

**LATINA MOTHERS IN EARLY HEAD START:
NEGOTIATING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES THROUGH
RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOME VISITORS**

by

Megan Barolet-Fogarty

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Human Development and Family Studies

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ABSTRACT

Latino families comprise over a third of the enrollment of Early Head Start (EHS), a federally funded child development program serving low-income pregnant women and children under the age of three (Office of Head Start, 2015). Utilizing an ecological systems framework and critical race feminist lens, this qualitative study examines the experiences of immigrant Latina mothers participating in an EHS program in Delaware. The primary focus is on how mothers and EHS home visitors negotiate different child rearing practices and parental ethnotheories in the context of a home visiting program model. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with a total of 22 participants, representing the perspectives of mothers, home visitors, and an administrator. Interviews with Latina mothers revealed that they appreciated the opportunities gained by raising young children in Delaware even while they faced challenges that might have been reduced by living in a more familiar environment. Latina mothers compensated for the loss of support systems due to migration by relying more heavily on formal resources and services, including the relationships they built with their home visitors. Strong relationships with home visitors and the perception that their beliefs were respected led mothers to share positive impressions of their involvement with EHS. Home visitors reported success negotiating cultural differences by recognizing parental authority and discussing sensitive topics after

establishing relationships based on trust and openness. This research shows that immigrant Latina mothers value services such as Early Head Start that recognize and respect their cultural beliefs and support them in navigating the challenges of raising young children in an unfamiliar environment.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Macro-level political and economic forces drive some Latina mothers to raise their young children in the United States, sheltering them within family structures shaped by migration, acculturation, changing gender roles and an increasingly multicultural household. These mothers may seek services for their children, opportunities that were unavailable to them in their countries of origin, but must simultaneously negotiate the preservation of their own values in their interactions with agencies providing these services. These topics raise various questions: How do Latina mothers negotiate the socialization of their young children and impart to them their cultural values? Do these mothers expect their children to assimilate to the host culture, retain values from their cultures of origin, or embrace biculturalism? Do these mothers feel that their parenting practices and cultural values are congruent with the expectations of American social service agencies?

The questions posed above drove this qualitative study of the experiences of immigrant Latina¹ mothers of young children and their interactions with Early Head Start home visitors. Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally funded comprehensive child

¹The term “Latina” or “Latino” is one used by the researcher to describe people of Latin American descent. Most of the research participants identified themselves by national origin or used the more common term “Hispanic” to describe their ethnicity.

development and family support program that targets low-income pregnant women and children up to three years of age. In the home-based EHS program option home visitors provide weekly visits focused on promoting the parent's ability to support their child's healthy development. For this study, interviews were conducted with 14 Latina mothers with various degrees of acculturation who were enrolled in the home-based option of an EHS program located in Delaware. Additional interviews and focus groups were conducted with seven EHS home visitors and an EHS program administrator who were employed by the same program. A primary purpose of the study was to examine multiple perspectives on the way culturally diverse parenting values can be respected and negotiated in an Early Head Start program.

Sample and Topic Justification

According to the Pew Hispanic Center, in 2013, Latinos were this nation's largest minority group, numbering more than 53 million, or 17.1% of the U.S. population (López & Patten, 2015). Latinos also accounted for a majority (56%) of the nation's growth between 2000 and 2010 (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). During the past forty years over 12 million Mexicans alone have migrated to the United States (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). Most recently, however, perhaps due to the economic recession, immigration from Mexico has slowed and even reversed. At the peak of Mexican migration in the U.S. in 2000, about 770,000 immigrants arrived annually, the majority of whom arrived illegally, but by 2010 that number had dropped to about 140,000 with the largest percentage arriving as legal immigrants (Passel et al.,

2012). Overall, the percentage of the Latino population that is foreign born has decreased from 40% in 2000 to 35% in 2013 (Lopez & Patten, 2015).

As the foreign-born percentage of the Latino population decreases, the number of Latino families raising young bicultural children in this country continues to grow. Many, though not all, of these families are low-income, sometimes undocumented, and often lacking in the formal education necessary to compete for higher-paying jobs. Women in these families may be entering the workforce for the first time in order to provide for their families, but they might also be primarily concerned with raising the family's children: a monumental task given the lack of resources available to them. Extended kinship networks have been disrupted due to migration, and many mothers may feel isolated and unsupported. The primary sample for this research project was selected from Latina mothers who can speak to the difficulties of raising and socializing children in the U.S. cultural context.

Immigrants may be reluctant to seek assistance through social service agencies because of their legal status, language barriers, or conflicting parental values. Despite these concerns, some immigrant mothers do reach out for formal support, and Early Head Start is one federally funded program that has taken steps to serve this population. Nevertheless, it is unclear what individual mothers may think of the services they are receiving through Early Head Start, and how compatible they find these services and parent education with their own cultural values and beliefs. From a program and policy point of view, understanding these needs and differences can lead to the development or adjustment of services and supports to best serve these families.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start is a federally funded program that began in 1965 as a part of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. Head Start was:

designed to help break the cycle of poverty, providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. *A key tenet of the program established that it be culturally responsive to the communities served* [emphasis my own] (Office of Head Start, 2011).

In 1977, Head Start launched bilingual and bicultural programs in 21 states, and in 1995 the first Early Head Start grants were given out. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and infants and toddlers under the age of three, whereas traditional Head Start concentrates on preschool aged children ages three to five. The growth of Early Head Start has been supported by increasing research about the great potential for the impact of interventions during children's earliest years (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Together, Head Start and Early Head Start have served over 32 million children and their families since the program first began, and 1.1 million children and pregnant women in the 2014-2015 program year alone (Head Start Program Facts, 2015). Although EHS enrollment makes up only a fraction (about 20%) of that total, it has experienced rapid growth recently and further expansions are expected. The rising numbers served by EHS makes studies conducted with this population all the more necessary. The ultimate ongoing goal of Early Head Start, according to the program's framework, is to promote children's well being and competence. However, underlying EHS goals include: providing safe and enriching childcare, supporting parents,

mobilizing communities and resources, and staff development (Office of Head Start, 2016).

Evaluating the outcomes of such comprehensive program goals is difficult, particularly with limited large scale randomized experimental studies. Two exceptions have been the National Head Start Impact Study (Puma et al. 2012) and the Early Head Start Research & Evaluation Project (Love et al. 2002). In general, research has shown the effects of participation on children and families to be generally positive, but with relatively modest gains. Love et al. (2005) were able to show the positive impact of EHS on the development of 3-year-old program children, as well as upon the parenting behavior of their caregivers. Of relevance to this study, they also found that benefits were greatest for participants in programs that offered a combination of center-based and home-based services (Love et al., 2005).

Unfortunately, present research seems to show that most gains for participants in EHS and HS tend to fade over time as the children progress through elementary school (Barnett & Hustedt, 2005; Puma et al. 2012; Vogel et al., 2010). In a long-term follow-up of the sample from the Early Head Start Research & Evaluation Study, Vogel et al. (2010) found that overall by the time the child was in 5th grade the positive effects of EHS participation were no longer significant. However, for Hispanic families there continued to be some lasting impact in parent self-sufficiency, and home-based families (regardless of race/ethnicity) had continued favorable impacts in areas of family well-being, mental health, and economic self-sufficiency.

These long-term findings suggest that some of the most lasting benefits from EHS and HS participation are found in parent and family outcomes. Head Start and EHS emphasize family engagement, and acknowledge parents as the primary caregivers and teachers of their children. Early Head Start also recognizes that “parent education and the support of a positive parent-child relationship are critical” for healthy child development (Office of Head Start, 2016). While the services that EHS provides must be varied and comprehensive, this study focused on parent education and the relationship between home visitor and parent in order to highlight the negotiation of cultural differences in parenting.

Head Start Programs and Cultural Responsiveness

With a continued emphasis on family engagement and an awareness of the importance of cultural differences, Head Start has established a National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness as a resource for its program affiliates. Nationwide, there are a number of Head Start and Early Head Start programs that work specifically with tribal nations or with migrant workers. Despite the element of cultural responsiveness built into the mission and framework of Head Start, it is unclear how individual programs incorporate these values into their programs, and specifically into parent education practices.

One of the early members of the original Head Start Planning Committee in the 1960s, Edward Zigler, acknowledges that Head Start was designed in a time when the notion of cultural deprivation of the poor was very prevalent (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

This was the implicit assumption that the culture of the poor was inferior to that of the middle class, and therefore that poor children should be instructed in middle class cultural values and morality. In addition, there was a confounding of the concepts of low intelligence and impoverishment, which was not helped by an original emphasis of some researchers on the possibilities of raising the IQs of Head Start children, and the overrepresentation of academics who worked with mental retardation and developmental disabilities on the planning committee (Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

The inferred link between poverty and developmental disability, or cultural deficit was even more problematic given the racial and ethnic make-up of much of the target population for Head Start, as the effects of social class and race were rarely disentangled. Zigler & Styfco (2010) write that nevertheless, the original Head Start planning committee “rejected the deficit model and consciously adopted a cultural-relativistic approach that respected Head Start families’ racial backgrounds and cultures” with an emphasis on parental involvement (p.36). Zigler does acknowledge that this cultural-relativistic approach often had to be balanced with the stated goal of Head Start, to prepare children to succeed in a school environment:

Of course, our job as planners was to prepare children to succeed in a school environment that was structured around middle-class traditions and values. We had to assure they learned “school behavior” without abandoning their cultural identities. Ultimately, the planners decided that Head Start would not try to make poor children emulate the middle class but would instead try to build on the strengths they bring to the program” (Zigler & Styfco, 2010, p. 36).

Of particular interest to this study is how individual programs negotiate this balance between preparing children for a school environment largely built upon White middle-

class expectations, while also respecting diverse cultural views and parenting practices.

There are a variety of service options that different Early Head Start programs utilize to serve enrolled families. Nearly half of all Early Head Start programs operate center-based services (either full day or half-day) where high quality childcare is provided for infants and toddlers, 43% of programs offer home-based services, 5% serve pregnant women, and another 5% provide services through another model or as a combination of program options (Head Start Program Facts, 2015). The home-based option is delivered by trained home visitors who visit with each family for at least 90 minutes a week in their home, focusing on promoting parent-child interactions and educating parents on appropriate expectations based on child development. In addition, home-based families are invited to socialization opportunities at local parks or educational destinations several times a month. These socializations usually last several hours and include an educational component, time for children and parents to socialize, and a snack or light meal. Home visitors and family specialists in the centers also work on empowering families by setting family goals in areas such as employment, education or housing. Often home visitors and family support staff help connect families with other resources to satisfy basic needs such as housing, utilities, food or clothing, or make referrals to mental health or nutrition specialists.

The home-based option offered by some Early Head Start programs demands a particular awareness of cultural differences in parenting practices because of the high level of interaction and engagement with families within their own homes. Vogel et al.

(2006) in a report on the findings from a survey from Early Head Start programs emphasize that cultural competence is an important part of the performance measures framework for Early Head Start. They identify four areas based on site interviews in which family culture particularly impacts Early Head Start programs:

1. Programs emphasize respecting family cultures and traditions, even in less diverse programs
2. Programs use strategies to ensure culturally competent services, such as hiring staff who are representative of the service population (or at least speak the same languages) and offering diversity or language training to staff
3. Programs that encountered differences in cultural childrearing practices are mostly accepting of different practices or take tactful approaches to suggest changing them.
4. Additional challenges for programs serving a culturally diverse population include serving families with undocumented immigration status and contending with cultural stigmas against obtaining certain social and health services. (Vogel et al., 2006, p. 35).

Latinos in Early Head Start

Latino children and families are a growing proportion of the population of the United States, and that proportion is reflected, or magnified, in the number of Latino families in Head Start and Early Head Start. In the 2013-2014 program year, 34.9% of EHS children were Hispanic, a proportion that has been increasing steadily over the past two decades (Office of Head Start, 2015). Head Start and EHS have always served a diverse population, and there is a wealth of research on HS and EHS children and families that utilizes race/ethnicity as a demographic variable (Deming, 2009;

Keels, 2009; Love, Chazan-Cohen, Raikes, Brooks-Gunn, 2013; Raikes et al., 2006; Reid, Webster-Stratton, Beauchaine, 2001). However, the literature which focuses specifically on different ethnic or cultural groups is much more limited. Given the large proportion of Hispanic or Latino children in HS and EHS, very little research has been undertaken to identify concerns and experiences unique to this group. This study helps fill that gap by prioritizing the voices and experiences immigrant Latina mothers in Early Head Start, and focusing on their weekly interactions with EHS home visitors and the way different cultural parenting practices and values are negotiated.

Research Questions

The following are the principal research questions that this study seeks to explore:

1. What are the experiences of immigrant Latina mothers in Delaware?
How has their migration impacted their cultural beliefs and practices, particularly their mothering?
2. How do these mothers share cultural beliefs and practices with their children? Do they actively promote racial/ethnic socialization and/or biculturalism?
3. How do immigrant Latina mothers feel about the parenting advice and instruction they receive from Early Head Start home visitors? Do they feel that their own cultural beliefs are recognized and respected in the Early Head Start model?

4. How do Early Head Start home visitors who work with Latino families negotiate mothers' cultural beliefs when they deliver Early Head Start services? How does the home visitors' own ethnic backgrounds impact their approach to delivering EHS services and curriculum?

