I told her, “And Spanish? Who is going to teach her that later? I told her, “No” I said, “For English she will have the rest of her life to continue learning it and continue learning.”

Thus, for Laura, although English is important she views learning English for her daughters as something that will happen no matter what. She compares this to Spanish, whose development and maintenance she paints as more precarious and in need of more focused effort. As Laura describes to her friend, “Lo importante es no dejar que se le olvide el español./What’s important is not letting them forget Spanish.” As such, this is the focus of Laura’s efforts for all her daughters ‘y le echa ganas’/and she gives it her all.

### **SUMMARY**

Laura authors herself first and foremost as a vigilant mother who gives her all for the benefit of her family including her four daughters. Laura’s personal history is shaped by childhood experiences of her father’s transnationalism (movement across two countries), his frequent absences, and her mother’s strength in maintaining the household during those absences. Her parent’s inheritance to her was one of the emotional capital of strength and resilience. It is this inheritance that became Laura’s lifeline as she crossed the border into the U.S. from México undocumented and faced the hardships those life circumstances can bring. Laura experienced the tensions and contradictions of being a school defined ‘good mother’ due to her consistent involvement in school prescribed parent involvement activities and an ‘undocumented worker’ perceived to be taking what does not belong to them, a place in U.S. society. Laura in her everyday life is always negotiating the tensions created by her desires to be the ‘good mother’ and her fears and uncertainties that stem from her immigration status. For Laura a simple drive to pick up her daughter fills her with fear as she wonders if this will be the time she will get stopped by the police, discovered and deported. When the bus incident occurred with Alicia,

although Laura approached many social resources for support and assistance, she was unable to convert them into the social capital currency within that school campus. The agency she did initiate was marginalized and went unacknowledged at school. In addition, her immigration status held her back from approaching the principal about the situation. Laura preferred to not cause any problems that might bring further attention to her family and risk their residency status in Sonoma. Having exhausted her resources, she drew on her emotional capital, her resiliency, to not be defeated but rather to use the experience to adapt the *consejos* she provided to her daughters to better prepare them if a similar situation presented itself. Although this experience did not change her level of involvement at the school it did impact the teachings provided in the home about school which essentially taught ‘you must defend yourself because school won’t.’ Following the incident, Laura’s narratives communicated an underlying distrust of the school system. Her involvement as a classroom volunteer also emphasized the need to keep an eye on teacher’s actions in the classroom. However, Laura also acknowledged the importance she placed on education and the availability of the bilingual education program to support her efforts to maintain Spanish in the home. With a strong marriage and partner in her children’s home education, Laura together with Julián provided stability to her daughters despite the contradictory instability produced by their immigration status. Laura’s response to life’s hardships was to begin again, and again, and again.....after each hardship, she activated her emotional resources to begin again using her agency to give it her all for the benefit of her family and her children.

## CHAPTER 8

ANNA SALAS

### ‘I’m A Voice That Must Be Heard’

I’m proud to be a Hispanic woman living here in Sonoma and proud to have...uhmm...gone to school, to public school here. And, I’ve had lots of challenges and things in my life and I’ve never given up. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

I’m outspoken. I’ll be heard. I’m a voice that must be heard. That’s the good thing. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Our heritage is continuing you know and it’s only going to get better. Being bilingual is...It is awesome to be bilingual. And that’s why I...I’m proud....you know....I think and I say, “Wow. Years ago, they didn’t want to speak Spanish and now they’re....” (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

I feel like being a bilingual, not truly, like we talked last time, but I try my best in reading it and writing it and speaking it. A lot of people have asked me if I was born in México because how fluent my Spanish is which is...I’ve learned it just on...just in everyday life dealing with different people. ... It makes me feel proud of myself and my heritage because not being in México, just learning through...and having dealt with people from México I feel I can relate to. And, here in Sonoma and I ...ahmm....like I said this is mostly a German town. Its...through the years, we’re now about in there, balance between Hispanics and Germans and I feel that I can do.....I can do anything that I set my mind to do. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

In the excerpts above, Anna authors herself as a bilingual, Hispanic<sup>8</sup> choosing the term ‘Hispanic’ which is commonly used by Latinos in Sonoma. The ties of the term ‘Hispanic’ to the history of colonization of Latinos go largely unrecognized here in Sonoma. As Anna narrates herself, she brings into focus her voice, the most significant tool she uses to exert agency across all settings in her life, including parent involvement.

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<sup>8</sup> For purposes of this case study, I will utilize the term Hispanic in the context of Anna’s own narratives as this is the term she chooses to describe herself and her community. However, for consistency with the rest of this dissertation, I will continue to utilize the terms Latina/o and/or Mexican origin in reference to my discussions of Anna.

Her narratives are filled with her pride and struggles with being ‘Hispanic’ in a community that during her childhood had not embraced her heritage or language. Her hope and sense of change is captured as she describes the emerging balance between Germans and Latina/os in Sonoma and the higher status Spanish has achieved. Anna also narrates herself as equally proud of the connections and respect she is able to obtain from people from México who reinforce her pride in being bilingual and Mexican.

Anna is a forty-three year old woman of Mexican origin born and raised in Sonoma, Texas. She is married, has three children and has worked at a variety of part-time and full-time jobs in the service industry. Many of her jobs have involved working with Latina/o families. Anna describes these jobs as outlets for her commitment to support other Latina/os, especially immigrant families who have recently arrived in Sonoma. My *pláticas* with Anna began centered around her personal history and parent involvement but when she was fired from a job that she perceived to be for discriminatory reasons, our *pláticas* broadened to include discussions of discrimination and the tensions these raised in her while she simultaneously embraced the hope signaled by Sonoma’s opening of a dual language education program in which her son was enrolled. In her narratives, Anna illustrates how the race and language history of Sonoma filters into her life, including her parent involvement and how her parent involvement choices inside and outside Sonoma ISD in turn are shaped by these experiences.

In the sections that follow, I will describe Anna’s background in Sonoma, Texas to highlight issues in her personal history that often surfaced in her parent involvement. Anna’s case study then moves into Sonoma ISD, as I follow the parent involvement she participates in and out of school. Finally, Anna, through her narratives, discusses her

language ideologies, the impact of the local dual language education program on her overall views toward schools, and its impact on her Spanish language maintenance efforts.

## ***PERSONAL HISTORY***

### ***Family & Educational Background***

Anna's grandparents came to the U.S from Hidalgo, México. Her parents met in Sonoma, got married, and divorced when Anna was very young. Following the divorce, Anna expresses how she was sent, along with her oldest brother, to live with her grandparents who used primarily Spanish in the home. When her grandparents died just as she was entering her pre-teenage years, she returned to live with her mother. Her childhood is characterized by Anna as represented by a series of moves, with Anna often moving between her mother's and father's homes. Through her parents' and their respective subsequent marriages, Anna had a total of nine siblings. Yet the one Anna speaks proudest of is her oldest brother for what he has accomplished.

My oldest brother he lived with our grandparents and he was going to college when...when grandfather died first and then a year later my grandmother died and he was going to college here at Southwest. And he went into [the] music department.....and when he got on his feet he finished his college with a degree in sociology, psychology. He moved to California and he got his doctorate last year. And he put himself through school. Yeah. He put himself through school. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

While her brother was focused on school, Anna, at the age of fifteen, got pregnant and finally settled to live with her mother who helped her raise her son. Anna describes how this pregnancy changed her life.

I did leave school at an early age, 15 years old, cauz I got pregnant with my son. But, after I had him, I went to work for a little while. Then I decided to continue my education cauz I knew that I needed to have at least a GED so that I could be able to find a decent job. I've never been a quitter. I like to get things done. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

As Anna authors herself, she does not focus on the pregnancy in a way that depicts it as a negative event. Rather, she authors herself as someone who takes action to make things better in her life, a person who moves forward. For Anna, a key to making things better is education.

To be able to succeed in life, you have to have an education. Education is important, most important. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

This realization is depicted by Anna as having come over time through experience. It was not a perspective she had when she was in school.

When I was a child, school was not....important. We went, we had to go but we didn't enjoy it because they didn't make the teaching fun. It was just you had to go to school or your parents would have to go to court cauz...or the truant officer had to come and pick you up and take you to school cauz that happened to me. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna's own educational history begins to seep through her narratives as she alludes to her problems attending school and her general lack of interest in school at that time. When her oldest son entered high school and began having problems, Anna recalls with pride the finding of support through one person at the public school that cared enough to work along side her to assure her son's high school graduation.

That's one thing that I'm proud of that...my oldest son I put him through high school and he graduated. The one thing I can say with public school that in high school he had a coach that...that really, really took him under his wings and helped me. And when...every time my son would get in trouble you know the coach would help. I mean He knew how hard I wanted....to put my son through school. When he presented my son with...with a diploma he had tears in his eyes. And that was very touching to me because it takes a special person.....to go....to that expense. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna describes her experiences with her now adult son of twenty-eight years of age as ones that showcased for her how there are individuals within public schools that care and can make a difference. Her oldest son's experiences, her own schooling experiences in Sonoma ISD, combined with the entrance of her two children ages seven and six in Sonoma ISD, had Anna keeping a watchful eye on Sonoma ISD to assure her youngest children's educational success. Anna had incentive to be receptive to what the school had to offer but was also vigilant of her children's progress and treatment in school. I will discuss this in more detail in the parent involvement section of this chapter. Yet it was Anna's current life circumstances that determined the extent to which she could remain vigilant as I will now discuss.

### ***Current Life Circumstances***

Anna has been married for nine years to Ricardo. He was originally from San Luis Potosí, México but his family now lived in Monterrey, México, a location Anna and her family made an effort to visit at least once a year. Prior to his marriage to Anna, Ricardo had been married to someone else.

My husband, I don't know if I told you, his first wife was gringa. And so he got to live that culture and come back to this one. I noticed when I first met him, he did have some...a different...style. And its funny how...like his first wife did not want no children. And he always wanted children. And they were married...I want to say 13 years. [It's] interesting because in that relationship he had money. They traveled. And, in this relationship its kids....and family. And its funny how...when he was married to his first wife, he didn't go that often to México. And, with me...I always stress to him, "Let's go see your mom" or other times I tell him, "You have to go see your mom." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna describes Ricardo's previous relationship as a cultural contrast to his current marriage to her where the value of family and a connection to one's Mexican roots are emphasized by Anna. Anna's value toward family and connections to one's Mexican roots only grew after her marriage to Ricardo. These views expressed themselves not only in the choices she made for her children to experience but also in her views toward Mexican immigrants and her relations with them.

On several occasions, Anna described her views toward immigrants from México and their work ethic.

...Being married to someone from México, they're proud. They have their pride. They don't want to be asking for handouts. They would rather work day and night. (laughing)...I can honestly tell you, I have this 28 year old son, and I've always told him, I go ahead and tell him, if you get a Black person, a Hispanic, a white person and you give 'em a shovel and say this is what you are going to do for eight hours I guarantee ya'll will leave and the person from México will stay there and work ten hours, twelve hours, .....not these guys. And that's the honest truth. They'd rather be doing the easy way out. Uh-hum. And I tell him that all the time. I tell anybody that, because they work hard. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

Anna's views reflected an overgeneralization of the characteristics of immigrants which raised their status in her view above those of any U.S. groups which she depicts as searching for an 'easy way out'. According to Anna, immigrants' work ethic then became the work standard that was to be aspired to and the one she held as a model for her own children. Since her marriage to her husband, her awareness of the circumstances immigrants faced here in the U.S. had increased.

I was very touched because my husband brought his brother, I had just had my little boy, and they talked and my husband said to him, "You know brother I've got to go to the United States because I've got to make some money. We need to build our house and I'm going to be there a year, dadadada..." So anyway, my brother-in-law comes to the United States and he's going to stay here and I helped him get a job and he worked and worked. And he didn't last very long. He was

so homesick and I would cry for him because I was seeing him. He'd get home. He didn't even want to eat. He would go in his room and I could hear him crying. And I said to my husband, "You know he feels obligated like he has to stay here for a year but you know what, take him home" I said. He was here three months and I can honestly say he really...he took enough money home to build, finish his house. And every time that we go we talk about it and I say that's a true man. He wanted to stay for a whole year but his wife would call him and...he was miserable, he was miserable. You see I can relate to these people cuz I've seen it first hand. It's so hard; it's so hard for them. I can just imagine me going to México and trying to live there but he was so gung-ho about coming to "los Estados Unidos" and working and saving lots of money. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

As the stories of the immigrant individuals she met became part of her own lived experience, Anna was able to understand the hardships of immigrants and compare their responses to those she would adopt if in the same position. These experiences served to reinforce her commitment to helping immigrant families.

I have been an advocate...about them [Head Start and Sonoma ISD] having ESL classes. I've also, I've stressed to them the importance of trying to make these families feel welcome and that we are trying to help them. Not set them back. ...They have it hard as it is to come here and not have a clue...what's going on. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Her advocacy efforts reflected the emphasis Anna placed on connection to one's cultural roots. This emphasis as well as her focus on family provided a foundation for her to make choices for her children that supported language and cultural renewal and prioritized their needs above everything else.

According to Anna, together she and Ricardo set priorities and negotiated their roles within the family.

I'm the one that handles the finances, and I'm afraid for a rainy day. It's just the way I am. (Anna Salas Interview, 4/16/2004)

[My husband], when it comes to the kids...he said to me, "I'll work two jobs. I'll work a night job." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

In negotiating their respective roles within their relationship, Anna expresses herself as the coordinator of family life and finances with Ricardo committed to working at whatever level required to ensure the wellbeing of his children. However, since Anna had always worked two to three jobs as a single mother, Ricardo's willingness to work additional jobs created some tensions in Anna.

I had him [my oldest son] at fifteen and I did it all by myself. So, then when I married my husband and started having babies one right after the other, uh...and that I knew he was there that...it was easier....cauz I had help. ...I don't have to work two to three jobs. [But] you know it's nice to be helping him with the bills. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Her responsibilities for the family finances while simultaneously not being required to work as she raised her children was a situation that Anna reported on several occasions as hard to handle. Thus, Anna was often confronted with choices between her need to create a financial safety net for her family and her priorities to her children and family. Sometimes these choices were clear and it was simply a matter of helping Ricardo see it too as in the case of buying a house.

It was just when we were shopping for a house this was...its funny because my husband had been married to an Anglo gal before me who's a realtor and they didn't have no children. So, he was used to the uppity life. And so when we decided to get married I said to him....we looked at several houses. We looked at this house a few times and he said it needs a lot of work and it's an older home. I said, let me tell you something, I said, if you want me to go buy a hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand dollar home we'll go buy one but I'm going to tell you right now today I am not working after I have a little baby. So if you want your fifteen hundred dollar mortgage you tell me right now. Then he thought about it and (laughter) he liked this house. Then he liked it. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

Other times, the financial pressures were so great that Anna described her priorities being compromised. This displayed itself most dramatically following Anna's acceptance of a full-time job that had begun at the start of 2004.

I accepted a full time position. My husband and I had been talking about it because I jumped at it and I didn't keep my priorities in order. Uhm...I see myself doing less in school because I...I'm working and I want to...I want to decrease my work load so I can go into the school because I would go and have lunch with my kids. I would go on the field trips. I would go...last year, I did a lot of reading with the students one on one. And this year I've done nothing. Last year I was very involved... ..Yea. My children are suffering. Yes, because they notice. I mean, for Valentine's Day I went to my son's Valentine's party and didn't go to my daughter's Valentine's party and so when he came home and shared the news with her and she cried. And I said to her, "Mija, I could only do one because I only had an hour and I'm the room mother in his class." So, I had to prepare and coordinate and so it put me in a spot where she cried and ohhh, if she cries I cry. It hurt me. ...my priorities are my family. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Following acceptance of the full-time position, over the coming months Anna expressed growing concerns over her ability to meet the needs of her children. She struggled to meet the requirements of her job while maintaining the priorities she had committed to with Ricardo towards her children.

I've got to re-evaluate it [my full-time job] and just kinda make some decisions. I do feel that my children being my number one priority, I will make good choices. I can't and I told my boss...and I can't put my family second... (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna felt, the pact, made to herself and her family to put family first, forced her to have to make some difficult choices as she re-prioritized her life. In an unexpected turn of events, life intervened and made the decision for Anna as her employment came to an abrupt end following an incident at work. Ironically, the incident revolved around the actions she took when her daughter was ill that her employer had interpreted as Anna being negligent of her job responsibilities. Anna describes the incident in the midst of her efforts to brainstorm what her next steps should be.

I was just going to leave it at that, resign and nothing. And I said, "You know what, I'm going to file unemployment. Even if I don't win, at least they'll hear both sides. I can tell them how I was treated. How I couldn't..." She said, "You

just have poor planning. You should have had better timing.” I said “I’m sorry I couldn’t plan for my daughter to have a toothache. I’m sorry I couldn’t plan that.” I said “She just got it. I clocked out and went to the dentist. You know what, I accommodated the museum. I had my son drive her. I met him at the dentist office. Then I came back and he brought her home. I said “She’s my daughter.” I said, “You bring your child to work. You go to her class place. The other girl in the front, when her son has an appointment with the doctor, she goes all afternoon. She goes to his plays. She get off at three to take him to art class. My daughter takes art and I don’t go meet her for art.” So, I’m the only Hispanic here. So whatever I can do to stir it up, I will. ...I wish I could get an attorney to represent me, in my discrimination; a Hispanic attorney. ... In the whole time I’ve been there, there’s been no Hispanics. I’m the only one...and then for me to have worked there for three years, and then get rehired [in 2004], that speaks for itself. I can pick them up and go to their school. I worry, but my husband said, “don’t worry about it” he said “I’ll get a second job.” But I can go work part-time, although with unemployment you have to register for full-time employment. I mean I can get a job, I really can, cause I have personal references without them. But I get upset, to think how they treat you. That’s what makes me angry, because...I’ve never been fired from a job, never. I’ve always been a long time employee. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

It was this incident that raised for Anna the buried memories of past discrimination in Sonoma. As she reflected on her experiences in this job she began to highlight for herself all the ways she had been treated differently.

[Sonoma] is basically a good town. It’s just when you have a bad...like what I’ve experienced with [my job with] the museum, when you have a bad experience like that, then it makes you negative, about everyone. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

Her experiences in losing her job filtered into her perceptions of everything and everyone else in her life at that time as she became more vigilant for discrimination. Her anger and frustration carried over into all our remaining interviews as she often veered off topic to re-engage in discussions about the discrimination she had faced in this job. Although she continued to wrestle with her own tensions about working and contributing financially to the family and her desire to be more available for her children, Anna sought a little bit of both as she began to search for part-time employment.

Her efforts to seek a lawyer to file a discrimination lawsuit against her previous employer were thwarted at every turn and in the end after meetings with LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) and private attorneys she found herself with no option but to drop her efforts. Anna was left with a sense of injustice that translated into renewed efforts to teach her children to stand up for themselves and to have cultural pride. These became important elements of Anna's parent involvement efforts. Before, I begin to discuss these parent involvement efforts, I turn our attention to the social and cultural resources that Anna is equipped with when she enters Sonoma ISD to exert agency and negotiate her parent involvement.

### ***Key Social and Cultural Resources***

The resources discussed in this section are those which Anna described as having, which then have the potential to be activated into social and cultural capital depending on the context and circumstances in which she chooses to use them. For Anna, these included her bilingual English/Spanish language abilities; her experiences within U.S. institutional systems as a U.S. born citizen; her network of contacts as a lifelong resident of Sonoma; her husband and his family connections in México; and the material resources, including a computer, that provided a secure learning environment at home for her children.

For Anna, her bilingual language abilities were an asset. She viewed her Spanish speaking ability as a cultural resource that she saw as providing her access to people from México that strengthened her own cultural pride and offered her the ability to provide her children with these connections that might not have been available otherwise.

Although Anna had not always viewed Spanish as a cultural resource in Sonoma, over time, she began to see the increased value in being bilingual and adjusted her view of Spanish and its value accordingly.

By virtue of being born and raised in Sonoma, Anna had extensive access to social resources (people) and cultural resources (knowledge and objects such as the internet) that guided her actions around the institutions she worked within and alerted her to potential barriers she may have had to work around. Her personal experience with her own schooling and that of her oldest son provided Anna with valuable cultural resources about how schooling works and what doesn't work.

Education is very, very, very important.” I didn't have twelve years of education, but I thought enough about it that I went and got a GED. And see my children, I want them, and I always tell them that my oldest brother, he put himself through school. He put himself...there was no...he put himself through school. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

In addition, by having an older brother with a doctorate that put himself through school, Anna also described having access to a powerful social resource that provided her with guidance about what it takes to make it in education. Between the lessons of what works and what doesn't, Anna expresses feeling well-equipped to guide her children through Sonoma ISD and into college. Despite these resources, Anna still struggled to gain entry within schools to decision-making levels. She had access to some decision-makers but was not invited into the decision-making process. I will discuss this further in the parent involvement section of this chapter.

Another social resource that provided access to valuable cultural resources was Ricardo's family in México. By having family in México, Anna was able to guide her husband and children towards having regular contact with them which provided

opportunities to practice their Spanish with native speakers as well as a connection to their cultural heritage as persons of Mexican origin. This was a resource that Anna often referred to in our conversations and from which she seemed to draw a renewed sense of Mexican identity.

Finally, Anna and Ricardo had been able to provide a stable home, transportation, and tools for extending learning in the home. For Anna, the provision of an extensive supply of books (including some in Spanish) and workbooks to continue practicing school work at home was essential. In addition, despite some initial reservations, Anna agreed to purchase a computer for her children.

Having that computer, at first I didn't want to buy one, cause I'm such a tight wad. But I really do see it was a good investment. Because the kids get on there and I have games for them and stuff. Now my little boy likes to do basketball on it so... We only allow him a certain time on it. But my little girl, she goes into Lizzy McGuire and just does....little girly things, but it was a good investment. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

The addition of this tool at home provided a cultural resource that Anna's children accessed more than Anna initially thought possible. It was only after its purchase and use that Anna was able to acknowledge its benefits.

All of these various social and cultural resources were available to Anna as she entered Sonoma ISD and began negotiating how to achieve educational success for her two youngest children. I now turn our attention to her interactions in parent involvement both within and outside Sonoma ISD.

## ***PARENT INVOLVEMENT***

### ***Parent Involvement as Gendered***

Anna and Ricardo shared decision-making responsibilities for their two children. However, it was Anna who was responsible for coordinating parent involvement and informing Ricardo of what parent involvement activities and responsibilities he needed to participate in and take charge of. The pact that Anna and Ricardo had established to prioritize their children and family above all else (described in an earlier section of this chapter) left Anna free to be as involved as she wanted in the children's school.

The good thing says my husband is that I'm involved with the school. ...I'll be involved as long as I can. I'll be there and I'll be.....guiding my children right.  
(Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

It was understood that Anna's main concern was to ensure her children's best interests. However, as discussed earlier, this was a source of tension for Anna as she attempted to balance these responsibilities with her concern for the financial well-being of her family.

In spite of these tensions, Anna described herself as consciously making efforts to ensure that equal amounts of time and resources were spent for each child by each of them. For example, on one occasion, when Ricardo had taken his son, Mando, to a basketball game; Anna took Ariana shopping and spent an equivalent amount of time and money as the basketball game provided Mando. On another occasion, it was Ricardo who was assigned to work with Ariana on her homework because it was in a subject he excelled at.

My husband too, we talk about it when the kids do their homework. He only had like four years of education. He said “but I’ll tell you what Gloria, I studied my...adding and subtracting and...” He’s very smart in that department. He said, “I know my time tables” he says. And...cauz Ariana’s in second grade and they’re just starting, you know how they do it and he’s like... He’s pretty smart, when it comes to that. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

Although Ricardo had only studied to the fourth grade, Anna encouraged his participation in his children’s homework. Anna described Ricardo, as a willing and involved father in his children’s lives that although not formally educated had continued learning independently. This was a trait that Anna described as one she admired in her husband and one she desired her children to acquire – a love of learning.

Thus, as Anna entered Sonoma ISD parent involvement she came with the full support of her husband, Ricardo who attended the events Anna requested he attend. These included attendance at the dual language committee meetings and student performance special events. Otherwise, Anna was the primary parent representative to Sonoma ISD for her two children.

### ***Participation in Sonoma ISD Parent Involvement***

Anna describes herself as highly involved in the general Sonoma ISD parent involvement opportunities offered. She viewed the role of the school to provide “a good education for my kids.” (3/4/2004) Her participation in Sonoma ISD parent involvement includes both attendance at broadly offered events as well as activities specially selected by Anna to augment her presence in the school and keep the school accountable. Examples of broadly offered events are parent-teacher conferences, special student performance events, PTA meetings, volunteering for field trips and special events, daily

review of homework and classroom newsletters, and quarterly dual language committee meetings. Activities that were specially designed by Anna included having lunch with her children, conducting surprise classroom visits, and having intervention meetings/contacts with the campus principal and/or teacher immediately following the raising of an issue that affected her children's education and/or safety. For Anna, she describes issues of family and the tensions of work responsibilities as those that most impact her current participation decisions in parent involvement. In the next section, I discuss how Anna exerts agency within Sonoma ISD by the kinds of additional opportunities she creates for herself to participate and be visible in her children's school.

***Parental Agency.*** Anna has two priorities in her parent involvement within Sonoma ISD: 1) maintain the safety and wellbeing of her children and 2) assure they are learning. During her daughter's first year at Aguila Primary, Anna describes herself being there all the time. At that point in time, she was not working and was solely dedicated to her children. In Anna's narratives of that year, she authors herself as the 'good, active' mother who responded to every request the school made of her, was highly visible at the school campus, and was an officer of the PTA Board. In addition, she tells of her reputation on campus for being 'opinionated and a complainer,' which she attributes to her surprise visits and questioning of school actions. In the year of our *pláticas*, Anna had lost a sister early in the school year that she had been very close to and then she had taken a full-time job in January. Her emotional state and changed employment status left little time for her involvement in Sonoma ISD at the levels she had been previously involved; an adjustment every member of the family was making. In an effort to illustrate Anna's agency and changing responses to Sonoma ISD, I will begin

by focusing on three examples of her involvement: her experiences in PTA, her efforts to maintain her visibility at the campus, and her direct interventions when incidents arose.

Anna's narratives about the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) begin by dismissing the value of PTA for parents of children in primary school.

In Primary, you don't have to be on the PTA, you don't have to be...just be involved in your child's class. You'd be surprised at the amount of little ladies that go into Mrs. Martínez's class. They're not PTA members. They're moms. They have no clue about PTA, because it hasn't been....we don't have a bilingual PTA translator to tell you what it's about. Yeah, it's all in English (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

On further inspection, it is not just any parents to whom the value of PTA is diminished according to Anna, it is for Spanish-speaking parents in particular who do not stand to gain anything from attending events held in English. It is in relation to her own experiences in PTA that Anna begins to recognize the issues of status and power that are a part of PTA.

They talk about the fund raising...PTA is not what it use to be. They had PTAs [when my oldest son was in school], but, I was never involved. And see with them [my two youngest children], I am. You can be[come] a member to be a PTA member. If you want to be in the social mix of the PTA, then you can be someone. ...And I'll put a perfect example to you, last year in Aguila primary I was on the PTA board. This year, I paid my dues and I haven't been invited to participate.....in too many things. They got their own... I can honestly say that's probably because I haven't been as active. But....feeling included would be.....would be a little nice. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

Within these discussions, Anna on the one hand positions PTA as not a necessary activity for Spanish-speaking parents for whom the PTA in English is obviously not geared for while simultaneously positioning PTA as providing her social status but only when she was a leader within the organization. In our *plática* above, Anna acknowledged her loss of status when she failed to be re-elected as a PTA Board member and her

disappointment at her failed inclusion in PTA events this year due to her lower level of involvement. In reflecting on her experiences in PTA, Anna discusses noticing these discrepancies and the value of this information for decisions she will make next year on her level of PTA involvement. However, in the present year, Anna exerts agency not by pushing her involvement within PTA, but rather by increasing her involvement in Aguila Primary in her own self initiated ways.

Anna relates accomplishing this specifically through high visibility on the Aguila Primary campus, vigilance of any misstep on the part of the school, and direct interventions with the school when any issue arises concerning her children. It is through these actions that Anna has established a reputation for herself that she holds up as a badge of honor.

[My reputation in the school is that I am] very opinionated (laughing)...they know me..., they know me. As a matter of fact, when my child had an Anglo teacher and they hired a little....aide. The aide when she first came to work there later on they would tell me that the teacher said to her, "Oh, that's Mrs. Salas. Oh, you've got to watch out for Mrs. Salas cauz she will complain. She will complain. Oh yeah watch out for Mrs. Salas." So, and I said to them, "You know, I don't want you all to fear when I come but...and I'm not watching out just for my child. I'm watching out for all of them. ...That's the same way I am and I'll go and I'll air out my concern and I want.....I want answers. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

To accomplish her goal of maintaining a consistent presence on the campus, Anna makes regular weekly visits to her son's classroom.