Theoretical Foundations

In order to address these research questions, a number of theoretical frameworks were employed. Each of these theories has unique strengths that contributes to an overall understanding of the factors at play in the lives of immigrant mothers, their parenting practices, and their interactions with Early Head Start home visitors.

Ecological Systems Theory

The field of family studies has significant contributions to make to the understanding of immigrants operating within a family and sociocultural context. Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979, 1986) ecological perspective is an obvious choice for understanding the potential impact on family processes and parenting beliefs when the external cultural context has shifted in such a dramatic way as a result of immigration. The basic hypothesis of any research utilizing an ecological systems approach is that the development of the individual, or the relationships within a family, are all situated within a larger socio-cultural context within which they must be contextualized.

Ecological systems theory originally outlined four levels of organization that can be seen as a “nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). These levels are referred to as the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems. The micro-level is comprised of the family unit. For the purposes of this study, the primary focus would be on the meso-level and the interaction between the mother, as representative of the family culture, and Early Head Start, an external social service agency. This meso-level interaction is inseparable from the micro-level relationship between mother and child. Examples of exo-level processes that indirectly affect these immigrant mothers include media portrayals of mothers in general, and low-income Latino mothers in particular. The macro-level would include the social policies and laws that determine citizenship and legal standing in this country, as well as the economic demands of the global market which drive the need to migrate to begin with.

Ecological systems theory has continued to evolve since it was first proposed by Bronfenbrenner. In the 1980s, he added the chronosystem to his model to introduce the concept of time, from micro-level transitions in the development of an individual, to macro-level changes in the historical context which could influence the development of an entire generation or cohort (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The 1990s showed an increased emphasis by Bronfenbrenner on genetic and biological interactions with external environmental context, leading to a more comprehensive bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

The use of ecological systems theory is particularly relevant to this topic of study, since Urie Bronfenbrenner, the originator of the theory, was also a founding father of Head Start (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). In fact, it was as a result of Bronfenbrenner's belief in the impact of the family and community environment on a child's development that the Head Start program has included an emphasis on parent involvement and community partnerships since its inception.

With this shared history, there are a number of published empirical studies of Head Start or Early Head Start populations that utilize an ecological systems perspective. One example is Roggman et al. (1994)'s research on correlations between parents' leisure time and social support which showed parenting stress and psychological well-being as factors that ultimately influence the child's environment and well-being. Other notable examples include Ayoub et al.'s (2009) study which utilizes ecological systems to examine cognitive performance in Early Head Start children; Fagan & Iglesias's (1999) study which considers the impact of a father involvement intervention on Head Start children; and Vick Whittaker et al.'s (2011) study which examines family risk and protective factors in pathways to Early Head Start toddlers' social-emotional functioning.

Several studies also utilize ecological theory to examine Latino immigrant families (Gonzalez, 2013; Jensen, 2007; Levers & Mancilla, 2013). Despite the applicability of this theoretical framework to the study of immigrant mothers and the cultural relevance of Early Head Start, a major flaw is a lack of attention by this theoretical perspective to the role of institutionalized power inequality based on social

class, gender, and race/ethnicity. Therefore, in order to complement an ecological framework, let us turn to critical race theory, critical race feminism, and LatCrit.

Critical Perspectives

Critical Race Theory.

This research project utilizes a critical lens informed by perspectives such as critical race theory (CRT), LatCrit, and critical race feminism. Critical race theory (CRT) was initially developed in the 1970s by legal scholars Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado as a means to focus directly on the ideas of race and racism and to critique White supremacy as an undercurrent running beneath many of the institutions and assumptions in our society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The basic premise of this theory is to point out the prevalence of racism in the institutions and policies of the United States, not so much in terms of open bigotry, but in the privileging of White individuals, culture, and structures of power. Bonilla-Silva (2003) writes of a new form of “color-blind” racism, which makes the discussion of race and racial difference taboo without challenging the underlying assumptions that continue to privilege whiteness and denigrate people of color. Although CRT is a theoretical orientation that began in legal studies, it has also been influenced by ethnic studies, women’s studies and a number of other critical perspectives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). More recently CRT has entered into discussion in fields such as sociology and education (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Pérez Huber (2010), “CRT in educational research unapologetically

centers the ways race, class, gender, sexuality and other forms of oppression manifest in the educational experiences of People of Color” (p.78)

Critical Race Feminism

Critical race feminism or multicultural feminism widens the critical lens beyond the impact of race/ethnicity and racism to explore the dimension of gender as well. For women of color, their position in society is often constrained by both race and gender. Intersectionality is a concept that was developed to explore the identity and struggle of women of color who are simultaneously defined by their race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991). Patricia Hill Collins (2000) explores the added layers of sexual orientation and social class in her development of Black feminist thought, one thread of critical race feminism. She also develops the idea of the matrix of domination, the “overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained” (Collins, 2000, p. 228).

Critical race feminism, multicultural feminism, multiracial feminism, Black feminist thought and postcolonial feminism are all orientations that have developed out of a critique of Western feminism, which traditionally privileged the concerns and priorities of White middle-class women (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996; Mohanty, 1991; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). These perspectives have argued for a more inclusive feminist perspective that also acknowledges the role of race/ethnicity, social class and sexuality on the lived experiences of women. Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol (1997) argues that Western feminism is not “adequate for Latinas whose gender-based

world is complicated by their journeys as ethnic, racial, and frequently language and class others” (p.913). Recognition of the intersection of these identities and the matrix of domination calls for a need to honor the diversity of women’s voices and experiences. Few (2007) makes an impassioned argument for integrating critical race feminism into family studies, particularly when researching women of color.

LatCrit

LatCrit developed out of CRT and is concerned specifically with a progressive sense of Latino identity, but has also added dimensions of analysis to those proposed by CRT including: language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality (Bernal, 2002). CRT and LatCrit “explore the ways that so-called race-neutral laws and policies perpetuate racial and/or ethnic and gender subordination” (Bernal, 2002, p. 108). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) suggest that LatCrit is a “theory that has already developed a tradition of offering a strong gender analysis” (p.312). Hernández-Truyol (1997) argues that to address the concerns of Latinas, LatCrit while “embracing and being sensitive to cultural differences, must simultaneously reject oppressive aspects of culture, particularly sex-subordinating or sex-marginalizing practices or beliefs” (p.922) and that “to include Latinas, a LatCrit paradigm must incorporate an internationalist, globalized, feminist, multi/cross-cultural perspective. Such a nonessentialist model brings to the center of discourse the amalgam of Latinas’ identities, including race, ethnicity, nationhood, gender, and culture and will prevent Latinas’ exclusion” (p.921). LatCrit and CRT both place great

emphasis on giving voice to those who have previously been silenced or ignored in the discourse. Solórzano and Yosso (2001), write that “the strength of critical race and LatCrit theory and methodology is the validation and combination of the theoretical, empirical, and experiential knowledge” (p.489).

Parental Ethnotheories

Although almost all parent education programs and texts now mention the important role that culture plays in parenting, and often include examples from a variety of families from different cultural origins, the underlying assumptions of many texts, parent educators, and students still reflect White middle-class values. These assumptions are often “invisible” since we have been taught to primarily see culture as something which ethnic minorities have, but mainstream society does not.

Although an awareness of cultural difference is necessary throughout family studies research and practice, the specific field of child-rearing and parent education is a site where the role of culture can be particularly pronounced. In a volume on cultural approaches to parenting, Bornstein (1991) writes, “both arrogance and danger attend projecting essentially western ideas onto the behavior and experiences of peoples living their lives in other cultural contexts.” Anthropologist Robert LeVine has spent his career studying human development cross-culturally, and is one of many anthropologists and cross-cultural psychologists who find value in documenting and comparing child-rearing practices from cultures and contexts around the world.

LeVine & New (2008) write of these researchers:

Their comparative perspective reflects a critical reaction to proposals of universal standards for child rearing based on the presumption of one “normal” pathway grounded in the human genome. The more the professional experts on child rearing propagated universal concepts of the normal child, the clearer it became to anthropologists that the concepts were fashioned from local (that is, Euroamerican or Western) moral standards combined with biological speculation (p.5).

The value of cross-cultural research is the comparison it allows between different developmental pathways and contexts which illuminates the cultural assumptions underlying child rearing decisions in each locale. One of the dangers of this form of research, however, is the essentialization of cultures and the unintended “othering” of ethnic groups against which Western cultures are being compared. All too often cultural differences in child rearing are illustrated by pointing out an “exotic” practice, usually by a member of an indigenous group or ethnic minority, and comparing it against a White American middle-class “normal” practice. What goes unnoticed and undiscussed is the fact that the child rearing practices of the White American middle-class parent are no less steeped in cultural conventions than those of the tribesman from the Amazon rainforest. The difference is in the perspective, and the difficulty Western researchers have on viewing their own culture from within.

Although Critical race theory (CRT) focuses more on race than on culture, in many ways the lessons about invisible privilege are the same. Some developmental theorists and family studies scholars have trouble seeing the cultural values steeped within what is considered “normal” parenting practices because they are blind to the box within which they operate. Sue (2004) refers to these blinders as *ethnocentric monoculturalism* and describes it as “the invisible veil of a worldview that keeps

White Euro Americans from recognizing the ethnocentric basis of their beliefs, values, and assumptions” (p. 764). It is always easier to recognize the culture of others, than to become aware of the invisible framework that guides our own actions and values. According to D’Andrade (1992) and Weisner, Matheson & Bernheimer (1996), cultural models are particularly powerful because they are implicit and invisible, and therefore not analyzed and articulated in the way of models that are consciously held or developed. These cultural beliefs are particularly unlikely to be challenged when they are held by the majority of individuals in a society, or when they are institutionalized as a consequence of power inequalities which privileges the viewpoint of one group over all others.

The study of parents’ cultural belief systems or parental ethnotheories is a growing field that has capitalized on an interdisciplinary approach which combines research gathered from disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, and human development (Harkness & Super, 1996). Harkness & Super (1996) write that “parent’s understanding about the nature of children, the structure of development, and the meaning of behavior are to a large extent shared by members of a cultural group or subgroup” (p.2). As a result, the framework that parental ethnotheories provide can have a powerful effect on the development of both children and parents. An awareness of parental ethnotheories also helps contextualize the “childrearing choices that parents make within the constraints offered by the culture” (Harkness & Super, 1996, p. 5). This contextualization helps limit purely deficit thinking in the cross-cultural study of human development and parenting practices.

Asking parents directly about the motivations and belief systems that drive their parenting choices opens new possibilities for optimizing the health and development of children while still protecting diverse cultural foundations. Although strongly steeped in cultural traditions, these parental ethnotheories are articulated in unique ways by individuals and are often negotiated through interactions with “experts” such as other parents, teachers, and pediatricians. One purpose of this study was to examine how parental ethnotheories of Latina mothers are impacted by their interaction with trained Early Head Start home visitors and the information about child development that they share; information that is often based upon American mainstream conceptualizations of proper child-rearing practices.

Theories of Acculturation and Biculturalism

The study of immigrants has its own theoretical foundations and historical evolution. In focusing specifically on the sociocultural and psychological aspects of immigration, there have been several broad waves of theory that have characterized research in this century (Falicov, 1998). The first was marginality theory, which was developed in the 1930s. This theory emphasized the psychological stress of immigration and assumed that individuals born in one culture and raised in another remained indefinitely marginal to both cultures. Acculturation theory evolved out of marginality theory in an attempt to address the cultural change that occurred when two independent cultural groups came into contact (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008). Originally, acculturation theory was dominated by the idea of assimilation, proponents

of which posited that immigrants suffer acculturative stress but gradually acquire values of the dominant culture, and that stress diminishes (Falicov, 1998). The idea is one of unidirectional linear progression. Assimilation theory was popular to explain the incorporation of earlier turn-of-the-century European immigrants into the “melting pot” of American society.

Although the assimilation of European immigrants has been mythologized and might also be reexamined with a more critical eye toward ethnic identity retention/formation, real holes in assimilation theory have become evident in light of the changing face of American immigration since the 1960s. The present wave of immigrants comes predominantly from Latin American and Asian countries, tend to be physically identifiable as “non-White,” and often have limited educational and economic resources. As family therapist Celia Jaes Falicov (1998) writes, “assimilation may not be a matter of personal choice. Race and poverty may inhibit an immigrant from identifying with any group other than his culture of origin, in spite of shared cultural borderlands” (p.69). Immigration theorist Alejandro Portes (1997) critiques assimilation theory, and its legacy seen in policies and theories to this day, for stereotyping immigrant groups as well as focusing on superficial processes of adaptation without addressing the structural forces driving immigration.

In response to these critiques, a new wave of scholarship supports reexamining acculturation under what has become known as alternation theory. Alternation theory proposes a bidirectional mutual influence between the culture of origin and the adoptive culture, and argues that individuals can “alternate” cultural codes depending

on context and feel a sense of belonging within each culture (Falicov, 1998). There is also growing attention being paid to the idea of biculturalism or cultural hybridity. As Gonzales et al. (2002) write, “bicultural models allow for the possibility that acculturation to the majority culture does not necessarily preclude retention of one’s ethnic culture” (p.47) A common example is language: learning English does not mean that the ability to speak Spanish language need necessarily be diminished. True bilingualism has actually been shown to be highly predictive of academic success (Lutz, 2007). Bacallao and Smokowski (2005) are big proponents of bicultural skills training, pointing to negative behavioral and health outcomes tied to assimilation and evidence that biculturalism acts as a protective factor.