I go...into the classroom...once a week, twice sometimes. ...And Mrs. Martínez, bless her heart, I will walk into the hall and I will stand there and she will be in session they'll be in class. ...I just drop in. ...Like I said, I would go into the school...just to observe and see and... The one thing that I'm known for is when I voice my.....whatever concern it is...that I want to see a solution to it. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna describes her objective as not only being to observe what occurs but to get any issues she witnesses addressed. Anna sees her voice as a tool that has served her well in the past and that she can utilize to exert agency that gets her heard and obtains solutions.

Anna provides accounts of witnessing and responding to a variety of incidents on behalf of her children through her visibility in the school. Anna recounts immediately jumping on any issue and holding the school accountable at every turn. The next set of narratives illustrates Anna's response to four different incidents: 1) Discrimination on the bus; 2) Ariana gets hit; 3) Bully on the school bus; and 4) Mando's classroom incident. These are all examples of direct interventions taken by Anna in her own self-initiated form of parent involvement.

#### Discrimination on Bus

I will teach them to overcome any of it. Cause that's how this oldest one is. He won't be discriminated against. He speaks his mind, and I know, when I would go to school and I would fight for, like one time he was in a, he had an argument with a little white boy on the bus, and they dropped him off. They got him off the bus, blocks from my house, and I went up to school and I said, "Just like you got my son off the bus, that other boy should be dropped off like my son was too." I was always heard. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

#### Ariana Gets Hit

[Adult son to Anna] "Mom, Ariana got whacked with a backpack" and her...her primary teacher told him, when he picked her up, "Ariana got hit." But yet, nobody reported it between the time that it happened until the end of the day. So I marched right on over there and I said, "Ariana got hit with a backpack and, in the school property and nobody notified me." I said "What if that little boy would have had a hard ball in there? or What if he would have had a pin and poked her eye out?" I'm always 'what if.' "My point is why wasn't I notified." And so we had a big to do. I mean I was fit to be tied. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

#### Bully on School Bus

My little boy is a little boy. He's pretty cool and down to earth. He's real patient. My little girl she's like me. So, she can't take it. She told the little boy "Stop, stop calling him names!" And so yesterday he [my son] went to get off the bus and the little boy nudged him... and I said, "I'll have none of that." So, it's like he deals with this all the time and I'm afraid it's gonna reflect...you know he's

gonna say “Well, maybe this is the way I should be acting like a bully.” I mean I went to the school principal and I said “Look I don’t...this little boy needs help.” ...I said “He’s taking away from class time. The teachers are having to do the extra work. I don’t care if his father is a detective! I don’t care if his mother is Barbara Bush! I don’t care! You are going to have to find...a solution for this!” (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

[Talking on the phone to the school transportation director the day after the incident] ...he doesn’t know the name of the little boy but he said the little boy has been calling him names and my older daughter told the little boy to stop and he’s not listening. He’s a little third grader, a third grader! A bigger boy and my little boy is a little Kindergartener and so I don’t know what can be done. OK. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

#### Mando’s Classroom Incident

One day I wrote Mrs. Martínez [the teacher] a note [about my son participating in rough play started by some of the other students when he is a severe asthmatic]. She [Mrs. Martínez] said, “Can I share it with the parents?” I said, “You most certainly can because I would even like a meeting with these parents.” And Mr. Smith [the Principal] said “Oh, Ms Salas, let me handle it.” ...I said “OK Mr. Smith. But after this...I’m going to go to the Board because you’re telling me...and I’m telling you that if my child is injured or hurt, we’re going to have a big to do on our hands” “Oh, Ms. Salas, I know, I know, I know, I know it.” (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Within these narratives, Anna authors herself as a ‘concerned, involved’ mother that ‘gets things done.’ It is within these narratives that Anna provides examples of how she uses her agency to get results: through the use of her strong voice and her knowledge of how schools work. However, according to school informants, Anna’s responses to the school have earned her a reputation as a ‘troublemaker’. Thus, although visible and active in the school, Anna’s parent involvement participation is limited to Status II roles, as discussed in Chapter 5. These are roles that do not have any decision-making ability within the schools. Anna, however, through her narratives, relates the continued focus and priority she places on her children within her parent involvement activities in

Sonoma ISD. In the next section, Anna shares her day-to-day parent involvement priorities and efforts at home with her children.

### ***Day-to-Day Parent Involvement***

For Anna, parent involvement was not just about the activities she participated in at Sonoma ISD or the educational activities she set up for her children at home, it was all about the day-to-day decisions she made which prioritized her children's needs above her own and those of her husband. As discussed in the current life circumstances section of this chapter, these day-to-day decisions included what type of job to accept (full-time, part-time, or no job) and where to focus household spending (a computer versus a new washer or a fixer upper house versus a brand new house). It was these day-to-day decisions that Anna felt allowed her family to have the quality of life that put family first.

I wanted to do things that...my parents didn't do. I wanted to be there for them. That's one thing... I want to do things that weren't done when I was little. Cauz they're going to have that in their memory forever. ...And that's what I want my children to have....good memories. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna's priorities were to do things together as a family to build memories and build her children's self-esteem.

I try to keep them very active...very active. See that's the one thing that I want them to have, a high self-esteem...and be able to walk on their own. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

A part of Anna's described strategy was to keep her children very active. Therefore, the activities in a typical day included not only driving the children to school, greeting them as they arrived home on the bus, working on homework together, and having them read

or spend time on the computer before going to bed; but also included organized opportunities to talk and interact actively together as a family, and school lunch visits once a week to demonstrate her interest to her children. In many ways, Anna repeatedly described making decisions about her actions toward her two youngest children based on her own childhood experiences and the experiences she had with her oldest son. Thus, a typical day for Anna and her family varied based on what was available for the children and the family to do together that day. For example, on one occasion, Anna had been informed that her daughter Ariana was overweight. To address this, Anna and Ricardo began having family walks where every night they and their two children went for walks together around their neighborhood. The other activity Anna promoted to balance physical activity with mental activity and learning was reading.

My daughter is very good in school. She loves school. She does very, very well. And that's because I really enforced that. Like this morning, we had a great weekend and she didn't read Saturday and Sunday. She reads. Sister [her daughter's nickname] said "Mommy, this afternoon when I get home from school" she said "I'm going to, I want to make up my reading time" she said. And I said "That's okay mija." Cauz she had a weekend, and in the summer, we're going to have a great summer but I'm still gonna have them read. She's so cute. She said "Mommy, I didn't read Saturday and Sunday," she said "but I'm going to read this afternoon" and when she gets on the bus, she gets her book out and she reads. So I go "Okay". (Anna Salas Interview, 5/3/2004)

This was an activity that Anna described as having high value in her home. Everyone was encouraged to read and her two youngest children had adopted this practice at home. Drawing from her and her oldest son's negative experiences in school, Anna recognized the importance of reading and establishing a love of learning. She saw these habits as a foundation to their continued success in school. As Anna's narrative illustrates, the strength with which she had established this habit in her children was even a surprise to

Anna herself. She held strong views about television: “At home it’s...it’s...wasting by watching cartoons where they could be learning.” (3/4/2004). For Anna, it had been her deliberate efforts to prioritize books and outside activity over television, that had paid off.

Anna described her priority for family and for spending time with her children as direct lessons she learned from her experiences parenting her oldest son.

As you get older, you get wiser. When I had him [oldest son] at 15, I was totally unprepared. But, I assumed the role of mother and provider and...I just concentrated on support and didn’t give enough parental love. My mother, she gave him all the love. Then I...I wanted to provide for both. I’d buy both of them things. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

I felt like giving him everything was going to...and he proved me wrong. Now, if he doesn’t have designer, he doesn’t want it. He’d rather do without it. It’s like I’m not going to make that mistake again. These children will wear [whatever]... all my clothes are second hand clothes. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

[I learned] that’s the most important thing. Tell him every single day how much you love them. Like with my oldest son, I can be mad as a hornet, and he still comes to me and he tells me, “I love you mom.” “I love you too, mijo.” Even though in the back of my mind, I’m saying “#@#”. Just to love her children and just be involved...be involved with that child. ... And like I said, I don’t want to make the same mistakes that I did with him, in buying him material things. Love is free. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

As a young parent, Anna describes delegating parenting responsibilities for her oldest son to her mother and focusing on providing financially to the home. In her efforts to compensate for her maternal absence, she provided her son with whatever he wanted materially. She describes this as a mistake that she is now taking steps with her two youngest children to ensure she does not repeat. Anna’s realization of the importance to be involved with her children and to demonstrate your love through everyday actions are the cornerstone of her parenting approach now with her children, Mando and Ariana. It

is from this base that Anna then shares with her children *consejos* on leading a life where they can take care of themselves.

I don't want them to go through what I went through. I want things to be better for them. And they will learn to do it, because I'll tell you one thing. With this one [the oldest son], I would always tell him, "I want to be able to throw you in the river mijo and that you will be able to swim and not drown." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

In her narratives, Anna draws from her own experiences to identify the life lessons that are the most important for her to impart to her children. Her early hardships provide the second cornerstone of her parenting approach, ensuring that her children are taught to be survivors. Thus, the way she gears her *consejos* are towards skills and lessons that promote her children's ability to be self-sufficient.

Compared to the *consejos* of the immigrant mothers, Anna's *consejos* were briefly stated and then reinforced through the example of Anna's actions or other experiences Anna exposes her children to and discusses with them.

[How do you instill these messages in your children?] They're like sponges. Everything they see, they catch on. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

For Anna, the most powerful means of communicating her messages was by her children observing evidence of the truth of her *consejos*.

I've taught all my children, all three of them, about hardships. I tell them just think...like my husband when he came here, he was young. He was so young and he went to work. My children see when we go to México how the children are standing in street corners working, selling gum, whatever. They see that. They see that and both my little ones know the importance of an education. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

In this *consejo*, Anna relates her and her husband's own hardships but reinforces her message by showing her children examples of other children experiencing hardships they are not experiencing. In this way, Anna expresses her confidence in her children getting

the message that the only way to avoid those hardships is through education. This was in contrast to the *consejos* from the two immigrant mothers who provided their *consejos* many times in the context of their own life narratives. Anna's *consejos* encompassed broader lessons of tolerance and problem-solving.

I don't shield them. I don't...I don't want to keep them in a little plastic bubble either. I don't. They're going to see what happens...and you know what, we have discussions. For instance, my daughter, there a little Anglo little girl that...lives in a real nice home and all...but she wears her school clothes three and four days a week, the same clothes. And she asked me, "Why?" and I said, "You know Mija, it could be that her mom hasn't washed, or it could be that that's all she has." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

In our pláticas, Anna expresses her desire to have her children be sensitive to the needs of others and not judge people by outward appearances. In this *consejo*, Anna is illustrating these ideas to teach her daughter Ariana about tolerance and empathy, qualities Anna has said she values. In another *consejo*, Anna directs her children to solve a problem on their own to teach self-sufficiency and problem-solving skills.

When they [the two younger children] argue, I tell them, "Ya'll find a solution. Talk about it and see." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

These pedagogical tools (*consejos*) expanded the teaching provided in the home beyond the school's homework and Anna's store bought workbooks into home defined ideas of *la educación*. In contrast to the immigrant mothers, the *consejos* Anna provided were not meant to redirect or realign any of the school prescribed educational demands or messages. Instead, Anna saw them complementing what the school provided to her children. Yet, at their essence they remained lessons about leading moral lives. Another significant element in *la educación* that Anna was imparting to her children was a sense of their cultural heritage and the value of Spanish in their lives, a topic I will discuss next.

## ***LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND SPANISH LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE***

During our *pláticas*, Anna shared through her predominantly English narratives the various forms her agency took within her life. Weaved tightly within these discussions were her passionate views toward Spanish/English bilingualism and its role in her children's and family's life. It might seem contradictory that Anna would express her passion for Spanish/English bilingualism in English with a researcher who is a Spanish/ English bilingual. However, she was authoring herself in the language of power in a situation where she was establishing her positionality with someone representing an institution. In this light, Anna, as a survivor of U.S. institutions and English-only policies, was savvy enough to position herself first as an English-speaker. This skill only reinforces what Anna has to say about bilingualism and its role.

In addition, in light of her family's recent introduction into the district's dual language program and her past experiences with language education in Sonoma ISD, Anna's expressed views of her role and the role of school in the maintenance of Spanish were clearly articulated. Thus, this next section will review Anna's language ideologies, her past experiences around language, and the role the dual language program has had on her efforts at Spanish language maintenance and on the broader community.

### ***Anna's Language Ideologies***

Anna expressed a body of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs about learning and using Spanish that was steeped in her experiences in the community of Sonoma.

This has always been known as a German town and if you look at the statistics, now Hispanics are right up there...we are proud to be... I want to teach my two younger ones to speak it [Spanish] and not to lose it. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

For Anna, being ‘Hispanic’ and speaking Spanish were interconnected as she viewed the increased number of Latina/os in Sonoma as providing renewed cultural pride and support for becoming bilingual. According to Anna, English was a given, something that required no special attention. Therefore, her focus and goals for her children were bilingualism.

[My goal is that] They’ll [my children] be truly bilingual, where you can actually say they are bilingual. That’s going to be an asset to them. In the future, bilingual is going to be very important. It’s a plus now. And so...I have high hopes for my son. And Ariana, I’m hoping that...I would love for her to be a bilingual teacher like Mrs. Martínez. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

It was in bilingualism that she put her hopes for her children’s future. Within the above narrative Anna makes reference to becoming ‘truly’ bilingual. This was a point Anna repeatedly emphasized. Her discussions with Mr. Smith, the principal of Aguila Primary, about this topic strongly influenced her views of her own bilingual abilities and those she should expect from her children.

Like I’ll tell you, I’m not truly bilingual because I can’t write it correctly. I do the best of my abilities but like Mr. Smith said to me, “Can you read and write in Spanish?” I talk it...and I said “No.” Then he said, “Then you are not truly bilingual.” But I try, I try. I do translate... But I can read it and I write it but it’s not always accurate. I can write it. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

Thus, Anna had adopted Mr. Smith’s definition of bilingual to mean that one was able to speak and understand English and Spanish as well as also able to read and write in English and Spanish - be biliterate. In setting this standard, Anna questioned her own abilities and those of her oldest son who was able to speak and understand English and

some Spanish. However, Anna used this standard to push her youngest son toward bilingualism in all four language abilities: reading, writing, speaking and listening; and to create an environment at home that augmented the presence of Spanish orally and in writing.

However, the issue of Spanish language maintenance was a source of tension for Anna as she reflected on if she had equipped her oldest son and daughter with the skills to be ‘truly’ bilingual. She described feeling that she had let them down by not passing on this resource (Spanish) and hoped to not make the same mistake with her youngest son. She also decided in some way to try to rectify the gap in her two oldest children’s Spanish by ‘starting to speak more Spanish with them’ at home. She did this through deliberate planning for the increased use of Spanish at mealtimes, in one-on-one conversations between either herself or her husband Ricardo and their children, and during family events.

### ***Past Spanish Language Maintenance Efforts***

With her oldest son, Anna reflects on her own actions while he was in Sonoma ISD while acknowledging the impact of the political climate of the community of Sonoma at the time.

You just kind of get in the habit of talking in English and you don’t talk Spanish that much anymore by habit. That’s what happened with my oldest son. I just talked to him in English. He speaks some Spanish and understands it well. He just didn’t use it enough. I can honestly say that I can see it happening where they forget. Because of my oldest son...Now I feel it’s very important. ... [Back then] I thought like I said that it was more important to talk in English because this was an English-speaking community. And this being a German town then, that it was more important that you know how to speak English, because then you were made fun of if you didn’t speak English. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

In the above narrative, Anna shares her previous language ideology that supported English as most important and accepted Sonoma as an English-speaking community. Fear of ridicule motivated Anna's conformity to the hegemony of English perpetuated in Sonoma as well as her experience with her oldest son's bilingual education program.

I can honestly tell you, my oldest son, I put him in the bilingual, and it's not the same as dual language. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

Anna valued Spanish but it was secondary to English due to the higher status English was positioned as having in Sonoma ISD at the time her oldest son was in school. When her oldest son was in a bilingual program, the focus of the program was the use of Spanish to quickly transition children to English – an early exit transition bilingual education program. It is a bilingual education model that is based on a deficit model of education because it leads to outcomes of subtractive bilingualism, where children gain English at the expense of losing Spanish (Roberts, 1995). Despite Anna's efforts to maintain Spanish by placing her oldest son in a bilingual education program, English became his dominant language. According to Anna, her oldest son's Spanish was maintained, but only at a level of social, conversational language (Cummins, 1979) which he was not entirely comfortable using due to his limited of fluency.

When Anna's oldest daughter entered school, many years had passed and the community and Sonoma ISD had begun to change. As Anna reflected on her childhood in the Sonoma schools, she recounted that there were no Latina/o teachers only Latina/o teacher aides. Noticing the addition of Latina/o teachers in Sonoma ISD when her daughter entered school, Anna acknowledged this as a sign of the positive direction Sonoma ISD was headed. However, due to her experience with the bilingual education

program with her oldest son, Anna decided not to enroll her daughter in bilingual education classes. According to Anna, at that time she just didn't pay attention to actively promoting Spanish for her children. Then one day, her youngest son made a comment about the children in the Head Start program he attended speaking Spanish.

He [my youngest son Mando] learned Spanish more in Head Start. That's where he started picking it up. Because [when] they did their morning circle, they talked Spanish. He would say "Mom, some of the children talk in Spanish." That's what got me because I said, "You know I am forgetting him. It's our language! (with emphasis) I have to make sure it doesn't fade out." (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

This was a turning point for Anna. It was this event that triggered Anna's attention to the announcement that was sent to her home about a new dual language program available the next year at the school her youngest son, Mando, would be entering. According to Anna, it was a program she was excited about because of its focus on bilingualism.

### ***The Dual Language Program***

When the dual language program was first announced, Anna reported that few people were interested. It was not until people from San Antonio's dual language programs raved about the results they were obtaining linguistically and academically from their students that people in the community took notice. Soon, the demand for the program exceeded the space available for students.

They sent out a letter. People would sign-up and then when it got to be where it was overwhelming, then they said "We'll have to go to a lottery system." Once the public found out about it, everyone in the community wanted it. They were overwhelmed with the people putting in applications. It's a great program. A friend of mine, she really promoted it and her child didn't get chosen. It was just a lottery. As a matter of fact, I didn't think my son was going to get in. I was kind of waiting because the principal at the school, he really gave a good presentation. Then he said, "You have to really, really think about it. You have

to commit. If you can't commit...because if they have setbacks or are not doing well, then you are going to have to be prepared to help them and get them to the level they have to be." I have seen that. It's been wonderful! (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

Enrollment in the program then occurred through a lottery where those who entered were determined by chance. Thus, the selection of Anna's son for the dual language program was seen by Anna as unexpected. Also, due to the enrollment demand, it was a program that parents committed to supporting from the beginning. It quickly became a privilege and status marker among Sonoma ISD parents as described in Chapter 5. For Anna though, the addition of the dual language program was another sign of positive changes in Sonoma ISD as more people saw Spanish as an asset.

One of the key ingredients of the success of the dual language program was the heartfelt support of the program by Mr. Smith, the principal at Aguila Primary. Throughout our *pláticas* about Aguila Primary and the dual language program, it was Mr. Smith who Anna spoke about the most fondly.

...Mr. Smith is a great principal. ...He's been good. He's a good, good, good principal. ... Mr. Smith is about the children. It's all about the children. He will greet every child in the morning and he tells us in the meetings he'll say uh..."By the end of the school year I'll know your children's names." And he knows the parents. He loves the children. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

It was Mr. Smith who gave Anna further hope of real change in Sonoma ISD. As she reflected on his characteristics and compared them to the qualities of his predecessor, Mrs. Flaugen, Anna saw change.

Mr. Smith, I just admire him, because he just wants to help the people, everybody, not just my child, all the children. It's about all the children. ...That's the way, the person he is. He cares. It's not just the job of a principal. As a person, he cares. He shows it. ...Just ...his attitude, his overall persona...himself. He just... talked to you with feeling in it, not just from the principal level. Opposed to the other school, they are just going along with the flow. The principal that was

there before, she was a German, Mrs. Flaugen. She had no interest in the Hispanic, Spanish-speaking kids. You could see it. ...She was saying, "YOU need to teach your children. YOU need to study with your children...YOU need to, YOU need to..." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

She describes the previous principal as focused on what parents could do for the school. Mr. Smith's focus according to Anna was on talking and helping people with their needs rather than specifically the needs of the school. As an English/Spanish bilingual, Mr. Smith also provided an important model to Anna for bilingualism. The enrollment of her youngest son in the new dual language program combined with her interactions with Mr. Smith, served as catalysts for Anna to exert more agency in her efforts to promote Spanish for her children and family.

### ***Current Spanish Language Maintenance Efforts***

The impact of her youngest son's enrollment in the dual language program was immediately felt in a positive way in her son's Spanish language development.

I'm all for the dual language. And I think now, "Why didn't they implement this years ago?" The thing about the dual language is that all day long they speak Spanish. Only 30 minutes go to the English class. I can see that it's not setting him back. I see with my son and I can honestly tell you that with him learning his ABCs in Spanish and he went into public school knowing his ABCs in English. Now that he knows his "abecedario" in Spanish I can see, I can really see how he can read. He can roll his Rs, he can...and I've seen him. He is so eager to learn. Everyday he'll come home with something different that he learned. Things that I had no clue. ...He's teaching me. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

I did get my little boy's report card and he's doing very well....very, very well. And he's real proud. He's proud to be able to talk to his father in Spanish and they talk all the time. ... And it brings tears to his dad's eyes. I can see it. (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

In the above narratives, Anna authors herself as an avid supporter of the dual language program sold by the impact she sees the program having on her son's Spanish

language proficiency, academic progress, and the relationship being fostered between her son and her husband. As her son, Mando, learns Spanish, Anna listens as he shares all the new things he is learning in Spanish with her and with his father. In this way, Anna's own Spanish as well as her husband's is fostered and valued. It was these results that prompted Anna and her husband Ricardo to actively choose to promote Spanish and activities that fostered Spanish for their children.

One source of tension and frustration for Anna had been her daughter's limited use of Spanish, even when traveling with the family to México.

When we go to México [maybe three times a year], they [my children] speak Spanish there. Not as well as I'd like them to. Now that my younger one is in the dual language, he speaks it. She [my daughter] does talk Spanish but not ... My husband talks to her in Spanish and she'll answer in English (sigh) (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

Although her daughter understood when Spanish was spoken to her, she responded in English. As Anna saw her youngest son become more proficient in Spanish, she shared her concerns for her daughter's limited proficiency in Spanish and her own role in not encouraging its development early in her life.

My daughter is not that proficient in Spanish and...uhm...I'm going to push that she learn more Spanish, that she become proficient in it and be a true bilingual person. Maybe a little harder with her because we've had, she's now seven and a half...I should've started it...its just...its seems like back then I never thought about it and what it was going...and how it was going to affect her and everything. And now, it's a setback that I have to catch up on and get her....(Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

According to Anna, she continually made attempts to make her daughter, Ariana, speak Spanish by speaking more Spanish with her but with no success.

She's just in second grade. ... But I just can't get her interested enough in it. I don't know if its because maybe everyone in her class speaks English all the time and she wants to stay....with the....with the mix....the group. ...I wish it would

have...I could just turn back the hands...of time and I would put her in this dual language. I missed it by a year. [big sigh] (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

Anna recognized that the English-speaking classroom environment her daughter was in was making English more important to her daughter than Spanish. This combined with her son's increased proficiency in Spanish which she attributed directly to his enrollment in the dual language program, left Anna positioning the dual language program as the solution that she wished had been available for her daughter.

[My husband] and I were talking in Spanish and so Ariana says, "What are they saying? What are they saying?" So, he's [my youngest son's] repeating everything we're saying in Spanish to her in English. She's like "oh..." Then I said to my husband, "We won't be able to have discussions anymore because this little boy can translate. He's gonna know...everything we're saying." And Mr. Smith tells me, "Talk in Spanish all the time and Ariana will have to catch on." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

Yet, despite her frustrations with her daughter's efforts to speak Spanish, Anna notices her daughter's increased interest. As more and more of the conversations at home are done in Spanish, her daughter's interest is raised as she attempts to figure out what's being said. Anna also shares how Mr. Smith has offered other suggestions for home promotion of Spanish that she has chosen to implement. However, the impact of the dual language program has not only been in her children and in the types of activities chosen to promote Spanish for their children, but it has also impacted the broader school/community climate around race and language issues that Anna perceives to be present in Sonoma.

I see that the English-speaking...parents are...we share websites, what dictionaries to get, everything. They're into it [the dual language program] 100%. Our heritage is continuing and it's only going to get better. Being bilingual...It is awesome to be bilingual. And that's why I...I'm proud...I think and I say,

“Wow. Years ago, they didn’t want to speak Spanish and now they’re....” (Anna Salas Interview, 3/4/2004)

Anna’s narratives paint the dual language program as an effort that the whole community – English speakers and Spanish speakers, Germans and Latina/os – have been able to rally around.

...what I do see is that the children now a days, they don’t make fun of the little children that speak Spanish. They don’t do that. They did it thirty years ago when I was in school. They don’t do it now. Now...people praise you for being bilingual. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

The historical discrimination against Spanish speakers is placed in the past by Anna as she allows a new future to emerge where Spanish and those that can speak it are valued and celebrated in Sonoma.

They’re acknowledging their heritage now and being proud instead of being always (choked up) ...felt like....I have a friend that they did not speak any Spanish in their house and now they speak it. They speak it more...because the child got in the dual language. (Anna Salas Interview, 2/26/2004)

The dual language program’s message of bilingualism as an asset to be fostered has according to Anna increased pride in one’s culture and language among other Latina/os in the dual language program. Anna’s hope in an increased presence and respect of ‘Hispanics’ in Sonoma stands in direct contrast to the discrimination Anna reported experiencing in her prior employment due to her ‘Hispanic’ status. Although her narratives shared her feeling jaded by the experience of employment discrimination, it was not enough to lessen the hope the dual language program filled her with. If anything, it strengthened her efforts to exert agency to reinforce Spanish for her family.

## SUMMARY

Anna Salas authors herself simultaneously as an involved, watchful mother and as a proud Hispanic. For Anna, her personal history as a native of Sonoma Texas is shaped by the rejection of Spanish during her years in school. Spanish symbolized for Anna, the relative status being Hispanic in Sonoma had. Its rejection positioned Anna as a member of a marginalized group within Sonoma ISD. As her oldest son went to school to attend a bilingual program, Anna, as a single mother, had little time to be involved in the schools. She noticed some progress in the Sonoma public schools during her oldest son's tenure from when she attended as a student; for the first time she witnessed Latina/o teachers working there. However, Anna was soon disappointed to discover that the bilingual program that she had hoped would teach her son both English and Spanish was a transitional bilingual education model. As a transitional model it focused on using Spanish to transition students as quickly as possible to English. These early experiences within Sonoma ISD directly shaped the educational and language choices Anna made for her two youngest children as they entered Sonoma ISD in the present almost two decades later.

When her two youngest children entered Sonoma ISD, Anna's circumstances had changed dramatically. Now married, she had the financial support to be a full-time mother and participate actively in the schools. When her daughter entered Sonoma ISD, Anna participated as an active mother. She participated in the parent involvement opportunities Sonoma ISD made available to her but, she also initiated some of her own. Using surprise classroom visits, regular lunches in the school cafeteria with her children, and weekly visits with the teacher/principal; Anna monitored her children's safety and

education closely. It was her position as an active, opinionated, ‘troublemaker’ mother that most defined her at Sonoma ISD; a title Anna wore as a badge of honor that confirmed what she saw as a primary role for a mother. Since her daughter was enrolled in a mainstream English class, her interactions were mostly in English with English-speaking parents and teachers. Thus, Anna’s Spanish and her position as a Latina was not emphasized.

However, this all changed when her youngest son was exposed to Spanish in preschool and won a slot in the lottery to enter the new dual language program at Sonoma ISD the year of the study. Her son’s entrance into this program that emphasized the development of academic Spanish and English produced in Anna a strong sense of pride in speaking Spanish and in being Latina. This pride translated into positive feelings toward the school, and renewed efforts at home to nurture Spanish. However, she also faced the contradictions brought on by her struggles to get her daughter interested in speaking Spanish while enrolled in a mainstream English classroom as she was simultaneously celebrating her youngest son’s embrace of Spanish through the dual language program. For Anna, the single most important mediator of this tension was the words of advice and encouragement she received from Mr. Smith, the principal of Aguila. His instructions to augment the use of Spanish in the home were taken seriously by Anna who acted on this advice by increasing her use of Spanish in the home. This action led to Anna witnessing over time a slight interest spark in her daughter when listening to her parents Spanish conversations.

When a job incident occurred where Anna was fired for what she defined as racially motivated discriminatory reasons, her resolve to focus on her family and build

their self-esteem and ability to stand up for themselves as Latina/os was reinforced. The job incident served to remind Anna of the obstacles that her children may face as Latina/os and she renewed her efforts to equip them with the tools needed to succeed despite them: strong cultural pride through Spanish/English bilingualism, high self esteem, a voice to stand up for themselves, and an education.