Chapter Review

Latinos make up a significant and growing percentage of the population of the United States. Much of the recent growth in this population is due not to new immigration, but to families with young children born in this country. Currently, over a third of the families served by the federally-funded child development program Early Head Start are of Latino descent, and every indication is that this percentage will continue to grow. Additionally, the overall number of children served by EHS is rapidly increasing as well, due to greater awareness of the importance of intervention and support for infants and toddlers and their families. In focusing on a growing subgroup of an increasingly important federal program, this research fills a crucial role by providing insight into the experiences of these families. Of particular interest to this

study was how the culture of parents informs their parental ethnotheories, and how these values and practices are impacted by acculturation and interactions with Early Head Start home visitors. Multiple theoretical approaches informed this study. These include: ecological systems theory which considers the impact of multiple levels of contextual factors on the interactions within and around families; critical race theory and critical race feminism, which deconstruct the power relationships inherent in these interactions; and an understanding of the processes of acculturation and ethnic socialization, which are impacting mothers and their bicultural children.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter seeks to integrate relevant literature from a number of different fields that intersect to inform this study of immigrant Latina mothers and their interactions with Early Head Start home visitors. To begin with, literature on immigrant families and Latinos in the U.S. will be discussed. Next, research that considers race and culture in the study of mothers and motherhood will be explored. Finally, the focus will shift to culturally relevant parent education, Latinos in Head Start and Early Head Start, and literature on home visiting programs. The chapter will conclude with an outline of the limitations of the available research, and how the current study can address these gaps.

Immigrant Families

Although many immigrants migrate with dreams of returning home, this often becomes very difficult after they have lived in the United States for several years. For some, family that remained in their country of origin may be relying on them to provide remittances. For many Latin American countries, remittances supply a significant portion of their GDP and immigrants are likely to continue to work to support family members abroad until they are able to bring them to the United States for reunification (DeSipio, 2002). For other Latino immigrants, the educational

opportunities that the United States afford their children, particularly if the children are American-born, are simply too great to give up. For these reasons, and many others, immigrants who did not originally intend to stay in the United States find themselves settling down and acculturating to their new environment.

Biculturalism and acculturation are particularly important topics when considering immigration from a family studies perspective. Portes and Zhou (1993) write:

Research on the new immigration...has been focused almost exclusively on the first generation, that is, on adult men and women coming to the United States in search of work or to escape political persecution. Little noticed until recently is the fact that the foreign-born inflow has been rapidly evolving from single adult individuals to entire family groups, including infant children and those born to immigrants in the United States. (p.76)

Children of immigrants might have any of a number of immigration statuses themselves. They may be foreign born and immigrate to the United States with their parents, either legally or with temporary or unauthorized status, or they may be born here so that they are American citizens, while the status of their parents remains tenuous. It is not unusual for one family to have members with multiple different nationalities or immigration statuses, and these “mixed-status” families often face unique challenges (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001). Mixed-status families must negotiate immigration and welfare systems that allocate status and resources to some members but not others, and in worst-case scenarios face being torn apart as a result of deportation.

A new term, the 1.5 generation, has been coined to describe those immigrants who are foreign-born but who migrated at such a young age that they often identify primarily as Americans (Holloway-Freisen, 2008). Members of the 1.5 generation and the 2nd generation in immigrant families often have less practical problems negotiating life in the United States. They usually speak English fluently and are sufficiently acculturated to navigate freely in society. Nevertheless this group also faces their own challenges as they struggle to develop a sense of identity which includes both the cultural background of their parents and families, and the external peer and media influences which they have internalized from a young age (Holloway-Freisen, 2008).

Much has been written about dissonant acculturation, or the acculturative gaps that develop between parents and their children as young first and second generation immigrants rapidly develop cultural competencies in their new environment that may take their parents years to master (Rumbaut, 2005). In these cases intergenerational conflict may develop, as there is a reversal of roles with parents relying upon children to navigate in society. However, when Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao (2008) examined 402 Latino families from Arizona and North Carolina they found that while acculturative gaps did cause family dynamics to change, they did not necessarily lead to an increase in family conflict.

Immigration scholars are also paying increased attention to the dimension that gender plays in migration. This is probably due to the increasing number of women, and mothers, who are migrating in search of work as the global labor markets have shifted from manual labor, agriculture, and industry to an expansion of the service

sector economy, a traditionally female field. Not only are more women migrating in search of work, but gender roles within the family often undergo a process of change and renegotiation as a result of migration (Grzywacz, Rao, Gentry, Marin, & Arcury, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2002). The decision to migrate, and the subsequent consequences of immigration might also be unequally distributed along gender lines within a family.

Ethnic socialization

Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) point out that “relatively few studies have directly examined the relationship between parental socialization for cultural maintenance and ethnic identity in the children of immigrant families” (p. 138). Hughes et al. (2006) conducted a review of literature on ethnic socialization, noting that there has been a great increase in interest in this concept in recent years with research examining both the processes by which parents encourage ethnic socialization, and the impact of positive ethnic identity formation as a buffer against discrimination and marginalization.

In considering the development of ethnic identity among children of immigrant families, it is vitally important to consider that immigrant parents are not only attempting to negotiate a balance of culture-of-origin values with the pull of the current cultural context (and peer influence) but are also constrained by a lack of resources and social support systems. In fact, many of the authoritarian and traditional values often associated with Latino parenting styles are erroneously attributed to

culture when parenting stress and social support are important contextual mediators (Zayas & Solari, 1994). Finding this social support when family is far away, and when the dominant society often judges people by the color of their skin or their ethnic background is a constant struggle, and it is not difficult to see why immigrant families often form ethnic enclaves to provide this sense of community or why second generation adolescents largely associate with peers from within their ethnic group.

In the development of ethnic identity, many Latino adolescents in the United States today have more in common with long-time minority groups such as African-Americans versus earlier European immigrants who had the option of eventual assimilation into the White American masses. Therefore, the observation that “African Americans, like other ethnic groups of color in the United States, have stressed collective values and group solidarity as a response to exploitation and blocked opportunities” can apply equally to Latino immigrants whose cultural value of *familismo* is enhanced by the struggles of the immigration experience and a growing awareness of discrimination and structural barriers to success (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000).

Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca, & Guimond (2009) used an ecological framework to “examine the role Latino families play in predicting indices of enculturation and ethnic identity, given that family ethnic socialization has emerged as an important contributor to both” (p. 46). These researchers conducted a longitudinal study that utilized a multidimensional measure of enculturation which included “familistic” values as well as use of Spanish language. They found that family context

was critical in predicting youths' cultural orientation, with the effect of generational status on familistic values being fully mediated by families' ethnic socialization practices. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2009), like the vast majority of research on ethnic socialization and ethnic identity formation, focused on immigrant adolescents. Almost nothing has been written about the ethnic socialization of younger children when family context and parenting practices may have an even greater impact.

Incorporating Gender Into the Analysis

Although few researchers of acculturation and family immigration processes truly examine gender and its impact on family immigration processes beyond controlling it as a demographic variable, Falicov (1998) reveals how gender roles often play a decisive role in immigration decisions. Gender can have significant impact on acculturation and the psychological dimension of immigration, particularly if the decision to immigrate was not shared equally across family members. For instance, women in asymmetrical relationships often face additional acculturation problems if they have been coerced or pressured to immigrate by their partners.

Gender roles must often be renegotiated as a result of exposure to different cultural expectations as well as changing economic circumstances that might find women working outside of the home for the first time (Portes, 1997). Grzywacz, Rao, Gentry, Marin and Arcury (2009) examine the ways that gender-specific patterns of acculturation and Latino women's workforce participation can increase conflict in relationships already prone to violence. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2002) examines

shifting macro-level structural factors that have increased the demand for immigrant women's labor, and impact of this change on the immigrant family.

The shift to a dual earner household does not only impact gender roles and dynamics in the marital dyad, but also impacts the children as well. In their study of Mexican immigrant families in North Carolina, Bacallao & Smokowski (2007) found that financial stress in the United States prompted many mothers to enter the labor force for the first time. Although this helped the family financially, it decreased family time together dramatically. The types of jobs that immigrant women and men were able to get were low-paying, low-status, and physically demanding. In this study it was clear that "parents' stress from work in dual-earner households influenced parent-adolescent relationships, family dynamics, and communication processes" (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p.59). Adolescents spent much more time unsupervised and alone. Compounding the problem was the loss of social support from extended kinship networks that the families had relied upon in Mexico. Immigrant adolescents reported feeling isolated, lonely and depressed, and were more likely to dwell on the loss of what was left behind in Mexico than their parents were.

Latinos in the U.S.

Although they are often treated as a homogeneous ethnic group, Latinos have their origins in South America, Central America, Mexico, and islands of the Caribbean. While they do tend to share some cultural characteristics, immigrants are likely to identify with their national origins and demographically come from widely

different situations. Even within these regions and nations, the ethnic and racial diversity is astonishing. As a result of European conquest and the trafficking of African slaves to a continent with many different indigenous ethnic groups and civilizations, most Latino people have a mixed racial heritage. As a result of this *mestizaje*, racial characteristics and phenotype are other variables that add to the diversity of the Latino population in the United States.

The two most populous groups of Latino immigrants to the United States by far are Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans (López & Patten, 2015b). Puerto Ricans have the unique situation of being U.S. citizens. Obviously this facilitates movement between their culture of origin and the United States and allows them to be employed legally within the United States. Concentrated largely in New York and cities of the American Northeast, Puerto Ricans in the U.S. have higher levels of educational attainment than the overall U.S. Hispanic population, but lower than the total U.S. population (López & Patten, 2015a). Similarly, Puerto Ricans have a median annual personal earning of \$25,000, slightly higher than that of other U.S. Hispanics, but substantially lower than the median earnings for the U.S. population.

Mexico has been the number one source of legal immigration for a number of years, as well as the predominant source of undocumented immigrants (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002). In 2013, 34.6 million people of Mexican descent were living in the United States, that is 64.1% of the U.S. Latino population (López & Patten, 2015b). Recent Mexican immigrants tend to be of modest socioeconomic status and economic attainment. The vast majority of Mexican Americans and

Mexican immigrants have traditionally established themselves in the Southwest United States, California and Texas.

Whereas the Mexican influence in Texas and the American Southwest has been present since before the area became a part of the United States, Latino residents are now laying down roots in record numbers in new parts of the country, like the American South and Midwest. Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in the Midwest grew by 81% while in the South there was an increase of 71% (Guzman & McConnell, 2002). A number of Latinos moved their families to these new regions of the country in order to take advantage of the construction boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s, construction being one of the leading industries employing Latinos, particularly immigrants (Walcott & Murphy, 2006). As a result, with the economic recession, and particularly as a result of the damage to the housing industry beginning in 2007 and 2008, Latino unemployment rose sharply (Kochhar, 2008).

Although people of Mexican origin make up the majority of the Latino population in the United States, there are also substantial populations from parts of Central America. In terms of percentage of the total Latino population, Salvadorans rank fourth, Guatemalans, sixth, and Hondurans, eighth (López & Patten, 2015b). Immigrants from these Central American nations are also among the least educated of the Latino population, and the most likely to live in poverty. Immigration from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras has increased steadily since 1990, and the Latino population from all three nations is much more likely to be foreign-born, as compared to the overall Latino population in the United States. (López, 2015a; López, 2015b;

López, 2015c). Immigration from the “Northern Triangle” countries of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala has increased dramatically since 2011, and made national headlines in 2014 as a result of the large numbers of unaccompanied minors from these countries that surrendered themselves at the U.S. border. These children, and other migrants from these countries are fleeing chronic poverty, but in particular a rise in corruption, gang violence, and drug cartels which led them to seek asylum in the United States despite an increasingly dangerous and expensive journey (Carlson & Gallagher, 2015).

Latinos in Delaware

A search of literature on Latinos in the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. yields very little information, most of it centered on public health, and nothing from a family studies perspective. There is practically no academic scholarship on Latinos in Delaware. One reason for this void is the relatively recent influx of Latinos to the state. In 2000, the US census recorded only 4.8% of the population of Delaware was Latino or Hispanic, by 2010 that figure had risen to 8.2% (U.S. Census Bureau 2000; 2010). In addition to this dramatic increase in the Latino population in Delaware, the ethnic and national heterogeneity of this group is noteworthy. Located geographically between the largely Puerto-Rican Latino population of Philadelphia and communities of mostly Central Americans in Baltimore and Washington, Delaware’s population is 3.4% Mexican, 2.5% Puerto Rican, with 2.3% from other Latino or Hispanic origins, mostly Central American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In southern Delaware, an

ethnic enclave of Guatemalans, many of indigenous Mayan descent, has settled in the small town of Georgetown where they work in processing at poultry factories.

Common cultural values

Given the great diversity in the Latino population in terms of demographic characteristics such as: immigration status, nation of origin, socioeconomic status and educational attainment, ethnic and racial heritage, and acculturation to U.S. culture, the heterogeneity of this group cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, there are some cultural characteristics which most scholars would agree have salience for much of this overarching cultural background. *Familismo*, *Respecto* and *Personalismo* are three cultural values that have been identified repeatedly in the literature (Barker, Cook, & Borrego 2010; Calzada, 2010; Calzada, et al., 2010), and are explored in more detail below.