Despite Anna's pride and passion for speaking Spanish, Anna selected to conduct our interviews in English. I found that as I codeswitched to Spanish during our later conversations, she did the same. By doing this, she defined herself as an English-speaker who could speak Spanish if she needed to. In essence, Anna took her language cues from me and used English as a way to equalize her position within our interactions. During the times I observed Anna with her husband and family, it was English that dominated their conversations. Spanish was present when she made a conscious choice to use it; when highlighting key words, when in conversation with her husband, or during periodic interactions with her children. It was also very deliberately used during the dual language parent meetings when Anna proudly used Spanish not only with her son, but with the school personnel and the other children in the dual language classroom. This was done in full view of the other parents, especially native English speakers, who commented on her Spanish fluency and to whom she addressed in English. In this environment, Spanish was the language showcased by Anna to mark her position as someone with advantage within the dual language context. But it was still supplemented by her use of English to assure that everyone knew she also spoke English. This linguistic capital provided Anna with leverage and access to information and resources in both languages. Because of her language abilities, Anna was one of the few parents at

the dual language meetings that knew and talked to parents from each of the language groups: native English speakers, native Spanish speakers, and bilingual parents. Her youngest son, Mando, mirrored his mother's circle of contacts with friends across all language groups, a fact that Anna proudly acknowledged. In this way, Anna modeled for her children the pride, value, and benefits of holding this linguistic capital.

### **Summary of Part III**

In Chapters 6, 7, and 8, I introduced three Latina mothers as they entered Sonoma ISD. Each case study provided the unique personal history of each mother, their specific involvement in Sonoma ISD, and how it intersected with the day-to-day parent involvement that occurred in the home. The three case studies serve to illustrate how differently each mother took on agency within their lives and those of their children depending on the specific factors that impacted them and the social and cultural resources they had acquired and were able to activate into capital at any given moment. They also showcased the impact of their interactions in the figured world of Sonoma ISD's parent involvement on their language ideologies and their efforts to maintain Spanish in their children.

We began by meeting Esther Gómez. Her case study highlighted how Mexican patriarchal gender roles infused her everyday life including the agency she exhibited in her parent involvement activities. Isolated emotionally, Esther continued to exert agency as she improvised responses to the competing influences of Mexican patriarchal discourse about the role of women as mothers and the school discourse about the role of parents. She was constantly doing and providing to fulfill all the demands placed on her. Her story illustrated the emotional toll of this constant negotiation and the precariousness of her fulfillment of these simultaneous demands. With regard to her views toward Spanish language maintenance, Esther saw the home as being responsible for maintaining Spanish. Yet, at home, because of the enormous demands on her she struggled to have her two daughters continue to speak Spanish. Esther considered the maintenance of Spanish important for her children and promoted its use. However, because Puma

Primary was not actively doing anything to promote Spanish other than offering transitional bilingual education to her youngest daughter, there wasn't any reinforcement of her Spanish maintenance efforts.

Laura Luna, the second case study, provided a contrasting case of how through her own agency she was able to use and redefine Mexican patriarchal gender roles in her family and create dynamic parent involvement jointly with her husband to benefit her daughters. Laura offered a look at a mother of Mexican origin who despite this dynamic and active involvement in and out of school was still unable to get her agency efforts to produce a loud enough voice within the school to resolve a problem that arose with one of her daughters. For Laura, these experiences had a significant impact on her efforts to reinforce Spanish and English in her children as well as a strong sense of cultural pride. Because Laura felt that her voice was not being heard, she rallied around that experience to reinforce her daughter's with a stronger sense of themselves and their gifts, including Spanish. Thus, her challenges at Puma Primary galvanized her toward making a stronger personal commitment to the maintenance of Spanish in her children.

The final case study, Anna Salas, presented a U.S. born mother of Mexican origin demonstrating her agency through her efforts to maintain and reclaim her Mexican culture and traditions while also recognizing the intervention and monitoring efforts needed to ensure her children's educational success as Latinas/os in this community. Anna's case study brings the effect of historical race and language issues to the foreground and provides a view into how it shapes the parent involvement opportunities in which she decides to participate and the agency she exerts within them. Anna viewed Aguila Primary as having an important role in the Spanish language maintenance efforts

of her children. In many ways Anna's interactions in Aguila Primary actively promoted Spanish and encouraged her Spanish maintenance efforts at home. In addition, the active and public support of the community for the dual language program and its focus on English/Spanish bilingualism provided the third element of the three contexts (i.e, home, school, community) that researchers (Landry & Allard, 1991; Schechter & Bayley, 2002) describe as essential for additive bilingualism to occur. Anna's case study powerfully showcases the difference schools can make in the lives of U.S. born families of Mexican origin in fostering cultural pride and promoting and supporting bilingualism as a common goal.

These three mothers of Mexican origin in Sonoma showcase the complexities of agency evident in their interactions with Sonoma ISD schools where the intersections of race, language, and gender meet and move back and forth from home to school during their daily lived experiences as Latina mothers. Ultimately, each case study illustrates how their acts of agency and the responses they received from schools changed over time and impacted these mothers' language ideologies about Spanish and English, and their view of their role and that of schools in the maintenance of Spanish.

**PART IV**

**BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER**

## CHAPTER 9

### *DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS*

In this study, I introduced Esther, Laura, and Anna, three Latina mothers as they entered Sonoma ISD, to address two research questions contextualized within these mothers' complex day-to-day experiences and the sociohistorical background they were socialized within. First, how do these mothers of Mexican origin enact agency within parent involvement situated in Sonoma's historical race and language context? Second, how do their language ideologies and views toward Spanish language maintenance express themselves for these mothers as they interact within parent involvement? Each case study provided the unique personal history of each mother to set an additional layer of context as I followed each of the three mothers through their specific involvement in Sonoma ISD and looked at how it intersected with the day-to-day parent involvement that occurred in the home. The three case studies extend Gonzalez's (2001) work on the language ideologies and practices of Latina mothers and their children in their everyday interactions and Villenas & Moreno's (2001) research on Latina pedagogies in the home. This was done by utilizing Holland, et. al.'s (1998) theory of agency to illustrate how each mother took on agency differently within their lives and those of their children depending on the specific factors that impacted them and the social and cultural resources they had acquired and were able to activate into capital at any given moment. Additionally, these case studies showcase the profound teachings imparted to children through the use of these mothers' cultural resources in day-to-day parent involvement.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the major findings of this study, provide implications for theory and practice, and offer suggestions for future research. The first section reviews the three main themes that emerged across the case studies. I begin with ‘Participation, Power, and Agency in Schools’, a discussion of how parent involvement is shaped within Sonoma ISD for Latina/os in this community and how these Latina mothers’ exerted agency to mediate their marginalized positions within interactions within the figured world of Sonoma ISD parent involvement. In the section called, ‘Cultural Resources as Teaching Tools,’ I highlight the parent involvement efforts carried out in the home, especially how the cultural forms of *consejos*, *experiencias de la vida*, and *el buen ejemplo* were used to teach profound lessons as well as to mediate some of the school’s messages and dominant discourse. Finally, in ‘The Interplay of Home-School-Community in Bilingualism Efforts,’ I discuss how within Sonoma there were varied levels of active support for bilingualism as manifested across the two Sonoma ISD primary school campuses that were the focus of this research. The level and type of support for Spanish experienced by Esther, Laura, and Anna impacted their interactions within the figured world of Sonoma ISD parent involvement and subsequently their language ideologies toward the maintenance of Spanish in their children. The next sections of this chapter move into discussion of the implications of these findings for policymakers and educators as well as suggestions for future areas of research. Finally, I conclude with my final thoughts.

## KEY FINDINGS

### *Participation, Power, and Agency in Schools*

In Sonoma, Texas, the early history of Latina/os is filled with incidents of discrimination. These actions were specifically expressed in Sonoma through the tracking of Latina/o students to particular schools and classes; the denigration of Spanish in Sonoma ISD schools through the strict punishment of those caught speaking Spanish, and the holding back of political power to Latinas/os. This historical past filters into the present school/community context. Thus, for many Latina/os in Sonoma, the level of support for Spanish in the community of Sonoma was also an indicator of the overall level of acceptance of Latina/os in Sonoma ISD. As Gonzalez (2001) states,

Language is not simply a vehicle for communication, but the site of a highly politicized and vitriolic debate concerning the nature of who speaks what language where and under what circumstances. (p. 54)

Latina/os in Sonoma sensed this and acted accordingly as the findings highlight. Additionally, for educators it signaled a particular construction of Latina/o parents.

**Marginalization of Latina/o Parents in Schools.** As Nakagawa (2000) points out, schools, through their ‘parent involvement discourse’ make visible particular views they have toward parents. In Sonoma ISD, these views include a deficit view of Latino/a parents’ involvement in schools perpetuated from the remnants of this community’s past history. This historical legacy also perpetuates distrust among many Latina/o parents toward Sonoma ISD. It lives within Anna, the U.S. born mother of Mexican origin I interviewed, as she conducts her ‘surprise classroom visits’ to keep a watchful eye on the school. Interestingly, it was also communicated almost like legends to immigrant mothers that arrived in Sonoma, like Laura, through the whispered gossip present during

their interactions within the community and schools. For example, when Laura was ignored as she exerted agency to achieve resolution to the bus incident her youngest daughter experienced, she drew on the stories she had heard of how Mexicans were mistreated in Sonoma and Sonoma ISD. Her own present experience in the school served to activate this social memory (Gonzalez, 2001) and confirm the existence of this differential treatment of Mexicans leading her to seek her own solutions rather than depend on the school. Within the space of her everyday interactions, Laura reframed her relationship with the school and authored her own distinct way of addressing the needs of her family through the use of her cultural resources as home based pedagogies. Thus, this historical context provides another layer of influence on the present parent involvement discourse of Sonoma ISD and on the views of Esther, Laura, and Anna as they bring their children into Sonoma ISD.

In Sonoma ISD, parent involvement is part of an overall strategy to improve education for children of color and those from low-income families. However, the practices advocated in Sonoma ISD, as in many school districts in the U.S., remain grounded in white, middle-class conceptions of the ‘ideal parent’ (Lareau, 2000; McNeal, Jr., 1999). This allows districts such as Sonoma ISD to put the weight of the problem of children’s academic failure on the individual deficits of the parents of children of color and those from low-income families and not on the structural inequalities that reproduce educational inequalities (Valencia, 1997). A key finding was that for Latina mothers who were not English-speaking or were not actively participating in school-dictated forms of parent involvement, the parent involvement opportunities offered by Sonoma ISD were centered on the remediation of their parenting skills in order for them to be “good

parents” and help their child succeed in the accountability system. In the case of Laura, even her active and consistent involvement in Puma Primary and her diligent enforcement of school-dictated home activities did not equalize her power relations with the school. Laura and Esther’s failure to speak English relegated them to a remedial status.

Overall, there were institutional constraints that impacted how effective Esther, Laura, and Anna were in achieving positive outcomes with the school. Although all three mothers exhibited agency in their interactions with schools, in all three cases, their agency efforts only took them so far. Despite their medium to high parent involvement, Laura, Esther, and Anna remained marginalized in positions with limited power. For example, in the case of Laura, her efforts to bring resolution to her daughter’s bus incident and assure her safety were largely ignored. She was marginalized and her efforts unrecognized, as compared to Anna, a U.S. born Latina mother, whose efforts were legitimated by the principal at Aguila whenever she voiced a concern for her son’s safety. What was the difference? – key people in schools who recognized and legitimated their efforts. However, the key person had to have two things present: a) engagement with Latina/os, and b) have power within the institutional system, in this case the school campus. Despite Laura’s access to her daughter’s classroom teacher, her lack of access to the Puma Primary principal was a major factor in her inability to obtain results from her efforts at resolving her daughter’s bus incident.

Yet, even in the interactions between Anna, a highly involved Latina mother who spoke English, and Aguila Primary school, a campus that promoted additive bilingualism and advocated a resource orientation toward students and their families, unequal power

relations were found to be perpetuated. This was largely due to Anna's frequent challenges to the school's practices. As someone who questioned the school's actions, Anna had been labeled a 'troublemaker.' However, her involvement in traditional forms of parent involvement and her English-speaking ability established her as an involved parent. Thus, even though she had avoided the remedial status the other two mothers had been assigned by the school, Anna was still not selected for leadership positions. Sonoma ISD was oriented toward a particular style of parent: the good parent was one that behaved as white, middle class women and in addition did not question or challenge the school's actions. Anna was a 'good' parent for meeting the white, middle-class parent involvement standards set by the school, but not 'good' enough for decision-making positions in the school because of her active questioning of school practices. Not one of these three mothers was offered opportunities to participate at a decision-making level within Sonoma ISD or to help shape parent involvement opportunities to be more responsive to their particular resources and priorities. In the case of all three mothers, the schools they encountered continued reinforcing to them the hegemony of the dominant school culture (Gramsci, 1971) and traditional forms of parent involvement (Epstein, 1995).

**Institutionalization of Deficit Views.** Today, in the age of educational accountability and high-stakes testing, supplementary parent involvement requirements have become the foundation of all our nation's public school systems, including Sonoma ISD. Parent involvement policies enacted to comply with *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* at Sonoma ISD, focus on the central role of parents in supporting schools for the benefit of their children's academic achievement. The emphasis on parent involvement

in these recent educational reforms is at least partially due to research that asserts that parent involvement positively impacts student achievement (Henderson and Berla, 1994; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Steinberg, 1996). However, these recent national, state, and local accountability policies have only served to further institutionalize the deficit representations of Latina/o parents in Sonoma ISD and justify their marginalization to positions of limited power.

In addition, rather than strengthening parent-school relations, it appears these policies are further alienating parents as Sonoma ISD focuses on offering parent involvement opportunities that mirror these deficit representations such as the monthly Spanish trainings on topics like nutrition and ‘how to’ play with your child as well as providing the quantified number of parent involvement opportunities required by accountability policies regardless of their effectiveness or how poorly they are attended. These findings are consistent with those of other researchers (de Carvalho, 2001; Gonzalez, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Nakagawa, 2000) who found that deficit-based practices perpetuate hegemonic power relations already in place within an institutional school context such as Sonoma ISD.

**Infringement of Schools on Home Life.** The fact is that while these parent involvement efforts were meant to improve parent-school partnerships for the benefit of children’s educational achievement, the accountability requirements enacted in Sonoma ISD were found to infringe deeply on the family life of the Latina mothers in this study. Although Esther, Laura, and Anna all described a family life that had been taken over by school demands (refer to Chapters 6-8 for examples from their narratives), Betty, a U.S. born Latina mother I interviewed during the initial screening process of this research,

offers the most powerful example of how the pressure of accountability requirements affects family life.