Familismo. According to Smokowski, Rose, and Bacallao (2008), “familism involves a deeply ingrained sense of the individual being inextricably rooted in an extended family system and is commonly regarded as the most influential factor in the lives of Latinos” (p.297). Research with diverse subgroups of Latinos has backed the finding that in general in this culture it is expected that family needs come before personal needs (Almeida, Molnar, Kawachi, & Subramanian, 2009; Baca Zinn, 1982; Streidel & Contreras, 2003).

Respeto. *Respeto* is the idea that children are not to question their elders, but this value also extends to the interactions between adults of different ages or status.

For example, Latino parents might hesitate to question a classroom teacher on her methods or curriculum because of the deference given to authorities, particularly those with higher levels of education (Olivos, 2009). Calzada et al. (2010) utilized focus groups to examine the concept of *respeto* paying particular attention to the degree of enculturation and acculturation of diverse populations of Latino mothers. Despite demographic differences in the focus group populations, responses by mothers were remarkably consistent, except in the areas of acculturation and enculturation, supporting the idea of *respeto* as a pan-Latino cultural value.

Personalismo. *Personalismo* addresses the importance given to personal connections above and beyond institutional affiliations, and the valuing of personal goodness and the ability to get along with others (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002). These characteristics are considered more vital than individual ability or material success. The values of *Personalismo* and *Familismo* together make the foundation for a collectivist orientation, which characterizes many Latino cultures and sometimes clashes with the more individualistic leanings of mainstream America.

Culture of origin or culture of immigration?

Although *familismo* has been largely understood to be an important aspect of Latino culture which immigrants bring with them to the United States, Van Hook (2010) points out that it is at times hard to separate the impact of immigration itself from the influence of home country culture. She writes:

Immigrants may thus respond to migration by acting and thinking uniquely, sometimes in ways that suggest strong adherence to family members and the

subordination of individual needs. Because undocumented status is also correlated with less acculturation, these strong bonds to family may be erroneously attributed to less acculturation (and by implication, to cultural vestiges from immigrants' countries of origin) (Van Hook, 2010, p. 148).

In one of the most methodologically rigorous studies of Mexican and Mexican American families, Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (a cross-cultural psychologist and a psychological anthropologist) attempt to systematically separate the effects of immigration from culture of origin (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). In this extremely ambitious study, the researchers examined four distinct groups of adolescents: Mexicans living in Mexico (with similar demographic characteristics to those likely to migrate to the United States), Mexican immigrants to the United States (born in Mexico), Mexican American youth (born to immigrant parents) and White American youth. They used multi-methods to examine these groups on three overarching dependent variables: family conflict, achievement orientation, and familism. Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (1995) confirmed that all three groups of Mexican ethnicity (Mexican, Mexican immigrant, and Mexican American) scored significantly higher than the White American comparison group in familism. Interestingly, the Mexican immigrant group scored slightly higher than the other groups of Mexican ethnicity, and similar to Van Hook (2010), Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (1995) theorize that the challenges of immigration itself may intensify the family ties.

Familismo, acculturation and family conflict

This intensification of *familismo* within immigrant Latino families runs contrary to the expectations of some scholars who proposed dissonant acculturation as a source of potential intergenerational conflict for immigrants to face. Fortunately, family conflict is another key variable examined in Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco's (1995) study. Surprisingly, although they found "increasing tensions between parental authority and peer group pressures" in both the White and second generation Mexican American group, this did not hold true for Mexican born adolescents for whom the "family remains the key institution" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995, p.152-153). Rumbaut (2005) examined a number of immigrant groups and found Mexicans in particular, and Latinos in general, to have relatively high familism and relatively low parent-child conflict (particularly in relation to various Asian nationalities that tended to exhibit even higher familism, but much higher parent-child conflict). Across all immigrant groups, familism fell with greater acculturation while parent-child conflict increased (Rumbaut, 2005).

Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao (2008) examined 402 Latino families from Arizona and North Carolina with a number of interesting findings about adolescent and parent acculturation. They found that biculturalism and country-of-origin involvement were related to positive outcomes, and that parent-adolescent acculturation gaps impacted family cohesion, adaptability, and familism but did not necessarily increase parent-adolescent conflict (Smokowski, Rose & Bacallao, 2008). In an earlier small-scale qualitative study, Bacallao & Smokowski (2007) showed an

increase in parent-child conflict in immigrant families due to increased parental strictness. However, this increased strictness came because of parental concerns over the dangers they perceived in the environment (drug use and gang activity, etc.) as well as attempting to limit the acculturation of their adolescents in ways that threatened Mexican family values.

Mothering in the Context of Race and Culture

The social construction of the ideology of mothering and motherhood has received significant attention in recent decades, particularly from feminist scholars critiquing a patriarchal ideology which “locks women into biological reproduction, and denies them identities and selfhood outside of mothering” (Glenn, 1994, p. 9). A primary focus in this literature has been the increased freedom of many women to enter the “public” arena of paid employment, although not without outside critique and internal ambivalence about this move’s impact on their role as mothers. At the same time, this focus on work/family balance and the dichotomy of public and private spheres has been critiqued by critical race scholars and third wave feminists as relevant only to the experience of White middle-class women, and obscuring the long history of outside employment by poor women and women of color (Collins, 1994). In fact, many of the gains in the labor market for White women have come on the backs of poor and working class women of color who have been conscripted in what Glenn (1992) calls the “racial division of reproductive labor” (p.3).

Latina immigration and employment

Although much of the earlier critique of the racial division of reproductive labor focused on the long history of exploitation of Black women, the increased feminization of immigration has largely been driven by the demand for a new immigrant labor force to fulfill the growing demand for low-cost care-work. Arendell (2000) writes that immigrant mothers are often expected to prioritize employment for the well-being of their families and children, in contradiction of the ideology of intensive mothering which has constricted middle-class White women. In the United States, the vast majority of female immigrants come from Mexico or Central America, and most of these find their way into some sort of domestic service or caretaking jobs. Although the body of literature is still small, there is growing interest in the experiences of women of Latino descent, and their conceptualizations of motherhood.

According to Segura (1994), research on women of Mexican descent and their employment outside the home has typically suffered from failing to distinguish between native-born Chicana women and Mexican immigrant women. Even more troubling, this research has largely assumed a linear process of acculturation in work-family beliefs and practices, based on “the view that ‘traditional’ Mexican culture lags behind North American culture in developing behaviors and attitudes conducive to participating fully in modern society (Segura, 1994, p. 214).

Segura (1994) found that nearly all the Latina women she interviewed identified motherhood as their most important social role, but contrary to expectations, Mexican-born women saw employment as more congruent with motherhood than the

Chicanas. Their ideology of motherhood did not challenge the patriarchal substructure, but “the dichotomy of the separate spheres lacks relevance to Chicanas and Mexicanas, and other women whose social origins make economic work necessary for survival” (Segura, 1994, p.226).

Further complicating the lives of Latina mothers, many have a tenuous legal status which forces them into a secondary labor market which rarely accommodates the needs of their own families. Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila (1997) interviewed Latina women from transnational families in Los Angeles, many of whom were employed as live-in domestic servants and caregivers, which made it practically impossible for them to have time to care for their own families in this country. They write, “historically and in the contemporary period, paid domestic workers have had to limit or forfeit primary care of their families and homes to earn income by providing primary care to the families and homes of employers, who are privileged by race and class” (Hondagneu Sotelo & Avila, 1997, p.310). In order to retain their own identities as mothers despite this sacrifice, they have needed to transform the meaning of motherhood, as well as relying on kin and “othermothers” to raise their own children in their country of origin (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Collins, 1994).

Devalued Mothers

Dominant ideologies of race and class have long influenced who is valued as the example of the “good mother” in American society. Hill (2008), writes that the growth of the industrial economy in the nineteenth century began an era of scientific

motherhood in which the “good mother” was seen as a self-sacrificing being who devoted herself to the care of her children. Unsurprisingly, this “good mother” figure was highly racialized. Women of color, who were often forced to work outside the home for economic reasons and more often had children outside of marriage, were seen as violating gender roles, and failing to subordinate themselves to patriarchal authority. Therefore they, “were vilified as the antithesis of the good mother” (Hill, 2008). This vilification has continued to the present day when the tired stereotype of the welfare queen still underlies assumptions about low-income women of color and their reproductive choices.

Shellee Colen (1995) coined the term *stratified reproduction* to describe the devaluation of Black women’s reproductive rights and experiences. She writes:

By *stratified reproduction* I mean that physical and social reproduction tasks are accomplished differentially according to inequalities that are based on hierarchies of class, race, ethnicity, gender, place in a global economy, and migration status and that are structured by social, economic and political forces (Colen, 1995, p. 78)

According to Harrison (2004), stratified reproduction can be seen as the “differential ways that reproduction is organized along lines of social inequality, privileging some and dis-privileging others in their capacity to give birth, nurture, and sustain life” (p.10). Collins (2000) also addresses the devaluation of mothers of color who were often blamed for their children’s failures or delays without consideration for the external social context which impeded their success at every turn. This devaluation echoes sentiments about the culturally-based deficits in parenting which continue to haunt parent education today.

Villenas (2001) writes about the way “benevolent racism” plays a role in the devaluation of Latina motherhood through a discourse in which immigrant mothers “were simultaneously constructed as both the ‘problem’ and the ‘victim’” and lacking in their ability to raise their children in a “modern” and appropriate way (p. 8). In her study of Latina mothers in the American South, Villenas (2001) found that Latina mothers were often targeted for parenting classes by well-meaning individuals and organizations. She writes, “As a form of cultural and ideological domination, the practice and manifestation of benevolent racism in Hope City was the normalization of White/Western middle-class cultural ways (including mothering practices) and the pathologizing of Latino cultures” (Villenas, 2001, pp. 8-9).

Motherhood as a source of empowerment

Despite the devaluation of mothering by women of color, many women of color have historically drawn upon their status as mothers as a source of power and status (Collins, 2000; Hill, 2008; Silva & Alexander, 2013). While limiting the sources of women’s power to fertility and motherhood is certainly problematic, the experience of mothers of color have often been quite different from those of White mothers. For women of color with children, the greater source of oppression usually stems from the struggle for economic stability, instead of a construction of motherhood that isolates them in the home. Adding the voices of mothers of color to the feminist discourse on motherhood has broadened the dialogue, and reinforced the idea of motherhood as a potential source of empowerment (Hill, 2008). Nevertheless, Collins (2000) writes that

“Black motherhood is a fundamentally contradictory institution. African-American communities value motherhood, but Black mothers’ ability to cope with intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation should not be confused with transcending the injustices characterizing these oppressions” (p. 195).

Women in Latin America have long called upon their role as mothers as a source of political empowerment. Norat (2008) writes of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo who challenged the dictatorial military regime of Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s by claiming their rights as mothers of victims of political persecution in a “culture that sanctifies motherhood” (p. 221). By working within the traditional construction of mother love, these women were able to claim power to organize and defy the political authorities. This vision of motherhood as a source of empowerment is echoed in Hispanic literature as well (Norat, 2008). Pardo (2005) writes how Mexican American women activists organized the “Mothers of East Los Angeles” and found that these “women speak of their communities and their activism as extensions of their family and household responsibility” (p. 541).

The implication of this body of literature is an affirmation of the need to consider the impact of racial and class context on the social construction of ideologies of motherhood, and to include the experiences of women of color in discourses about motherhood. Immigrant mothers are often particularly vulnerable as a result of immigration policies which restrict their employment options and force them into the international division of reproductive labor. However, women of color have also often claimed motherhood as a source of personal or political power. Unfortunately, this

power often goes unrecognized by institutions that question their legitimacy as mothers and pathologize their culture and parenting practices. In order to recognize the legitimacy and respect the parenting practices of immigrant mothers, these institutions and programs must consider family culture when providing services

Culturally Relevant Parent Education

Early Head Start is a comprehensive child development program comprised of many dimensions of service, however many of the interactions between home visitors and mothers often take the form of parent education. Parent education, or parent training, usually involves multiple sessions during which an outside professional or paraprofessional meets with a parent in order to share information and teach parenting skills. Parent training is often utilized to try to help parents work on problematic behaviors with their children, but more general parent education can also be used in a preventative manner to improve relationships and understandings of development during early childhood.

Early childhood is a critical time in the socio-emotional development of an individual and is highly dependent upon a positive and stable relationship with a caring adult or family unit. It has been shown that a close supportive family can serve as a protective factor from the multiple risks that many young children of color from low-income neighborhoods encounter daily (Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith & Bellamy, 2002). Parent education has been seen as a promising avenue of intervention and prevention because of its emphasis on the family unit and the chance of developing

important parenting skills and strategies (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996). However, early childhood is also a time for the socialization of children on cultural values and often highlights differences in assumptions and priorities between ethnic groups.

Traditionally, American parent education programs have been developed almost exclusively with a White middle-class value system (Coard, Foy-Watson, Zimmer, & Wallace, 2007; Forehand & Kotchick, 1996). Critics posit that the implementation of these programs with low-income African American and Latino parents is at best ineffective and inappropriate, and at worst an attempt to force cultural assimilation based on assumptions of deficits in minority ethnic group parenting. Johnson (2009) examines how the emphasis on “best practices” in parent education often reinforces the idea of a unitary model of parenting which “ignores, or in many cases disregards, the diverse childrearing practices that many families daily utilize to transmit certain values to their children” (pp. 257-258). Therefore, a growing number of researchers and practitioners are calling for the adaptation and development of culturally relevant or culturally sensitive parent education programs and interventions.

Culturally relative parent education lies at the intersection of many different complex issues. Race, ethnicity, and culture play a prominent role in parenting styles and values, and obviously shape the way that parents, children, and families as a whole interact with their environment. Parenting in our society is at once seen as a very private matter, and yet simultaneously the source of great public scrutiny, particularly for families that fit outside of our societal “norm.” As a result of their

lower status in society, coupled with frequent interactions with social service agencies, the actions of parents of color are particularly scrutinized. At the same time, many of these families face overwhelming obstacles from the context in which they raise their children, and could certainly benefit from support and education. The challenge is to create culturally relevant programs that empower these parents to choose for themselves which strategies and skills best work for them and their children.

Interestingly, literature on parent education programs is generally found not within education, but under the umbrella of behavioral therapy and mental health interventions. One indication of this shift from education to therapeutic intervention is the changing use of language to describe these parenting programs. Most programs or interventions are not referred to as “parent education” but rather “parent training.” This shift in language belies a subtle but important change in the aims and power relationships inherent in these interventions. Cheng Gorman and Balter (1997) write that although these terms are often used interchangeably, they also reflect a “continuing lack of consensus on the *goals* of parent education” (p. 340). While some scholars and educators argue that the overall goal should be to strengthen parental support systems and empower parents to raise their children successfully, others see parent education as “existing primarily to prevent child maltreatment through skill building” (Cheng Gorman and Balter, 1997). These stated goals reflect underlying differences in assumptions about the capabilities of parents, particularly low-income parents of color, and their role as partners or passive consumers in the parent education process.

Types of Culturally Adapted Parent Education Programs

In 1996, Rex Forehand and Beth Kotchick issued a “wake-up call” for considering cultural diversity in parent training. Since then, a number of studies on culturally adapted parent education programs have been conducted (Calzada, 2010; Coard et al. 2007; Johnson, 2009) although researchers still point to the relative inattention to cultural diversity in this field. In their critical review of quantitative research on culturally adapted parent education, Cheng Gorman and Balter (1997) identify three main types of programs with varying degrees of cultural adaptation: *translated* programs, *culturally adapted* programs, and *culturally specific* programs. The vast majority of programs discussed in the literature would fall into the *translated* category in which fairly superficial changes have been made to conventional programs in order to adapt them for culturally diverse populations by translating materials into a target population’s native language, matching the racial make-up of staff and participants, and including images and references to the target ethnic group in program materials.

One particular exception to this trend, is the *Black Parenting Strengths and Strategies Program* (BPSS) which places heavy emphasis on the racial socialization of African American children in order to prepare them to develop strong self-identity and enhance their ability to cope with racism and discrimination (Coard et. al., 2007). This program was found to be highly successful, not only in its retention of African-American participants but also in the positive outcomes for both parents and children. A similar emphasis on ethnic socialization and cultural preservation may be appealing

to Latino parents who mentioned concerns over the loss of cultural priorities during focus groups on parenting values, and reported using strategies of ethnic-racial socialization with their children (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010).

Incorporating Latino Cultural Values Into Parent Education

In her article, “Bringing Culture into Parent Training with Latinos,” Esther Calzada (2010) builds on two previous studies, an ethnography that combined participant observation and semistructured interviews of Mexican, Dominican and Puerto Rican mothers around the topic of *familismo*, and a study of the value of *respeto* utilizing focus groups. This author examines examples of these values and explores the cultural implications on program modality (moving beyond a parent-child dyadic focus) and program content. The author does an excellent job of foregrounding the need for collaboration which empowers parents and honors their input, and calls for a cultural flexibility on the part of clinicians that encourages parents to try new parenting strategies within frames and constructs that are culturally relevant.

Calzada et al. (2010) focus on the concept of *respeto*, paying particular attention to the degree of enculturation and acculturation of diverse populations of Latinos. This study made use of qualitative methods of analysis stemming from focus groups held with foreign born Mexican mothers, foreign born Dominican mothers, and U.S. born Dominican mothers. Mothers were asked open-ended questions to identify Latino cultural values, to identify perceptions of American values, and the definition and socialization of *respeto*. This study illustrates a comprehensive and replicable

process for identifying and discussing cultural values specific to particular ethnic groups.

Empowerment, Trust, and a Strengths-based Approach in Parent Education

Other parent education program models have found success among culturally diverse populations by emphasizing empowerment, trust, and a strength-based approach (Canning & Fantuzzo, 2008; Sheely-Moore & Ceballos, 2011). Instead of focusing specifically on the incorporation of culturally relevant values in any prescribed way, the emphasis was on the empowerment of parents as experts and collaborators in the parent education process. While cultural knowledge and sensitivity is still a prerequisite to establishing the trust and respect that provides the foundation for empowerment, this process could built upon group strengths without being culture-specific. Johnson (2009) writes about the potential of “funds of knowledge” approaches that value the knowledge that families possess and use it as the foundation for parent education curriculum.

There is also a growing emphasis, both in parenting interventions and in the early childhood field more generally, on “evidence based” programs that can prove their impact on outcomes empirically. While there may be some danger that the unitary model implied by this emphasis repeats the “best practices” approach that often minimized or ignored cultural differences, there is also great opportunity for research findings to challenge assumptions about the compatibility of parent training programs and interventions with culturally diverse families. Reid, Webster-Stratton, &

Beauchaine (2001) evaluated empirically the effects of The Parent Program from the Incredible Years Training Series and its use with culturally diverse families in Head Start. Their conclusion was that participation in the program resulted in positive outcomes for families from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, they also emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity incorporated within the program by respecting diverse viewpoints and allowing parents to individualize their goals.

In early childhood education, and particularly in the field of special education and interventions with children with disabilities, one major focus in the past several decades has been on increasing family-centered care and services. Dunst and Trivette (1996) explain how family-centered helpgiving can have empowering consequences when there is an emphasis on positive relationships with families, a recognition of families existing capabilities and capacity for growth, and when families are active participants in the decision-making process. Dempsey and Keen (2008) define family-centered services as recognizing that (1) the family, not the professional is the constant in the child's life, (2) the family is in the best position to determine the needs and well-being of the child, (3) the child is best helped by helping the family, and (4) family choice, decision-making, and strengths must be emphasized. The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children recognizes family-centered practices as one of their recommended practices, along with family capacity-building practices, and family & professional collaboration (DEC, 2014). In reviews of the literature on family-centered practices and their outcomes, both Dempsey and Keen (2008) and Dunst, Trivette, and Hamby (2007) recognized that family-centered

practices do not generally have a direct effect on development outcomes, but rather are indirectly mediated by self-efficacy beliefs of parents and other effects associated with parent and family empowerment. Throughout the literature on family-centered services, there is an emphasis on the importance of relationships between practitioners and families built upon mutual respect (DEC, 2014; Dempsey & Keen, 2008). The DEC recommends that “practitioners build trusting and respectful partnerships with the family through interactions that are sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic and socio-economic diversity” (p.9).

Understanding more about the work that has already been done to create culturally relevant parent education programs, the challenges of developing programs, and the controversies surrounding this process, reaffirms the importance of this topic. It seems that researchers and practitioners in this area are showing an increased awareness of issues of cultural diversity and difference, but unless a critical race perspective is active in the debate the tendency will be to adapt pre-established programs in a superficial manner. Re-situating parent education programs and literature within the family studies and early childhood education fields, as opposed to maintaining such a heavy emphasis on the modification of antisocial problematic behavior through parent training, could also help destigmatize parenting interventions. It is encouraging to note current trends in parent education and early childhood education that emphasize the collaborative role of parents in preventive interventions instead of program designs that attempt to address parenting in a way that reinforces a legacy of cultural deficit thinking.

Latinos in Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start were developed with an awareness of the importance of counteracting cultural deficit thinking in services provided for low-income families. In many ways, Head Start program designers were pioneers in acknowledging the need to respect different family cultures, and focus on the empowerment of parents and a strengths-based approach.

Despite this awareness, there is a dearth of research specific to the experiences of Latinos in Head Start or Early Head Start. There have been a few recent studies published on the impact of the bilingual environment of many Latino families, looking at either language acquisition and abilities (Hammer, Lawrence, & Miccio, 2007), or literacy (Farver, Xu, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2013). More relevant to the current study, there has also been research on Latino family engagement in HS, which shows that Latino parents often adopt a multi-dimensional view of engagement and parental responsibility based on the Spanish concept of *educación* that emphasizes morality and interpersonal relationships on equal ground with more conventional concepts of school-readiness. (McWayne et al., 2013). Additionally, Keels (2009) considered ethnic group differences in EHS parents' parenting beliefs and practices and their impact on the cognitive development, examining Latino parenting in depth. Finally, Beeber et al. (2010) examined how short-term intensive interventions with EHS Latina mothers could reduce depressive symptoms.

Garcia and Levin (2001) used data from the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), a national longitudinal study of the cognitive, social,

emotional and physical development of Head Start children and their family characteristics, to examine the characteristics of Latino families served by the program and their levels of involvement and satisfaction. Garcia and Levin (2001) compared children and families from three groups: Latino participants in Head Start in Puerto Rico, Latino participants in HS on the US mainland, and non-Latino HS participants in the U.S. To begin with, they found that Latino children were more than two times more likely to live in two-parent homes than non-Latino low-income families. They also found that Latino caregivers in the U.S. reported more barriers to HS participation than other HS parents in the U.S. or Latino parents in Puerto Rico. The top two barriers they listed were: childcare needs and language/cultural differences.

Garcia and Levin (2001) also reported that U.S. Latino caregivers reported lower levels of external social support than Latinos in Puerto Rico or non-Latinos in the U.S. However, U.S. Latinos reported high levels of support from spouses and HS staff. Finally, Latinos in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. reported higher levels of satisfaction with the HS program than non-Latinos in the U.S. They were particularly satisfied with how well HS prepared their children for Kindergarten.

Although a bit outdated, in 1999 Currie & Thomas published an article titled, “Does Head Start help Hispanic Children?” as part of a series of studies on the impact of Head Start. Currie & Thomas (1999) investigated the lasting academic benefits of HS for Hispanic children by comparing children who had participated in the program with their siblings who had not. While this methodology is not ideal, the findings showed that on average, HS participation closed at least a fourth of the gap in test

scores between Latino children and non-Hispanic White children, and 2/3 of the gap in the probability of grade repetition. Currie & Thomas (1999) also found that these gains were not evenly distributed among all Latino groups. Gains appeared to be greatest among children of Mexican descent and children of mothers born in the U.S., and fewer benefits were seen for children of Puerto Rican descent and children with foreign-born mothers. Interestingly, one of the authors' initial assumptions was that one of the potential gains for Latino children in HS would be cultural assimilation that would help prepare them for school.

Home Visiting

The current study focuses on Latina mothers in Early Head Start, but also specifically on the home-based program option whereby home visitors visit the family in their home environment. Home visiting is not unique to Early Head Start, and has been garnering increased interest both in academic circles and from policy analysts because of some promising outcomes and the relatively low cost of this manner of service delivery.

Home visiting as a method of delivering social services to families has a long history in this country dating back to the settlement houses of Jane Addams who worked with new immigrants in Chicago in the 1880s (Slaughter-Defoe, 1993). However, recently home visiting has been receiving unprecedented levels of attention and support as a method for use by programs to target low-income children and families and decrease gaps in school readiness (Azzi-Lessing, 2011). Interest in home

visiting—particularly for providing services to families that are otherwise hard to reach as a result of factors such as geography, poverty, or language—has continued to grow despite mixed results in evaluations of an increasingly diverse number of programs.

Powell (1993) pointed out that an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of home visiting programs is difficult given that programs vary so greatly in terms of goals and focus, curriculum, staffing, duration, frequency, and target population. For example, there are a number of different types of home visitors employed by different home visiting programs, including: nurses, other professionals such as social workers, and “paraprofessionals” with less education who have been trained on specific topics and often have experience with the community or population. However, in 2009 the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness Review (HomVEE) was initiated to review research on home visiting programs (serving families with pregnant women and/or children up to age five) and determine which met the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) criteria for evidence-based early childhood home visiting service delivery models. Models were evaluated for the quality of their outcome measures as well as the duration of impacts, along with a number of other criteria (Paulsell, Avellar, Sama Martin, & Del Grosso, 2010). The Early Head Start home visiting model was among seven home visiting models that met the HSS criteria. HomVEE also identified gaps in the research on the effectiveness of home visiting models, one of which was a lack of literature on home visiting effectiveness with

certain subgroups including immigrant families with diverse cultural backgrounds or whose first language was not English.