Betty had a relationship with the school that was most defined by what happened after the identification of her youngest child as ‘at risk’ by his kindergarten teacher due to low test scores. After receiving the news from the teacher, Betty scheduled a meeting with her to discuss her son’s test scores. At this meeting Betty asked the teacher for feedback on the test itself, what it measured, and the consequences of these low test scores on her son’s academic progress. Betty reports that the teacher then explained how the results had implications for his entire future academic success and suggested that she consider having her son repeat kindergarten. According to Betty, there was no solicitation of input on her perception of her son’s skills or needed supports. At the conclusion of the meeting, she described requesting from the teacher, “just tell me what to do and I’ll do it.” As a result, when I questioned her about her family life (the time after the children arrived from school and on weekends), Betty described a series of activities scheduled from the time the children awoke through bedtime where just about every move was carefully choreographed to meet an academic task requested from the school. To keep up with the specific tasks assigned to each of her two children, Betty and her husband posted a wall size bulletin board that featured a calendar with each day noting the academic tasks and activities to be done with each child as well as any required parent involvement activities at each child’s school. In the eyes of the school she was a ‘good, involved’ mother but it was at the cost of allowing her family life to be hijacked by the school’s demands and at allowing her own voice to be silenced.

Based on many of the factors named above, the mothers' responses to what they found in schools were not uniform across mothers or even within the same mother over time. Their responses and thus their agency and choices changed and evolved based on each particular situation they faced. Sometimes mothers chose to strive to become the 'good parent' they thought everyone wanted in order to be accepted and support their children's education. They accomplished this by adopting Sonoma ISD's discourse of what constitutes a 'good mother' and doing as the school requested either on their own terms as Esther or unquestioningly as Betty. Other times, inspired with new hope by what they viewed as positive changes from the discrimination they had faced, mothers such as Anna warily did as the school requested but were also willing at the slightest hint of discrimination to fight the fight. 'No one is going to hurt my child' was Anna's battle cry. But as their case studies showcase, how the fight was fought, how they expressed being a 'good' mother, how they confronted their histories was different for each of them. Laura, Esther, and Anna were in a place where the styles meaningful at home went unrecognized within schools. Thus, they made choices and exerted agency to accommodate the privileged forms of parent involvement the school recognized while continuing to maintain their own forms of parent involvement through the use of *consejos*, *experiencias de la vida*, and *el buen ejemplo* that I will discuss next.

### ***Cultural Resources as Teaching Tools***

Latina/o parents are not frozen in culture but are constantly trying to make sense of their own lives as they transition between multiple past, present, and future cultural expectations and perspectives (González, 1996). Over the course of weeks, months, and

years; Esther, Laura, and Anna have been exposed systematically to the socialization agent that is school in the U.S. context. Some like Esther and Laura entered when their children entered U.S. schools. Others, like Anna have been engaged both through their own and now their children's schooling in the U.S. Almost without their knowing, each of these mothers began a dialogic exchange within the figured world of Sonoma ISD's parent involvement. It was the agency exhibited by Esther, Laura, and Anna within their interactions both within school and home parent involvement that provide the clearest picture of how these two worlds intertwine. As in González's research (1996, 2001), the present study highlights how Latina mother's everyday life is filled with new and emergent forms of cultural life that are adapted or adopted from tradition in response to hegemonic structures within various social worlds. In addition, I extend her work by drawing on theories of agency (Holland et. al., 1998) to illustrate how these Latina mothers are active agents forging new cultural forms and practices that shape the lessons they impart to their children about navigating through these hegemonic structures.

In looking at agency among the mothers of Mexican origin I studied, I was concerned with documenting the ways in which they were agents who acted and responded to concerns with their children's education (Auerbach, 2002, p. 1385; Vincent, 2001; Holland, et. al, 1998). This included the attitudes, values, and beliefs that guided Latina mothers' interventions and advocacy on behalf of their children. In the case of these Latina mothers, they enacted agency in many different ways. In school parent involvement, we saw the impact of Laura, Esther and Anna's efforts to exert agency to directly impact the school system and the different responses each of them received from their school campuses for those efforts. Each of them in their own way and to varying

degrees experienced the institution of school positioned as a marginalized individual with limited power. However, what was most striking was the interaction between what was happening at school and what these mothers were choosing to do within the home.

In response to schools, each of these mothers of Mexican origin exerted agency through the use of various cultural resources within their homes. Agency for them was linked to the dual mission of supporting their children's education and affirming the value of Spanish and Mexican culture (e.g. Auerbach, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Villanueva, 1996). To further their own curriculum for their children, these mothers reinforced aspects of the school's curriculum while simultaneously mediating other aspects that ran counter to their goal of imparting their children with *una educación* (Valdés, 1996). This study provides further documentation of family educational practices that illustrate Latina teaching and learning, done on their own terms, as cultural strengths.

**Providing *Una Educación*.** *Una educación* is a broader conception of education that refers to both formal schooling and the way in which a person should live morally in the world with others (Reese, et al., 1995; Valenzuela, 1999). As Esther put it,

No creo que la educación nada más se las den en l'escuela. Para mí, creo que también en la casa. La escuela creo que es más enfocarse...a un estudio...a enseñarle, y la casa ayudarles, pero la educación aquí en la casa es...enseñarles a ser responsables, ...enseñarles buenas maneras, a portarse bien en la escuela, con los demás, o en la calle, en las tiendas o un empleo donde trabaje. Creo que la educación es...enseñarles

I don't believe that an education is only given to them in school. To me I believe that it is also in the home. The school I believe that it's more about focusing...on one area of study....to teach them..., and the home helps them. But an education here at home is teaching them to be responsible,...to teach them good manners, to behave in school, with others, or out in the street, in the stores, or in a job where they work. I

a ser buenas personas. (Esther Gómez  
Interview, 3/29/2004)

believe that an education is....teaching  
them to be good persons.

Encompassed in *una educación* is also the more subtle knowledge and resources imparted to children throughout these mothers' day-to-day lived experiences. It is critical to continue to differentiate the English term 'education' from culturally specific notions of '*una educación*' since the latter term encompasses much of what drove Esther, Laura, and Anna's efforts to educate their children. It is in the way Laura maintains family routines and outings no matter what the current economic, emotional, or health challenges she or Julián may be facing that teaches her children the importance of persistence and family cohesion to move forward in life. It is in the way Esther works all day, runs to each school event, assists her husband to complete his job and still sits with Esperanza and asks her about her homework; communicating the importance of school, and giving her daughter a sense of security in knowing that she is there for her. In addition, Esther through her interactions with her husband communicates the contradictory lessons of life she was experiencing as a Latina woman who feels obligated through marriage to fulfill her assigned role while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of attaining independence as a woman and resisting marriage until later in life. Anna teaches her children through her advocacy for herself and others about the importance of standing up for yourself and respecting and being of service to others. The most significant ways in which these mothers of Mexican origin provided *una educación* was by improvising acts and directly utilizing cultural tools such as *consejos* (*everyday narratives that impart moral messages*), *experiencias de la vida* (*narratives of personal experience*), and *su buen ejemplo* (*modeling expected good behavior*) to mediate the

effects of the intersecting constructs of race, language, and gender upon their daily lived experiences and those of their children.

**Consejos.** *Consejos* were a cultural tool utilized by the mothers in this study in various forms through which they taught lessons of morality and cultural values as previously found by other researchers (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Villenas & Moreno, 2001). Esther, for example, agreed with the school's message that education and a career were important. However, Esther did not agree with the messages she felt were being conveyed that valued certain careers over others simply because they were higher paid, and shared the following *consejo* with her oldest daughter,

Le digo a Carmen, le digo échale ganas hija porque dice que quiere ser pediatra. Le dije un día, “¿quieres ser pediatra porque se gana buen dinero o porque tú quieres hacerlo? Dice: “porque quiero hacerlo”. Le digo: “pues ojalá.” Porque tampoco quiero que ella agarre...una profesión porque le dicen aquí vas a ganar dinero. Le digo: “si vas a agarrar algo es porque a ti te va a gustar y porque lo vas a hacer de corazón. No nomás porque aquí [en los Estados Unidos] le dijeron que aquí se gana dinero y ya.” (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004)

I tell Carmen, I tell her give it your all, hija because she says she wants to be a pediatrician. One day, I tell her, “You want to be a pediatrician because they make good money or because you want to do it? She says because she wants to do it. I tell her: “Well hopefully.” Because I also don't want her to take a profession because they tell her that you'll make money there. I tell her, “If you are going to take something it's because you are going to like it and because you are going to do it from your heart.” Not just because they told her here [in U.S.] that this is where you can make money and that's it.”

Within this *consejo*, Esther teaches her daughter about the value of knowing and following what gives you joy and not the allure of material things, like money. It is the life lesson that also communicates that all possibilities are open to her as a woman in the U.S. but that you must make choices based on what it is you really care about. The *consejos* Anna, a U.S. born mother, provided were not meant to redirect or realign any of

the school prescribed educational demands or messages. This was in contrast to those from Esther and Laura, who are both immigrant mothers. Instead, Anna saw her *consejos* complementing what the school provided to her children. For example, in the following *consejo*, Anna shares lessons about tolerance and empathy towards others.

I don't shield them. I don't...I don't want to keep them in a little plastic bubble either. I don't. They're going to see what happens...and you know what, we have discussions. For instance, my daughter, there is a little Anglo little girl that...lives in a real nice home and all...but she wears her school clothes three and four days a week, the same clothes. And she asked me, "Why?" and I said, "You know Mija, it could be that her mom hasn't washed, or it could be that that's all she has." (Anna Salas Interview, 3/18/2004)

This is also a lesson about the existence of hardships in life. It reflects Anna's commitment to allow her children to be prepared for the uncertainties of life as a means to survive them themselves and to be willing to help others survive them as well. At their essence the *consejos* these mothers share remain lessons that prepare their children to be world citizens leading moral lives in a not so perfect world.

*Experiencias de la Vida and Ejemplos.* *Experiencias de la vida* were another cultural tool utilized by the mothers to teach lessons about overcoming hardship and the need to persevere, maintain good behavior, and respect oneself. For example, Laura had begun to explicitly share the tough *experiencias de la vida* that emphasized the sacrifices she and Julián had had to make for the benefit of their daughters.

Le digo, "Sí mija, poquito a poquito, todo lo que tienes a tu alrededor tu papá te lo ha comprado, y lo hemos hecho juntos, nadie nos ha dado nada, y hacerle ver lo que uno se batalla pero de que lo principal es ser responsable y respetarse. (Laura Luna Interview, 3/23/2004)

I tell her, "Yes daughter, little by little everything you have around you your father has bought for you and we have done it together. Nobody has given us anything." And make her see how we struggle but that the most important things are to be responsible and to respect oneself.

Whereas, the younger daughters were shielded from these and other stories of struggle and sacrifice, the older daughters were deliberately told these stories in hopes that their realization of their parents' sacrifices would teach them how respect is earned by fulfilling commitments to one's responsibilities to the family and thus motivate them to correct any wayward behavior. Yet another cultural tool explicitly utilized by Laura as a teaching tool was *su buen ejemplo*. By modeling good behavior, she once again communicated an important lesson about mutual respect and the obligation each family member has to maintain good behavior for the benefit of the entire family. For Laura this included avoiding vices such as drinking, demonstrating charity with others, and working hard.

Each of these cultural tools were used by these mothers to exert agency to re-define parent involvement for themselves, and to mediate messages emanating from the school that were in conflict with or accentuating messages that supported their efforts at imparting *una educación*. These findings lend support to Holland et. al's (1998) theory of agency showcasing how these three Latina mothers' selective use of their traditional cultural tools had everything to do with how they viewed their agency in the context of power relations in Sonoma and Sonoma ISD. This research also illustrates the strategies embedded in households and communities extending the work of researchers such as Stanton-Salazar (1997), Delgado-Gaitán (1994), Villenas & Moreno (2001), Lopez (2001), and González (2001) who have called for recognition of these strategies. This research suggests that these mothers' provision of *una educación* is in fact not only imparting lessons about life but also building children's overall resiliency and adaptive

resources to navigate the array of sociocultural worlds they must function within over their lifetimes. They are lessons that teach children to navigate the institutional fault lines of race, class, and gender to survive.

### ***The Interplay of Home-School-Community in Bilingualism and Biliteracy Efforts***

When I began this research, I focused on mothers as the adults having the most powerful influence on Mexican-origin students' attitudes and motivation for language learning (Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Zentella, 1987) and eventual Spanish language use and proficiency (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992). Women of linguistic minority communities were described in the research as "those given the most responsibility for maintenance of the home language and cultural survival" (Zentella, 1987, p. 174) and "keepers of the keys that unlock a child's life" (González, 2001, p.15). Despite some changes in the roles of men and women over the last three decades, mothers have frequently remained the ones found to be more likely to be taking an active part in their children's schooling and caretaking (Lareau, 2000) due to the way their lives continue to be structured in society around gender. This prior research suggested that the valuing of Spanish by Latina mothers layed an important foundation for a child to become bilingual. Although I found in the present research that the Latina mothers I interviewed held major responsibility for coordinating their children's education and deciding what opportunities they would access, the findings suggest that mothers' efforts alone are not enough to help their children maintain Spanish. Schools and communities also have roles which impact the fostering and maintenance of Spanish in Latina/o children.

**Learning from Older Children's Language Shifts.** Anna, a U.S. born Latina mother within the Aguila campus, reported the most significant positive impact of school and community efforts on the family's Spanish language maintenance efforts. In her own schooling and twenty years later with her oldest son, Anna experienced the denigration of Spanish in the community. Despite enrolling her oldest son in a bilingual program, he only developed basic proficiency in Spanish. Anna explained that she felt she just hadn't made enough of an effort at home to help support his Spanish. Now with her youngest son, Anna felt Spanish and being of Mexican origin was being valued and recognized in Aguila Primary. This reinforced the existing value she placed on Spanish maintenance and promoted her to make more conscious and constant efforts towards Spanish maintenance for her family.