Early support for home visiting was largely predicated upon studies of the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program conducted in Elmira, New York in the 1970s. Olds et al. (1998) summarized the Elmira study findings, which included improvements in maternal health, prenatal health, and reductions in the seriousness of child neglect and abuse among participants. However, subsequent studies of an NFP program in Memphis, TN with an urban African-American population of mothers showed much smaller gains (Olds et al., 1998). Howard & Brooks-Gunn (2009) write that results of meta-analyses of home visiting programs suggest modest positive effects on children and families, but that analysis is difficult because of the many different roles that home visitors play, and the mixed emphasis on parental and child outcomes. Azzi-Lessing (2011) examines how the trademark strength of home visiting—its flexibility and potential for being tailored to community needs and program goals—can also create programmatic issues which can weaken positive effects.

Gomby (2007) investigates why the home visiting program Healthy Families Alaska (HFAK) produced greater gains in terms of child development outcomes than the program upon which it was based, Hawaii Healthy Start. She concludes that this difference was tied to the program's main content and how that content was delivered by home visitors (Gomby, 2007). She suggests that to optimize program impact, the content that the home visiting program intends to deliver must align with program

goals, and secondly, the home visitors must deliver the content as it was intended. Similarly, Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie (2002) critique the limited effectiveness of a Parents as Teachers (PAT) program in terms of positive child outcomes, a result which according to them can be traced to a flawed theory of change. In their qualitative study, Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie (2002) find that home visitors assumed that supporting and praising parents would empower them to be better parents, and that this would ultimately lead to benefits for their children. However, parents reported that although they appreciated the social support, they joined the program to seek expert advice and information about child development.

Riley et al. (2008) point out that while most researchers and practitioners agree that a key component of any home visiting program is the provider-caregiver relationship, there is very little knowledge of how this relationship develops and functions in the context of a home visit. Studying the actual interactions between caregivers and home visitors without influencing it is extremely tricky, and Riley et al. (2008) argue that the common use of conventional program data on family engagement falls far short of usefully capturing variations that might influence outcomes. Korfmacher et al. (2008) concur that there is a range of parental involvement in home visiting programs that is largely ignored in the literature, although it is often central to effective interventions with children. They argue that program evaluations need to focus more on process and less on outcomes, and that parental involvement should be separated into program participation (quantity) and program engagement (quality). Wagner et al. (2003) use qualitative methods to

identify five dimensions of parent engagement, an understanding of which they say is crucial to decreasing attrition in home visiting programs and ensuring that families are receiving the full benefits of the program as designed.

Azzi-Lessing (2011) points out that sensitivity and respect for a family culture plays a large role in encouraging family engagement and retention. Slaughter-Defoe (1993) first wrote about the importance of considering a family and community's cultural ecology when designing home visiting programs over twenty years ago; however many programs still fail to fully address the role that culture plays in families and child rearing when designing services. Astuto & Allen (2009) highlight the potential for home visiting programs for working with culturally diverse immigrant families, since "home visitors can gain insight into the cultural context of the parent-child interaction and the parent's approach to learning" (p.10). Additionally, the home visiting model has the flexibility to reach out to families that may otherwise face language or cultural barriers to early childhood interventions. According to Astuto & Allen (2009) 1 in 5 children in the U.S. comes from an immigrant family, families that are less likely to participate in traditional early care education programs. "Thus," they conclude, "it is reasonable to suggest that there may be a particularly good fit between this type of service model and Latinos and/or other young children of immigrant families—an area of research in need of further exploration" (p.11).

Paris (2008) conducted a qualitative study of Latina immigrant mothers in a home visiting program and found that many mothers suffered traumatic experiences as a result of their migration (including leaving children behind) and were particularly at

risk for mental health issues. These women greatly valued the emotional support provided by their home visitors, and utilized them as “cultural brokers” to help acclimate themselves to life in the U.S. (Paris, 2008). Healthy Start Programa Madrina is a home visiting program in Chester, PA which uses paraprofessional bilingual and bicultural *promotoras* to engage in outreach and education on prenatal, perinatal and maternal health with pregnant Latina women (Bill et al. 2009). This program was developed based on the Mexican tradition of lay or community health workers or *promotoras* to be a culturally appropriate form of health promotion. Bill et al. (2009) found that *promotoras* in the Programa Madrina provided emotional support and were effective at gaining the trust of undocumented women, leading to an increase in access to prenatal health care and health insurance, and ultimately decreasing preterm births and incidences of low birth weight in the population they served in comparison to a control group.

Limitations of the literature

In reviewing scholarly literature from a variety of fields and research areas that intersect to inform the present study, several gaps in the present research become apparent.

To begin with, scholars considering acculturation, ethnic socializations and parent-child interactions in immigrant families have focused almost exclusively on the adolescent period. While adolescence is an obvious starting point for considering the formation of individual ethnic identity, and children of this age are often acculturating

faster because of their greater exposure to influences outside of the family circle, it would be erroneous to assume that younger children can be fully insulated from new cultural influences or the effects of the immigration experience itself. The processes by which immigrant parents attempt to reinforce cultural expectations most assuredly begins long before the child begins to question these expectations in the expression of their individual self. Furthermore, expanding the age range in the sample of immigrant children upon which we have collected empirical data is the only way to separate the effects of the immigrant child experience from the developmental processes that all young people undergo. The current study contributes valuable information on attitudes about, and processes of, ethnic socialization of young children in Latino households.

In addition, although researchers do a good job problematizing the pan-ethnic label of “Latino” or “Hispanic” and addressing interethnic heterogeneity based on nationality, socioeconomic status, race, and immigrant status, the overwhelming number of studies of Latino families are conducted with Latinos in the American Southwest. Scholars often noted the sociopolitical history of long-term immigration and cultural exchange between these border states and Mexico. One contribution of the current study is its unique focus on the Latino experience in the mid-Atlantic region. In a region of the country with a weaker historical and cultural link to Mexico and Central America, immigrants here often encounter great discrimination and have less opportunities of insulating themselves within established ethnic communities.

This review of the literature in both immigration studies and research on parent education interventions show that neither topic is typically addressed from a family

studies perspective. The present study contributes substantially to the literature by applying ecological systems theory and utilizing a critical lens that considers the intersections of race/ethnicity, class, and gender in the study of immigrant families and their perspectives on acculturation and parent education. Unpacking assumptions about immigrant mothers and valuing different forms of mothering can be particularly important.

Finally, while Latino families make up a significant and growing proportion of the Head Start and Early Head Start population, literature that focuses specifically on the experiences and perspectives of these families is limited. There is evidence that Hispanic children and families, particularly those with limited English, see positive outcomes from participation in these programs. These findings are particularly noteworthy considering the educational gaps facing many Latino children. Home visiting in particular is a promising form of service delivery, which may have practical and cultural appeal for reaching Latino families. However, currently there is little empirical research about how the interaction between home visitors and Latino families plays out on a daily basis. The current study contributes to filling this gap, reporting about these interactions from the perspectives of both mothers and home visitors.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of immigrant Latina mothers and their interactions with Early Head Start home visitors. This research is situated within family studies, but with a critical eye to power differentials and hidden assumptions based on race, class, and gender. By examining the way Latina mothers and EHS home visitors negotiate cultural differences and processes of acculturation and ethnic socialization, this study can help inform Early Head Start programs in their work with culturally diverse families. The following are the principal research questions that this study sought to explore:

1. What are the experiences of immigrant Latina mothers in Delaware?
How has their migration impacted their cultural beliefs and practices, particularly their mothering?
2. How do these mothers share cultural beliefs and practices with their children? Do they actively promote racial/ethnic socialization and/or biculturalism?
3. How do immigrant Latina mothers feel about the parenting advice and instruction they receive from Early Head Start home visitors? Do they feel that their own cultural beliefs are recognized and respected in the Early Head Start model?

4. How do Early Head Start home visitors who work with Latino families negotiate mothers' cultural beliefs when they deliver Early Head Start services? How does the home visitors' own ethnic backgrounds impact their approach to delivering EHS services and curriculum?

Study Design and Rationale

This study was based almost exclusively on qualitative methods of data collection. Qualitative methodology is most appropriately applied to research questions that seek to gain in-depth and socially constructed perspectives with an awareness to the impact of contextualizing factors on data. The main focus of these research questions is not on gathering objective facts, but rather on capturing the lived experiences of participants and how these experiences contribute to multiple perspectives on their interactions. Acknowledging these perspectives, and contextualizing decisions within external environmental factors such as culture, language, legal status, and poverty, requires a grounded, flexible methodological approach.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss in which theoretical propositions are not stated at the outset, but instead developed continually throughout data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Researchers are expected to use constant comparisons between incoming data and previously developed theoretical

assumptions for verification of the validity of the assumptions. This methodology was created for developing theories, but can also be used to strengthen or refine previous findings. Mertens (2010) identifies a number of key methodological features of grounded theory, including the need for the researcher to constantly interact with her data in order to formulate and reformulate theories and hypotheses, to utilize purposeful sampling of data (or participants) that is guided by emerging theory, and the systematic and vigorous coding of data.

Sensitizing Constructs

Although grounded theory embraces an inductive approach to research, it is not advisable for researchers to enter a research project without some notions of the focus of study (Patton, 2002). Outlining sensitizing constructs that inform our research not only acknowledges these preconceptions, but also helps focus observations and interviews in order to enhance data collection. In this study, sensitizing constructs include: social support, parenting values, acculturation, formal/informal networks, *familismo* (familism), respect, language barriers, power, and access to resources. These early constructs emerged based on the theoretical framework and a review of past research literature, and continued to be refined throughout the research process.

Study Setting and Context

The specific site for this research project was Strong Foundations Early Head Start² (SFEHS), an Early Head Start program located in Delaware, with a somewhat unique affiliation with a major university. This creates an optimal opportunity for linking research and practice. Strong Foundations Early Head Start (SFEHS) was originally funded in 1997 as part of the third wave of Early Head Start funding, with services beginning in 1998. Over the years, the number of families and children served by SFEHS has fluctuated somewhat based on available federal grant funding. However, SFEHS currently serves approximately 200 children at any one time.

SFEHS offers two options for the delivery of services: center-based and home-based. The main sample for the current project came exclusively from the home-based families served by SFEHS. This is for several reasons. First of all, a sizable percentage of home-based families are fairly recent Latino immigrants, and while there is a diverse array of levels of acculturation included in the sample, the primary focus of the current study is on the cultural socialization and parental ethnotheories of relatively recent immigrants. There are a number of families of Latino-descent served through the center-based option, but they make up a much smaller percentage of the overall families served and tend to be second or third generation Americans with good English language skills and more exposure to American cultural values through employment outside the home. Center-based SFEHS

² The name of the specific Early Head Start program has been changed.

services are delivered in English, while home-based services are delivered in either Spanish or English according to the family's preference.

The second reason this study was focused on the home-based population is because of the unique relationship developed between families and home visitors. Although center-based families do have monthly home visits with family service providers, and parental involvement in the classroom is highly encouraged, the majority of interactions take place between classroom-based early childhood professionals and the children. In the home-based option, the home visitor is interacting constantly with the caregiver in his or her own home environment. This environment and the interaction between caregiver and home visitor is particularly pertinent for the study of the negotiation of cultural childrearing beliefs in an Early Head Start setting.

This study focused specifically on Latina mothers since the vast majority of home visits with Latino families involve home visitors interacting with the child and their biological mother, who is the child's primary caretaker. The involvement of fathers is also encouraged, and occasionally home visits are held with other caregivers or family members such as grandmothers or aunts, but home visits with mothers predominate.

Study Population

The Latino families within SFEHS come from varied backgrounds, with a majority being two-parent heterosexual families from Mexico or Central America with

the father working outside the home in manual labor or the service sector, and the mother staying at home, or working part-time. Families average 2-3 young children in the home who are usually American-born and may have older children, either living with them here or who remained with relatives in their countries of origin.

Immigration status, maternal age, and levels of education vary substantially. Nearly all SFEHS families qualify as low-income based on federal poverty guidelines.

In 2014-2015, SFEHS served a total of 273 clients³. These clients include multiple children within the same family and pregnant women. Also, that is the total number of clients served in one year, including ones that entered and exited the program during that timeframe, meaning that the given enrollment at any given time is closer to 180-200. Out of that total, 45% identified themselves as being of Latino or Hispanic origin⁴. However, only 32% listed Spanish as their primary language, meaning that there was also a percentage of the Latino population being served that was acculturated enough to consider English their primary language.

Of the 273 total clients served, 186 or 68% were served through the home-based program model. In the home-based model, 57% of the families identified as Latino/Hispanic and 46% listed Spanish as their primary language. This confirms that most of the more acculturated Latino families chose center-based services (only six

³ Data from the 2014-2015 program's Early Head Start Program Information Report (PIR).

⁴ Two years previous, according to the 2012-2013 PIR report, only 36% of the families served by SFEHS identified as Latino (46% of home-based model).

clients who listed Spanish as their primary language were enrolled in the childcare centers), whereas a large number of the Latino families served through the home-based model listed Spanish as their primary language and were presumably more recent immigrants to this country.

The home-based model is divided into two semi-autonomous programs that serve different counties in Delaware. Delaware is a small state divided into three counties, two of which are served by SFEHS. New Castle County is the northernmost county and is situated along the I-95 corridor between Baltimore, Maryland and Philadelphia, PA. The state's largest city, Wilmington, DE, is located in New Castle County (NCC), as a result the area is much more urban, and is ethnically and economically diverse. Kent County is the central county geographically, and contains the state capital, Dover. However, the majority of Kent County is much more rural, agriculturally based and less ethnically diverse.