In contrast, for Esther and Laura, the impact of Puma Primary on their Spanish language maintenance efforts was more subtle as each had their children enrolled in bilingual education programs that focused on using Spanish as a tool to transition children to English proficiency and literacy. Laura felt her Spanish monolingualism combined with being Mexican was the reason she was often slighted by the school administration in her youngest daughter's school. The value she placed on Spanish maintenance was deeply held and had been reinforced through key teachers during her two oldest daughters' early schooling. Thus, in her case as well as Esther's, the current atmosphere at Puma Primary, which did not actively promote Spanish, only served to reinforce their commitment to do more at home to promote Spanish. They received the message loud and clear that they were responsible for maintaining Spanish, not the school. These two mothers recognized that the bilingual education program was short-

term language support for their children and for them. This support was contradicted by the active efforts of Puma Primary to transition children to mainstream classrooms with English as the language of instruction. Once Esther and Laura's children left the bilingual education program, they and their children were left to navigate the English-speaking school system on their own and decide the kinds of activities and exposure to Spanish they would make available in their home.

This worked for Laura's oldest daughter Beatriz, who she kept in a bilingual program throughout the elementary grades and has the greatest Spanish proficiency. It was with her second daughter Mari, with whom Laura learned the impact of not keeping her in the bilingual program for at least another year. As she states,

La niña que sigue, ella no pidió permiso para meterse a inglés. Ella firmó. Ella firmó y dijo, "Yo me voy a puro inglés." Ella tiene desde grado cinco o seis y la diferencia es que Beatriz habla mejor el español que Mari. Entonces no pienso volver a cometer el error de dejar en quinto grado puro inglés. Un año más no les hace daño y como quiera los años que siguen es inglés. Lo van a aprender. (Laura Luna Interview, 2/27/2004)

The next daughter, she didn't ask for permission to go into English. She signed. She signed and she said, "I'm going to pure English." She's been in since fifth grade and the difference is that Beatriz speaks better Spanish than Mari. So then I don't plan on committing the same mistake of allowing pure English in fifth grade. One more year doesn't hurt them and anyway the years that follow are in English. They are going to learn it.

As a result, the longer immigrant mothers such as Laura were able to maintain their daughters in bilingual programs the more proficient their children became in both English and Spanish.

The reality was that Esther, Laura, and Anna all watched their oldest children lose their Spanish proficiency to varying degrees at times despite their efforts to maintain it. Due to these experiences with their oldest children, all three Latina mothers were

adapting their efforts with their younger children. For example, Anna chose not to enroll her daughter in bilingual education because she viewed bilingual education as not having been successful in developing bilingualism in her oldest son. However, when she noticed that her two youngest children were not gaining any proficiency in Spanish, she looked for other options for her youngest son. The availability of the dual language program at Aguila Primary met the needs she had identified for her son and was not something she had tried before as a strategy for Spanish maintenance. Her positive interactions in Aguila primary and her son's rapid progress toward Spanish proficiency motivated Anna to increase her own Spanish efforts at home, not just with her youngest son, but with all members of the family.

**Raising the Status of Spanish.** Language maintenance occurs within the moment to moment language choices made during day-to-day interactions in the home, community, and school (Schechter & Bayley, 2002). It is through these language choices that powerful messages are being conveyed about the value and acceptance of languages and the people that speak them. This was the case within Sonoma ISD as well for each of the Latina mothers who were the focus of this research.

Esther, Anna, and Laura all had deeply held language ideologies toward Spanish that valued the development of English/Spanish bilingualism in their children. They viewed Spanish as a resource, an element of their identities (González, 1996), and often attempted to use it as capital (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995) in schools. As Esther states,

Español...es el idioma que nosotros traemos de México...y...es algo que uno no puede cambiar ni debe

Spanish...it is the language that we bring from Mexico...and...it is something that one cannot change nor

cambiar. (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/20/2004) should change.

However, sometimes these mothers' language ideologies were in opposition to those being promoted in the schools their children entered. For example, although Esther and Laura both had their children enrolled in bilingual education programs, the transitional nature of the program signaled language ideologies in the school that valued English primarily and Spanish only as a means to gain English. As Kjolseth (1973) states:

The school's policy is essentially a 'burnt bridges' approach: the ethnic language is seen only as a bridge to the non-ethnic language – one to be crossed as rapidly as possible and then destroyed, at least as a legitimate medium of instruction, although some voluntary classes in it as a foreign language may be maintained. (p.13)

These language ideologies formed the basis for negotiating power among and within groups in the schools, often creating the context for the power struggles that were present in home-school relations between Spanish-speaking Latina/o mothers, English dominant Latina/os, and the schools. As a case in point, in the present study, Esther discussed her need to learn English and her frustrations with encountering other Latina/os that refused to admit to her that they spoke Spanish.

Aprendí que en este país si usted no entiende un poco de inglés...me ha tocado que algunas personas que parecen mexicanos o son México-americanos...me hay tocado que ellos dicen, "No hablo español." o me dicen, "I don't speak Spanish". (Esther Gómez Interview, 3/29/2004)

I learned that in this country, if you don't understand a little bit of English....It's happened to me that some people that look Mexican or are Mexican Americans....It's happened where they've said, "No hablo español." or they tell me, "I don't speak Spanish."

The responses received toward Spanish in Sonoma ISD were different in each of the campuses. At Puma Primary, the messages Esther and Laura received promoted the hegemony of English (Shannon, 1995) and established an overall goal of subtractive

bilingualism (Lambert, 1975) where English was valued at the exclusion of Spanish. Anna, on the other hand, experienced Aguila Primary, a campus in which additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1975) was the goal and Spanish was promoted and valued almost as much as English.

Anna's case illustrates impact of a dual language program for a community like Sonoma in which the Latina/o segment is poised for change in the midst of continued historical pressures on the part of dominant institutions to maintain the status quo. Her case shows the difference purposeful actions schools in partnership with homes and communities can take in the shifting status of Spanish in Latina/o families. Without the use of Spanish in the daily interactions of the home, school, or community; Spanish was not fully developed in her oldest son or in her daughter, resulting in partial acquisition of the language (Schechter & Bayley, 2002; Wong-Fillmore, 2000). It was the combination of the raised status of Spanish in Aguila Primary and among the community supporters of the dual language program as well as Anna's purposeful valuing of Spanish and its use in the home that was having the biggest effect on her children's Spanish language use and proficiency. The raised status towards Spanish in the school and community facilitated Anna's shift toward making Spanish language maintenance a priority for her family. Ultimately, in order to withstand the societal constraining factors and the internal factors developed in reaction to the sociopolitical/historical factors; successful heritage language maintenance depends on the constant efforts of family, community and schools jointly contributing to and promoting additive bilingualism (Schechter & Bayley, 2002).

In this study, the dual language program provided this unique collaboration between these three stakeholders who were all vested in the goal of bilingualism and

biliteracy. Thus, this research suggests, as evidenced so powerfully in Anna's narratives, that it was the active promotion and support of Spanish/English bilingualism by the school and community along with Latina mothers' values and efforts to coordinate family life toward Spanish language maintenance that was having the most significant impact on children's developing bilingualism. Latina mothers' efforts alone were an insufficient condition for maintaining Spanish in their children.

### ***IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND EDUCATORS***

#### ***Re-Conceptualizing Parent Involvement***

The findings presented are based on a small sample in one particular community, but they offer us some cautions. As standardization becomes more prominent in public education, we must remind ourselves of the lack of standardization present in the diversity of human experience. We must recognize the important role parents play in their children's education in ways not captured by traditional forms of parent involvement and of the value of family life separate and apart from school. The reach of the accountability system extends beyond classrooms and directly into family life and the very fabric of Latina mothers' identities and ideologies. Finally, we must acknowledge that a pre-written agreement of roles and responsibilities does not make a partnership. There must be respect and a willingness to negotiate parents' roles and responsibilities with individual parents. We cannot offer a cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all approach to parent involvement based on generalizations and essentialized notions of parents and their experiences. We must take into account that each family has individual strengths and needs that differ from other families. To achieve real partnership, we must allow

parents to contribute their unique ‘funds of knowledge’ (Greenberg, 1992; Veléz-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992; Moll, et. al., 1992) on their own terms, not as dictated by school prescribed avenues.

When school practices conflicted with a mother’s own moral compass by which she guided her children’s development, she exerted agency to keep her children aligned with her own moral standards while accommodating the realities of life. In many cases it was cultural resources/capital in the form of *consejos* and other non-privileged tools that served as avenues to achieve this moral alignment. The implication is that teacher-parent interactions can be supported through knowledge of what the term *educación* represents (Galindo & Olguín, 1996). The present research extends González’s (2001) documentation of Latina/o family life and its intersections with schools by detailing a picture of what we mean by Latina/o family’s cultural resources. It asks schools to consider the level of engagement needed with Latina/o families to gain an in-depth understanding of the contexts in which they live, and the lessons and learning children and families are bringing to schools from their experiences in the many worlds they navigate. It is critical that the important work of *educación* that is being conducted in homes by Latina mothers and fathers be equally recognized as the academic educational work conducted by schools. For children of color, it is the powerful lessons conveyed in their homes that give them the resiliency to survive the many challenges they face across the many sociocultural worlds they inhabit including schools. In fact, by relying only on the school dictated parent involvement opportunities currently available in schools and ignoring their unique forms of capital, Latina/o parents are left experiencing social (de) capitalization (Valenzuela, 1999) much like their children who attend these schools. This

process of (de)capitalization extends our notions of just how far the subtractive schooling experience reaches into the lives of Latina/o families.

Delgado-Gaitán's (1991, 1996) work offers some examples of Mexican immigrant parents who joined together and through their collective empowerment guided schools to recognize them as assets. It is time that we align the discourse and expectations communicated through policies with more additive, resource perspectives of culturally and linguistically diverse parents. As Delgado-Gaitán (1990) points out, it is not that different cultural groups interact differently with schools because of issues of culture; rather, "the process of engaging with the educational system is bound by rules, language, and values that privilege some people and exclude others" (p. 299). Schools need to include diverse representation from within the Latino community (i.e., U.S. born/Immigrant) in their efforts to involve Latino parents so that the most vocal and active are not repeatedly selected to represent ALL Latinos even though they may have limited connection and knowledge of the issues impacting the Latino families most in need (other than obvious issues of linguistic barriers). Schools have a significant role to play both in promoting parent involvement with Latina/os that is based on a resource perspective which values the contributions that Latina/o families are already making and can continue to make for their children's educational success. As Valenzuela (1999) states, "Additive schooling is especially about the maintenance of community, which includes improving home-school relations, even if it means that the discourse gets politicized" (p. 270). It is time for these issues to be politicized and new approaches implemented that are responsive to communities and formulated in full partnership with them.

### ***The Pivotal Role of Schools in Forging Partnerships for Bilingualism & Biliteracy***

Schools are not neutral. We underestimate the impact of schools on parents and families and how the stances taken by schools filter into the social and language ideologies reinforced by parents. Schools can play key roles in setting a foundation for parents and their young children that promotes Spanish/English bilingualism and biliteracy as valuable assets. Taking a sociocultural perspective, this research revealed the important role educational institutions play in shaping the choices Latina mothers' make about the role of Spanish in their children's academic and home life. School policies and practices that are additive, meaning they value the language and cultural resources brought to schools by Latina/o students and their families, minimize one constraint placed on the maintenance of Spanish. It doesn't mean that all the constraints are eliminated, but it does mean that they had one less thing pushing them away from fostering Spanish. Those schools, such as Puma Primary, that were NOT purposefully additive, meaning they were subtractive, amplified the existing constraints against Spanish. Mothers in this environment expressed an attitude of, "Spanish is a bonus if it happens, but not necessary." In light of the current English-only, anti-immigration political and social climate in the U.S. (Macedo, 1997), our federal educational policies advances an educational system that promotes subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1975) which focuses on English language acquisition at the expense of the Spanish language (Portes & Hao, 1998; Fillmore, 2000; MacGregor-Mendoza, 2000). More political efforts need to be put toward promoting the voices of Latina/o parents, teachers, and community members/leaders who can attest to the value bilingualism has had in their own lives and communities. We need to push away from short-sighted solutions to

develop solutions that are long-term and heavily vested in by the communities the educational system is meant to serve.

Smith (2002) stated that even dual language programs, such as the one Anna's son Mando is enrolled in, do not prevent English developing as the dominant and preferred language. Schechter & Bayley (2002) say the community by itself is insufficient. Some would say that Spanish language maintenance efforts are a losing battle. However, this study illustrates that there are multiple ways to approach Spanish language maintenance. In addition, this study supports the findings of Schechter & Bayley (2002) and the views of Allard & Landry (1992) that the community, schools, and families must work together toward this goal of Spanish language maintenance for it to occur. If one of these three stakeholders stays neutral or is not involved, developing bilingual proficiency becomes very difficult. When this study began I conceptualized mothers as playing a pivotal role in Spanish language maintenance. This study illustrates that mothers are but one of several factors that work in conjunction with one another (e.g., availability of a good bilingual program, administrative support for bilingualism, community buy-in) to make the difference between Spanish being maintained and fostered or lost. For example, Anna enrolled her son in a dual language program at a campus with full administrative and community support for the development of academic proficiency in English and Spanish. They had teachers with high Spanish and English academic proficiency and full support and active participation from over 90% of the participating parents. The community was fully educated on dual language education program model and the outcomes to be expected at each grade level. The main reasons Anna was able to successfully promote Spanish to her youngest son was the availability of full school and

community support which provided incentive for her to increase her own efforts at Spanish language maintenance in the home. It is this level of investment that schools must make with all parents, especially those of color. If a quality bilingual education program had as much invested in it from administration, community, and parents as the dual language program at Aguila primary received, Spanish language maintenance would be more sustainable over time. Unfortunately often, as in Aguila, the teachers with the highest Spanish proficiency are selected for the dual language program, administrative resources are prioritized toward the dual language program, and bilingual education programs remain second tier remedial programs.

Despite this, educators and parents should not underestimate the role a quality bilingual program can have in Spanish language maintenance efforts. To maximize this role it is important that bilingual programs have teachers with high Spanish proficiency and offer a curriculum with high academic rigor in Spanish and English. In addition, it is critical for language education program design and implementation be coordinated and aligned across grade levels and content areas. This ensures a consistent and thoughtful approach to language that promotes the highest academic outcomes for Latina/o students.

I offer some additional key strategies that are important to be applied to home, school, and community contexts alike. First, across all contexts it is important to provide access to heritage language (in this case Spanish) print and literacy experiences. Esther, Anna, and Laura each had access to Spanish print and promoted Spanish literacy through authentic situations such as birthday notes to Spanish-speaking relatives, Spanish reading books or magazines, and household items with Spanish labels. Second, it is important to identify linguistic resources in the community that have high literacy in the heritage

language. These resources can serve to augment classroom connections to the community events that may be particular to the linguistic community being served. Finally, it is important for daily opportunities to perform bilingual and biliterate tasks to be offered to children. It is consistent and frequent use of the heritage language across as many contexts as possible that promotes language maintenance. Schools interested in contributing to Spanish language maintenance are encouraged to work with parents to encourage their support of Spanish in the home. Schools can validate heritage languages such as Spanish by encouraging its use by all students at school. This can be done by offering classes in Spanish for Spanish speakers and/or Spanish as a second language, as well as by increasing the visibility of Spanish across school campuses and in the resources available in school libraries and resource centers.

### ***FUTURE RESEARCH***

This study highlights the need for continuing to examine the life experiences of Latina/o parents in schools to explore how schools and parents engage with each other and how these relations impact on children's outcomes, including family life. Researchers should consider exploring the phenomenon of Latina/o parent involvement through a longitudinal approach across multiple contexts. This study brought together the intersection of the fields of bilingual education and parent involvement. There is a need to explore further the particular way that parent involvement for Latina/o parents who have enrolled their children in bilingual education is structured. This study suggests that there are qualitatively different approaches being taken that currently tends to 'track and marginalize' these parents from the mainstream parent involvement efforts of the

school. Currently, there is research in parent involvement and in the field of bilingual education but there is limited research that has looked at the intersections between these two fields and its implications for students and schools. Thus, further study across different contexts is needed.

Also, this study points to the importance of needing to look at the way parent involvement and parenting is gendered for all parents, including Latina/o mothers and fathers. Parents are not homogeneous. Moreover, each individual is gendered differently because of the way they are situated differently by this economy and by gendered ideologies. It puts many mothers in a situation where they are positioned as primarily responsible for their children's education because of the way opportunities are structured for men versus women in this society. There is a need to engage in further scholarship that addresses these issues of male privilege and patriarchy and how they are enacted in parent involvement for mothers and fathers. Esther, Laura, and Anna's case studies provided examples of how differently each father was involved in the parent involvement efforts coordinated by their wives. For Esther's husband, his approach mirrored the traditional patriarchal ideas about the role of women as sole caretakers of children and family that were promoted in his and Esther's upbringing. Esther did not question her own role in childrearing, however, she did challenge his limited role and his 'hands-off' relationship with both his children. For Laura's husband on the other hand, it was a joint partnership approach with Laura. No matter which of them ended up attending the parent-teacher meetings, they each updated the other about the matters discussed with the teacher. If decisions needed to be made, they make decisions together and presented a united front to their daughters. Anna's husband saw his role as a supportive one to

Anna's primary efforts. When she asked for his help or attendance at an activity, he made himself available and participated fully. Each couple negotiated their roles and responsibilities based on how the circumstances in their present lives demanded them to respond. As such, these roles and responsibilities changed and evolved over time. It is this negotiation process between structural influences and the day-to-day agency and adaptation being undertaken between men and women that deserve further investigation, particularly within immigrant populations who are recent arrivals.

Another area in need of further exploration is the role of the social and cultural capital of families of color as mediating devices for confronting the hegemony of English and of white, middle-class values within their everyday lives in U.S. society. These tools play central roles in the agency exerted and in the responses generated from these acts of agency. Also needed are more detailed, in-depth descriptions of the use of cultural resources in the day-to-day lives of Latina/o families as they use them to teach profound life lessons to their children that are then applied by them to navigate through the many sociocultural worlds they will inhabit through their lifetimes.

This dissertation research has served to set the foundation for my research agenda in Spanish language maintenance by allowing me to explore the issues faced within families of Mexican origin and how schools over time subtly impact the decisions they make for their children's language and academic education. Spanish language maintenance is a complex issue with many different ways to achieve it. In my upcoming Post Doctoral research I further this research agenda by exploring how instructional decisions made for Latina/o Spanish-speaking children in early childhood regarding the language(s) of instruction impact their English and Spanish language and literacy

development and their academic achievement. My plans are to expand this into a longitudinal look at the issues that impact Spanish language maintenance by following the bilingualism & biliteracy development and academic careers of groups of Latina/o children contextualized within explorations of their parents and community.

There remain many questions to be answered about children's own role and values toward Spanish language maintenance. There is some research that has explored the nature of student's perceptions toward Spanish/English bilingualism and biliteracy and found children's attitudes to impact their language choices, proficiencies, and identity formations (McCollum, 1999; Moll & Dworin, 1996; Griego-Jones, 1994; Commins, 1989). Within the present study, the mothers shared narratives about their older children's struggles with maintaining or developing Spanish proficiency. Esther described her oldest daughter's efforts to regain her Spanish by taking a high school Spanish class. Laura talked about her second oldest daughter's struggles to communicate with her in Spanish despite five years in a bilingual education program. Anna, talked about her oldest son's reluctance to speak Spanish and her daughter's refusal to learn it. Thus, further research is needed to look at the intersections between children's perceptions and the sociocultural factors discussed in this study of parents, communities, and schools efforts toward bilingualism and biliteracy.

### ***CLOSING THOUGHTS***

Anna, Esther, and Laura's stories and that of the community of Sonoma serve as reminders of the complexity of factors and dynamic nature of individuals within equally complex and dynamic collectives. Although the historical context points to how the

issues of race, class, and gender are enacted in systemic policies and practices within communities and schools, this study illustrates that it is through the daily improvisations and utilization of resources characteristic of agency that social positions and their corresponding status and power are negotiated and reframed over time. Other researchers have found that mothers such as Esther, Laura, and Anna use this agency to protect and safeguard their own values and priorities while supporting their children's education and affirming the value of Spanish and Mexican culture (e.g. Auerbach, 2002; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Villanueva, 1996). With regards to Spanish language maintenance, schools can play key roles in garnering community support, providing quality language education programs, and setting a foundation for parents and their young children that promotes Spanish/English bilingualism and biliteracy as valuable assets.

In my own journey as a researcher, I was left unsettled by my own limitations in my ability to communicate the depth and intensity of emotion that filled the narratives I collected. I struggled to capture the nuanced experiences shared with me by Esther, Laura, and Anna and the Latina/o teachers and administrators who participated in this study. For me, their stories were an awakening. The richness of their narratives resurrected my own memories of the *consejos*, *experiencias* and *ejemplos* provided to me by Latina women in my own family and allowed me to witness the many ways my own cultural and linguistic resources had been pushed aside or discounted in various contexts throughout my life. I can only hope that these mothers' stories have remained powerful enough to sensitize the reader to the challenges faced by Latina mothers such as Esther, Laura, and Anna and spark a vision of the potential for what each of us can do to create a

world that cherishes and fosters all the cultural and linguistic resources present in every individual that enters our schools.





## APPENDIX B

### Phase I Mother Interview Guide

*NOTE: The questions listed under each Interview are intended to be possible questions that could be asked depending on the participant's responses and are NOT intended to be covered in their entirety. The primary responsibility of the interviewer is to achieve the purpose described for that interview.*

#### **OPENING RECRUITMENT MEETING:**

Purpose: To introduce the project, the researcher, and the purpose of the study; review consent form and confidentiality guidelines; and obtain basic background information on the mothers recruited for the study.

#### **INTERVIEW 1: FAMILY & LANGUAGE USE HISTORY**

Purpose: Obtain a clear picture of the family and their language patterns [supplemented by observation data], as well as the community dynamics toward Latino families and use of English and Spanish.

- Tell me about yourself, your family as you were growing up, and the family you are now raising (Probe for specific examples of the kinds of things they heard, saw, or experienced in relation to use of Spanish, or both English & Spanish).
- Describe a typical day in your family. When is English/Spanish/Both used? Probe: Does it make a difference if it is at home, work, school, shopping, etc AND/OR who you are talking to (family, friends, neighbors, school personnel, the children, spouse, etc.)?
- If you met a Latino family that was planning to move to Sonoma, Texas how would you describe this community and how they can expect to be treated here. What advice would you give them? Would your advice be different if they spoke only English, were bilingual, spoke only Spanish? How? (Probe for them to provide examples from their own experience that support their views and advice as well as for how Spanish/English are used in the community).
- What does living in the U.S. and being of Mexican origin mean to you?
- What does language (English/Spanish) mean to you?

#### **INTERVIEW 2: EDUCATION & SCHOOL RELATIONS/EXPECTATIONS**

Purpose: Obtain mother's views toward education & bilingualism, as well as district relations with Latinos and the role of Spanish in the schools. Establish what the mother's education and language goals are for her children, including her hopes and dreams for them. (probe for children's current language skills). Identify and clarify those factors seen by mothers as influencing a child's bilingualism, including the role of bilingual education if applicable.

- Tell me about education....What do you see as the purpose of education?

- Describe what you wish for your child ...In education, in society, in his community, as a member of his family. What do you think it would take to make that happen? What would your children need from you, from school, from his community? Who else and what else might he/she need?
- How much influence do you think speaking (insert each separately...English, Spanish, Both) would have on these hopes and dreams for your children?
- Tell me about your goals for your children's language development? (Probe for whether bilingualism- the ability to speak English and Spanish – is something they want for their child? Why or why not? Continue to probe for how they decided it was something they wanted for their children).
- Tell me about your children's current abilities to understand and speak English, Spanish, or both. (If described as bilingual, ask, what would it take for your child to remain bilingual? If not, what do you think it would take for your child to become bilingual? ---In both cases, probe for difficulties/obstacles to bilingualism and things that encourage it, particularly things they do to work through obstacles or to encourage it. )
- Tell me about your thoughts on bilingual education. What do you think happens in a bilingual education classroom? Why do we have bilingual education? What kinds of things do you think children are taught? How do you know that? Where have you heard about bilingual education? Is/Should bilingual education be promoted for Anglos? Why?

### **INTERVIEW 3: PARENT INVOLVEMENT & RESOURCES**

Purpose: Identify the activities they are involved in both at home and at school on behalf of their children. Probe for the social and cultural resources that have influenced a mother's values, ideas, beliefs and decisions to engage in these activities. Obtain description of mother's ideas of parent involvement and what they believe the school's ideas of parent involvement are. Identify challenges and supports described by mothers as evident when they engage in school parent involvement.

- If an expectant Latina mother were to come up to you and ask what you have to do to be a good mother, what would you tell her? Would your advice be different if they spoke only English, were bilingual, spoke only Spanish? How?
- If an expectant Latina mother were to come up to you and ask what you have to do to help your child succeed in school.....what would you tell her as a Latina? Would your advice be different if they spoke only English, were bilingual, spoke only Spanish? How?
- What would the school tell her if she asked what to do to help her child succeed in school? Do you think their advice would be different if the expectant Latina mother spoke only English, were bilingual, spoke only Spanish? How?
- What kinds of things are important to teach your child (Probe for the things they do at home, at school, and in general to be involved in your children's education).
- Describe people, places, words of wisdom, ideas, memories, etc...you usually go to for emotional support, information, advice on raising your children (Probe for

further description of the kind of information, conversations, ideas provided by others and how it affected what they considered important for their child as it relates specifically to education, parent involvement, and choosing to speak English/Spanish/or both).

- How do you feel when you go to your child's school? When you talk to teachers? The principal? Other people the school? Do you participate in school activities? Why or why not? Is your participation in your child's school necessary? Why or why not? Describe challenges and supports/help you have experienced when you participate in your child's school. (Probe for mother's views of the purpose of school parent involvement and how it compares with their views of the purpose of home or other forms of parent involvement.)
- When questions/concerns/conflicts/barriers/issues come up at school what do you do? How do you decide to do these things (probe for info sources and other resources and if identified probe for what kind of information they provided)?

**Follow-up Interviews (as needed): Revisiting of emerging themes (1 hour)**

Purpose: Clarify and Reexamine issues raised in earlier interviews.

## APPENDIX C

### Phase II Case Study Mother Interview Guide

*NOTE: The questions listed under each Interview are intended to be potential questions that could be asked depending on the participant's responses and are NOT intended to be covered in their entirety. The primary responsibility of the interviewer is to achieve the purpose described for that interview.*

#### **OPENING INFORMAL CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEW (FIRST WEEK)**

Purpose: To review the purpose of the second phase of the interviews and the confidentiality guidelines as well as to schedule the interviews.

#### **WEEKLY TELEPHONE OR FACE-TO-FACE INFORMAL CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS (8 WEEKS)**

Purpose: To gather weekly information on the day-to-day home and school parent involvement activities of Latina mothers selected for Case Portraits. In addition, to obtain a deeper discussion of issues that may have been raised initially during the first phase of interviews.

- Tell me about your week. How are the kids? How was school?
- If an incident (positive or negative) is reported, will ask them to tell me more about the details of the incident. Who was involved, when and where it happened, how it made her feel, what it means for her, for her kids, for other kids/parents in the school, what resources she drew on to address the issue or what resources were gained as a result of this incident. (Probe, if needed, for influence of being of Mexican origin and role of Spanish, if any, in this incident)
- NOTE: Although weekly interviews are scheduled, if an incident emerges the frequency of the interviews may increase in response.

NOTE: Permission will be requested of participants to be available for follow-up conversations, if needed.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Teacher Interview Guide**

#### **STAGE 1: SCENE SETTING**

- Personal Introduction
- Outline of the Research Topic
- Background Information on the Purpose of the Study: You have been invited to participate in this study because of your role as an experienced ESL/Bilingual teacher within Sonoma ISD over at least the last 20 years. Whether you are recently retired or still working for the district, you have a lot of history within this district. The purpose of this interview is to collect a history from your perspective of Latinos in the City of Sonoma and in Sonoma ISD. For the next hour and a half to two hours, you, as the oral historian, are asked to share your valuable experiences in order to assist me in better understanding the changes that have taken place over the last 20+ years.
- Review of consent forms, confidentiality of data and conversation content, and recording procedures.

#### **STAGE 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- Name & Background information (Type of Teacher, Retired or Practicing, number of years of experience, how long with Sonoma ISD, current city of residence, how long in Sonoma, Texas; Did you attend this district as a student?)

#### **STAGE 3: THE OPENING TOPIC**

- Tell me about the city of Sonoma and the history of Latinos in this community.
- What do you consider to be the main attitude toward Latinos in this community now? What makes you think that?

#### **STAGE 4: DISCUSSION**

- Tell me about Sonoma ISD and the history of Latinos (parents and students) in this district.
- Tell me about the history of Bilingual Education and the use of Spanish in this district? How have policies changed over the years?
- Describe any key events or incidents that happened in the City of Sonoma and/or Sonoma ISD related to race or language issues.
- What do you consider to be the main attitude toward Latinos in this district now? What makes you think that?

#### **STAGE 5: CLOSING THE DISCUSSION**

- Tell me about what you see as the key challenges/continued struggles/successes/new opportunities faced by Latinos, particularly Latina mothers and their children in the city of Sonoma and in Sonoma ISD.

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## VITA

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