The differences between these two regions are reflected in the populations that SFEHS serves. A fairly equal number of clients in the home-based model are served in each geographic region (97 in NCC and 89 in Kent). However, 76% of the NCC home-based population identifies as Latino (76% claim Spanish as their primary language), whereas only 36% of the home-based population in Kent is Latino/Hispanic (21% claiming Spanish as primary). All six home visitors from NCC serve some Latino/Hispanic clients, and 5 of the 6 are bilingual. In Kent County, 5 of 6 home visitors serve some Latino/Hispanic clients, with two of those home visitors being fully bilingual. The home visitors who are not bilingual but who serve Spanish-

speaking clients usually work with families in which there are at least some members who speak English.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through a variety of methods, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Participant observation has a long history in ethnographic fieldwork, particularly in Anthropology, and has the goal of contextualizing findings within a wider understanding of participants' particular situations and interpretations of the world. There is an emphasis on an emic perspective, "based on the belief that the unique ideas, concepts, beliefs, values and norms of a given culture are key factors in understanding behavior" (Varjas et al, 2005, p.243). Observations were made in the family homes as well as at Early Head Start events, and recorded in the form of fieldnotes.

The main sources of data are semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with a total of 14 Latina mothers in the participants' language of preference (11 in Spanish, 3 in English), tape-recorded, and then transcribed for analysis. All interviews with mothers took place in the participants' homes, and averaged 30 minutes of recorded interview time with substantial time spent before and after recording to review consent and develop rapport. The interviewer worked from a schedule developed based on sensitizing constructs as open-ended questions and prompts, but allowed participants to largely determine the direction that the interview took from there. The interview included an oral survey of demographic and

acculturation characteristics. Consideration was given to utilizing a research validated measure of acculturation, but upon reviewing possibilities it was felt that the best way to consider acculturation as it relates to the current research questions was through open-ended questions which allowed for elaboration and follow-up if necessary.

In addition to conducting interviews with Latina mothers, the intention was to conduct small focus groups with Strong Foundations Early Head Start (SFEHS) home visitors who have experience working with Latino families on a regular basis. The purpose of these focus groups with home visitors was to add an additional perspective to the negotiation of cultural parenting beliefs in an Early Head Start home-visiting model. A focus group design was conceptualized both as a pragmatic measure to limit the time commitment of the busy home visitors, but also to allow the home visitors to discuss their experiences with each other, both to improve the research data but also to double as a potentially beneficial reflection time for home visitors. However, in reality, due primarily to scheduling restraints and at the request of the home visitors, most of the data collected from home visitors ultimately was from individual semi-structured interviews. While one focus group began with multiple participants, several home visitors were called away almost immediately and completed their interviews individually at a later date. Overall, only four participants participated in two focus-groups/group interviews, the rest were interviewed individually. There were not substantial differences in responses between those who were interviewed individually or in pairs, although the individual interviews did generate more data from each participant. Home visitor interviews and focus groups were conducted in private

rooms at their place of work and averaged just less than 40 minutes each. All interviews with home visitors were conducted in English, although offers were extended to speak Spanish if the home visitor preferred. Home visitors also completed a brief open-ended demographic questionnaire.

After conducting interviews with home visitors, it was determined that an administrative point of view would be helpful, therefore IRB approval was sought and acquired to conduct an additional interview with an administrative staff member and supervisor who could provide a more holistic view of the program's mission and process.

Additional supporting data was gathered from SFEHS to help triangulate and contextualize interview and focus group findings. This programmatic data included: examples of curriculum, EHS performance standards and literature, and program demographics. Finally, a brief review of local media coverage of Latino news and events helped contextualize the social environment within which immigrant families were operating.

Timeline and Access

Data collection was completed in 2014-2015, with interview transcription and data analysis ongoing throughout, but primarily in Spring of 2015. This research project had the full backing of SFEHS administration, and was approved by the SFEHS policy council, which is comprised of parent representatives.

Research Participants and Sampling

The completed sample of qualitative interviews includes 14 Latina mothers, and 7 SFEHS Home visitors who work regularly with Latino families. An additional interview with an administrator was conducted. As with many qualitative research projects, participants were selected through purposeful sampling. Unlike quantitative studies, which seek randomly selected larger sample sizes in order to generalize to a larger population, “the logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002, p.46).

A few initial Latina mothers were asked to participate in the research based on practical reasons such as pre-existing rapport and accessibility; however, later efforts were made to expand the sample in a purposeful manner to represent the diversity of perspectives of Latino mothers in SFEHS. To represent this diversity, prospective participants were recruited based on: geographic region/program (New Castle vs. Kent County); age, education, marital status, employment status, or other potential markers of acculturation. Another aim was to conduct interviews with mothers who worked with each of the different home visitors, although the data from each party was analyzed separately. Mothers were contacted by phone and asked if they would be interested in being interviewed about their experiences as an immigrant mother in Delaware and as a participant in Early Head Start. If they agreed to participate, a later date was set for a meeting at which consent was obtained and the interview conducted. In total, 19 mothers were contacted, with 14 (74%) consenting to interviews. It is

understood that findings represent the subjective perceptions of specific women and families within a specific Early Head Start program in a particular region in the country and will not necessarily speak for Latina mothers nationwide.

All SFEHS home visitors who were actively working with Latino families were asked to participate in the study. At the time of data collection, eight home visitors were identified who met these criteria. Home visitors were approached by the researcher either in person or by phone. They were asked if they would be willing to participate in small focus groups or individual interviews about their experiences as home visitors serving Latino families in Early Head Start. Initially all eight of the identified home visitors signed consent forms, however one chose not to respond to repeated attempts to set up an interview. The administrator was contacted by email and after consenting to participate, the interview was conducted via Skype.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning data collection, all study procedures and documents were reviewed and approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board. In addition, at the request of the administration of the Early Head Start program, the researcher presented her proposed research idea to the program's Policy Council, an advisory board composed of parents from the Early Head Start program. They approved the researcher to move ahead with contacting and collecting data from the program population.

The primary ethical concern with this study was protecting the confidentiality of program participants. It was important that mothers in the program felt that information they shared with the researcher would not be passed on to their home visitor or program administrators in a way that would negatively affect their participation in the program. This was especially true because they were in some ways being asked to be critical of their experiences with the program. Of particular concern was protecting the confidentiality of immigrant families who lacked proper documentation or residential status in this country. Although the researcher specifically avoided asking about immigration status in order to protect this information and make families feel protected, several interviewees alluded to or shared concerns about their status nonetheless.

Although sensitive topics, such as immigration, loneliness, depression and separation from children were discussed in interviews, the interviewer followed the lead of the participant in how deep the discussion of these topics proceeded. It was made clear to the participant that they could change the subject at any time. In fact, Rossetto (2014) explores how qualitative interviews on sensitive subjects may have therapeutic value for participants if done well.

For Early Head Start home visitors, confidentiality was also important in order for them to feel free to share information that may be critical of the program or administration without fearing reprisal. To protect the confidentiality of both mothers and home visitors, participants were asked to pick pseudonyms that would be used to identify them in all research materials. If they declined to select a pseudonym, one was

chosen for them based on popular gender-appropriate names from their country of origin.

Audio recordings were encrypted and kept in password-protected digital locations, and were only accessible to the researcher. Transcripts and other data were similarly kept confidential and protected.

The Transformative Paradigm and Feminist Epistemology

Mertens (2010) writes that “transformative researchers consciously and explicitly position themselves side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social transformation” (p. 21). This perspective highlights social justice as a valid and necessary goal of research, and as such emphasizes the need to connect academic research with social policy and direct service. According to Mertens (2010), one of the major characteristics of this paradigm is its focus on analyzing inequalities and asymmetric power relationships based on gender, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and socioeconomic class.

Although scholars from different theoretical backgrounds and disciplines consider themselves and their work as falling under the transformative paradigm, the epistemology has been highly influenced by feminism. One cornerstone of feminist epistemology is the practice of researcher reflexivity. This reflexivity refers to an examination by the researcher of her own values, beliefs, identities, and position in society which can lead to biases in the conduct and analysis of research. Standpoint theory, one branch of feminist thought, critiques the idea that any researcher can

conduct research objectively, and that instead each of our understandings of the world are dependent upon the social and historical context of the researcher. Harding (1993) writes that:

Knowledge claims are always socially situated, and the failure of dominant groups critically and systematically to interrogate their advantaged social situation and the effect of such advantages on their beliefs leaves their social situation a scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged one for generating knowledge. (p. 54)

Positionality

As a White American heterosexual woman, my focus on studying the perspectives and parental ethnotheories of Latina mothers while utilizing a critical race feminist approach may seem a bit of a reach. Certainly my level of education and income highlight power inequalities between myself and my research participants. However, while my education brings privilege and access to resources, I come from a working-class background and have experienced life as a young mother on a limited income attempting to negotiate state programs such as Medicaid and WIC in order to support my children. My own cultural influences are very diverse, from my Irish Catholic family heritage, to a childhood spent in Nicaragua, and my adoption into the family of my Ghanaian husband. From each of these backgrounds, as well as many others, I have observed and garnered wisdom about childrearing practices and beliefs, and the diversity of these beliefs have driven my interest in the role of culture in parenting.

Insider/Outsider Status

Perhaps most pertinent to the current research project, is my more recent affiliation with Strong Foundations Early Head Start (SFEHS). My graduate assistantship was wholly or partially funded by SFEHS for three years, and the SFEHS office has been my home on campus. My fluency in Spanish and interest in parenting have led me to fill-in as home visitor for the program on numerous occasions. As such, I have developed relationships with Latino mothers, some of who became research participants. Additionally, I have developed personal and professional relationships with the home visitors and administrator whom I interviewed. I have also worked as a data collector and interventionist for a larger-scale research project utilizing the SFEHS population as a sample⁵. These affiliations clearly play a role in my choices in selecting a research topic and color my perspective. While a positivist perspective would count these previous relationships as threatening to my objectivity as a researcher, many qualitative researchers have come to see the value of having insider knowledge and preexisting relationships with research participants, both for building rapport and for insights in data analysis (Merriam et al. 2001, Sherif, 2001; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

⁵ No Latina mothers who participated in this research were actively participating in the larger-scale research project at the time of the interviews conducted for the current study, however some home visitors were participants in both.

Data Analysis

Deutsch (2008) writes that “qualitative research is a constant interplay of theory, data collection, analysis, and ideas” (p.210). Analysis of data began informally long before data collection was complete, although caution was employed by the researcher to avoid drawing major conclusions that ignored alternative explanations and patterns that may have emerged later (Patton, 2002). Thoughts and theories that emerged during interviews and preliminary analysis were recorded in field notes and memos, which were referenced later during further analysis and writing.

All audio recordings from interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the researcher. The decision was made to not translate the complete interviews but rather to transcribe in the original language, because it was felt that the comprehension of the meaning of the text was better in the original language, and translating dialogue word for word was a time-consuming task, which in the end could decrease the integrity of the meaning. This was particularly true since many of the mothers interviewed did not have high levels of education and tended to use colloquialisms specific to their national or regional origin that would have been difficult to translate. During data analysis and the writing up of findings in this dissertation, the translation of specific meaningful quotes into English was completed by the researcher.

Observational data from field notes, and transcribed interviews and focus groups were read, reread, and coded into categories based on themes that emerged from the data as well as the original sensitizing constructs. The qualitative software package, NVivo, was used to aid with coding and analysis. All interview and focus

group transcripts were imported into NVivo and then coded individually. The first interview of each type (mothers and home visitors) was coded line by line. At times one passage was coded with several different codes. Subsequent interviews were coded with the codes that had already been created as well as with new ones that were generated as needed. When all interviews had been read and coded once, the process was repeated to ensure that earlier interviews were also examined with codes identified later in the process.

Strauss & Corbin (1998) refer to substantive or open-coding as a way of interpreting and conceptualizing data into emerging themes. Axial coding is a secondary process by which these codes or themes are recombined and organized based on their relationships with each other. Special attention was paid to the convergence and divergence of codes and categories (Patton, 2002). Data analysis was considered complete when categories had been saturated, organized in relationship to each other, and made sense of theoretically and holistically.

Interviews with Latina mothers and interviews and focus groups with home visitors were coded independently. A total of 61 thematic codes were identified through open-coding the interviews with mothers (see Table 1). After axial coding of the interviews with mothers, four major categories emerged, along with a number of sub-categories. These categories are: The Challenges & Opportunities of Immigration, Raising Young Children in a Different Cultural Context, Reflections on Early Head Start, and Gender.

Table 1. Codebook for Interviews with Latina Mothers

Categories	Sub-Categories	Codes	
The Challenges & Opportunities of Immigration	Challenges	children	child with special needs
			childcare
		discrimination & racism	
		distance from family	going home
			remittances
			support system (lack)
		Practical	language
	Opportunities		transportation
		legal status	deportation
		state interference	child abuse
			domestic violence
			police
		employment	
		material gain	
Raising Young Children in a Different Cultural Context	Biculturalism		education
		Services & Resources	food resources
			medical care
	Cultural Differences	safety of environment	
		corruption	
		tranquilo	
		Possible to have both?	
		more than 2 cultures	
		Sharing culture	food as culture
Reflections on EHS	EHS suggests new practices		holidays
			language as culture
	Cultural Differences	differences b/w cultures	religion
		differences in raising children	alternative health remedies
			change due to migration
			lack of downtime
			independence of teenagers
			letting kids outside
			trust
			sleep practices
	EHS suggests new practices	Change b/c of EHS	
		Difficulties with change	
		EHS new info helpful	
Gender	Relationship with HV	EHS suggests new practices	child literacy
			discipline
			nutrition
	Suggestions for SFEHS	relationship with HV	
		HV ethnicity	
		self-confidence	
		suggestions	
		EHS-transportation	
		Socializations & Family events	
		being a mother	
		dreams & goals	
		family size	
		employment	
		migration decision	
		relationship with marido	

The transcripts of interviews and focus groups with home visitors were also open-coded with a total of 72 thematic codes identified (see Table 2). A number of these codes overlapped with those that emerged from coding the interviews with Latina mothers, but others were unique. After reflection, re-reading and through axial coding, these were combined and re-organized into four major categories: Latino Family Culture, Home Visitor Backgrounds & Relationships with Families, Supporting Latino Families in Early Head Start, and Gender Roles & Mothering.

Approval for an additional interview with an administrator of the EHS program was sought and obtained from the IRB board to follow up on home visitor observations, and in order to attempt to explore the uniqueness of this particular EHS program. This interview was transcribed and coded, and the results added an administrator's perspective to the program's work with Latino families.

Table 2. Codebook for Interviews with Home Visitors

Categories	Sub-Categories	Codes	
Latino Family Culture	Cultural Characteristics of Families	Role of culture in parenting	
		Openness & Warmth	
		Attachment to Children	Physical touch connection
		The Importance of Family	interconnectedness
			Independence of adolescents
			Family & community
			siblings
		Development & Education	Moms concerned
			School readiness
			School & homework help
			Social emotional development
	Other Family Characteristics	Absence of drugs & alcohol	
		Lack of education	
language			
Legal status			
Acculturation	Cultural change over time		
	Diversity among Latinos		
	Preserving culture		
HV Background & relationships with families	HV Background	Professional experiences	Classroom teacher
		Mother to mother	Using own experiences to relate
		Cultural upbringing	Social class & poverty
	Building relationships	Trust & honesty	trust
			openness
		Supporting parents	Lack of judgement
			HV as social support
		Boundaries	Favorite part of being HV
			confidentiality
Supporting Latino Families in EHS	Connecting Families to Services	Barriers to Services	Competition between families
			Experience with the system
			Accompany on visits
		Empowerment	Language barrier
	Parent as expert		
	Negotiating different cultural beliefs about parenting	Talking to Parents	Going into the home
			family disagree with EHS practice
		Safety & liability	Info not judgment
			Specific examples
		Potty training	
		Feeding practices	
		Co-sleeping	
		Alternative medicine	
		nutrition	
	Kids & cold weather		
	HV feedback on SFEHS &EHS	HV disagree with EHS	discipline
		language barrier	Proactive not reactive
socializations			
Pros & cons of HV		EHS flexibility	
Thoughts on SFEHS		supervision	
		transportation	
	Staff training		
Gender		Family map	
		Gender roles	
		Maternal instinct & sacrifice	

Chapter 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, results from the interviews with Latina mothers will be presented first, followed by results from interviews with home visitors, and the administrative perspective.

Latina Mothers

Data analysis of the interviews with Latina mothers yielded data that was organized into several categories. These categories are: The Challenges & Opportunities of Immigration, Raising Young Children in a Different Cultural Context, Reflections on Early Head Start, and Gender Roles & Mothering. This section will present examples from the first three categories, while Gender Roles & Mothering will be discussed in the following chapter.

Latina mothers were much more profuse in their descriptions of their lives as immigrant mothers and the daily struggles of raising their children in a new cultural context, than they were in their reflections on the Early Head Start program itself. These descriptions spoke to the first two research questions, but also reaffirmed the importance of an ecological systems perspective, which allows for a focus on interactions between mothers and home visitors within a broader sociocultural context.

Demographics and Acculturation

Out of the 14 interviews conducted with Latina mothers, nine of them were with mothers served in New Castle County, while five of the mothers were served in Kent County. The mothers were served by a total of eight different home visitors, seven of which were also interviewed for this study and an additional staff member that was no longer employed with the program at the time of the home visitor interviews. The mothers ranged in age from 23 to 37 with an average age of 29.7 (two mothers chose not to respond to this question). The mothers had between one and six children, with an average of less than three children each.

Two mothers were born in the U.S. to immigrant parents (from Puerto Rico and El Salvador respectively). Seven were born in Mexico. Two came from Guatemala and two from El Salvador. The final woman was born in Honduras. Besides the two native-born Americans, the immigrant mothers' age at arrival in the U.S. ranged from 15-25 years of age, with an average age of arrival of 19.5 years. Again excluding the native-born Americans, the women had spent a range of 5-18 years living in the United States. With an average of 10.2 years spent in this country, it is clear that these women were not exactly recent migrants. Seven of the twelve immigrants had migrated directly to Delaware; the other women had come by way of Chicago, New York, Pennsylvania, Los Angeles, and Houston.

The mothers' use of English varied from fluent/native to extremely limited. Most were low to moderate speakers, able to use limited English to navigate shopping or fill out very basic forms. Educational attainment was also varied. Four women

listed elementary school as their highest grade attained, four listed middle school, and three high school. Three women had attended some college, two in the United States and one in El Salvador. Six of the fourteen mothers worked at least part-time, and an additional five had previously been employed before having children. Monthly household incomes ranged from less than \$500 a month to more than \$2000. Most women responded that their monthly household income was in the \$1500-\$2000 range.

Table 3. Latina Mothers' Demographic Information

Acculturation	Participant	Age	# of children	Country of Origin	Age at Arrival	1st destination	Yrs. In U.S.	Education	English	Employment	Household income	County
High	Daniela	n/a	2	USA	n/a	n/a	n/a	High School	High	Yes	\$1500-\$2000	New Castle
	Nicole	n/a	3	USA	n/a	n/a	n/a	Some College	High	Yes	>\$2000	Kent
	Guadalupe	33	3	Mexico	15	Pennsylvania	18	Some College	High	Previously	<\$500	New Castle
		33	2.7		15		18					
Moderate	Alejandra	23	4	Mexico	15	Chicago	8	Middle School	Moderate	Previously	\$500-\$1000	New Castle
	Elena	28	3	Guatemala	18	New York	10	Middle School	Moderate	Previously	\$1500-\$2000	Kent
	Mercedes	24	1	El Salvador	18	Los Angeles	6	Some College	Moderate	Yes	\$1500-\$2000	Kent
	Victoria	35	2	Mexico	21	Delaware	14	High School	Moderate	Part-time	\$1500-\$2000	New Castle
		27.5	2.5		18		9.5					
Low	Adriana	23	2	Mexico	18	Delaware	5	Middle School	Low	No	<\$500	New Castle
	Camila	31	3	Mexico	21	Delaware	10	Middle School	Low	No	\$1500-\$2000	Kent
	Carmen	37	6	Mexico	23	Delaware	14	Elementary	Low	No	unknown	New Castle
	Gabriela	36	4	Mexico	25	Delaware	11	Elementary	Low	Part-time	\$1500-\$2000	New Castle
	Gloria	27	3	Guatemala	19	Delaware	8	Elementary	Low	Previously	\$1500-\$2000	Kent
	Maria	26	1	El Salvador	18	Delaware	9	High School	Low	Part-time	\$1500-\$2000	New Castle
	Sofia	33	3	Honduras	24	Houston	9	Elementary	Low	Previously	\$500-\$1000	New Castle
		30.4	3.1		21.1		9.4					
Total												
Average:		29.7	2.8		19.6		10.2					

In terms of acculturation, a holistic examination of these demographic characteristics shows three clusters of experiences⁶. Three women, the two American born Latinas and a woman who emigrated from Mexico at the age of 15 and finished high school and some college in the United States, clearly had the easiest time navigating in the United States. All three were fluent English speakers and relatively highly educated. Two worked full-time outside of the home and the third had previously worked full-time as well. The two American-born women identified as both their parents' nationality/ethnicity as well as "American." The third woman in this category, Guadalupe, has spent more years in the U.S. than in her native Mexico and speaks excellent English. However, she still strongly identifies as Mexican, illustrating the fluidity of self-identification.

A second grouping of "moderate" acculturation is illustrated by four women, immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala or El Salvador who entered this country in their mid teens to very early 20s (average age of arrival was 18). One of these women had completed several years of university in El Salvador, the others had high school or middle school educations. They all spoke some English, enough to work outside the home in a setting that required them to occasionally interact with colleagues or clients

⁶ These categories of level of acculturation to American society were not determined with a quantifiable measure, but rather emerged based on differences in experiences reported by the women during their interviews, and were largely based on language proficiency, self-identification, and ease and familiarity of navigating life in the U.S.

who did not speak Spanish (i.e., in fast food service). Three of these four women identified as both American and as being from their country of origin.

The final group of seven mothers was fairly low on any acculturation scale. They spoke little or no English and mostly had only elementary or middle school educations (one woman had attended some high school in El Salvador). These women had not immigrated to the United States until their late teens to mid-20s (average age of arrival was 21). A few of these women worked outside the home part-time or had been previously employed, but only in capacities where they did not need English to complete their jobs. All of these women identified themselves as being of the nationalities of their countries of origin, not American.

When considering these groupings it's interesting to see what demographic factors were important and which were not. Despite the rural/urban divide between the counties in Delaware, there were no apparent differences between regions (or programs) in terms of the levels of acculturation of the women that were interviewed. Women from both New Castle County and Kent County appeared in all groups. Except for the native born Americans, country of origin did not seem to impact levels of acculturation or self-identification. Most notably, number of years spent in the U.S. did not account for the differences between the moderate and low acculturation groups. It is hard to say whether it made a difference for those with the highest levels of acculturation since two of the three were native born (and had spent their entire lives in the U.S.).

English proficiency was what most separated the groups, but it appears that this proficiency is strongly related to age of arrival in the U.S. and to a lesser extent to educational attainment. Meaning that women that immigrated to the U.S. at a younger age learned English better and acculturated more quickly. Employment outside the home was somewhat dependent upon English proficiency and acculturation, but the relationship was not so clear since individual circumstances (such as number of children and support from family/spouse) also played a role. There were also no clear differences in between the groups in terms of number of children per mother, although the one outlier with six children was in the lowest level of acculturation.

The Challenges and Opportunities of Immigration

One of the major themes that emerged from coding was the increased challenges, but also increased opportunities, that immigration brought for Latina mothers and their families. These challenges and opportunities were similar in many ways to the shared experiences of all immigrants moving to a new country and culture, but also reflected the unique perspective of being an ethnic and linguistic minority in Delaware, and of experiencing this cultural adjustment as the mothers of young children.

All of the mothers interviewed had been living in Delaware for at least two years, and many for much longer. As previously mentioned, half of the mothers immigrated directly to Delaware, the other half moving here from another state. When asked why they moved to Delaware, most women mentioned that they had family here

or that their husband/partner⁷ had family here. Most felt very positively about Delaware, although life here was not without its challenges.

A common theme was the idea that Delaware was very “tranquilo,” meaning calm, tranquil, or relaxed. Elena⁸, a 28-year-old mother of three from Guatemala told me, “It’s very tranquil here...I love living in this place.”⁹ Maria talked about the insecurity in El Salvador, which was driving people to migrate:

Here, one feels safe because you can freely go about and you know that it will be ok, that nothing is going to happen to you. In contrast, in El Salvador it’s very dangerous now, because of crime. It’s very dangerous there. And so, many people because of that many people decide to come, because now in El Salvador it’s difficult to live.

Camila, a 31-year-old mother of three from Mexico, also talked about the insecurity and corruption in her home country. She felt safer in the U.S. in general because she felt there was less corruption in the government, and in Delaware specifically because of lower levels of crime.

For many of the women who had moved to Delaware from another state, the low crime rate and slow paced life in Delaware had been a major draw, especially for

⁷ All but one of the women lived with the father of her children (that one had recently separated from her husband). When referring to their partners, women used the Spanish word “marido” which can mean either common-law-husband or legal spouse; therefore “husband” refers to both.

⁸ The mothers have all been given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

⁹ Many of the quotes were originally in Spanish, all translations by the author/researcher.

raising children. Alejandra moved to Chicago from Mexico as a teenager with her parents, but when she began having children of her own she decided to move again.

Chicago might as well be Mexico. There are so many, too many Hispanic people. But I don't know why there is such insecurity. There are a lot of gangs, a lot! Yes, insecurity is what there is...and it was an environment that me, personally, I didn't like. I didn't want my children to live there. The Latino families that I know there, their young children joined gangs and that wasn't an environment that I liked...You can go one place and you have to dress in one color, you go somewhere else and you can't wear another color, because that gang isn't from there. That gang is from here. And no, that was not a lifestyle that I liked.

That is not to say that each woman felt completely comfortable in her community in Delaware. Guadalupe mentioned that although she considered her neighborhood to be safe, she still wouldn't let her young children out of her sight outside, as she didn't truly trust anyone. Even Alejandra had some bad experiences at her first apartment complex in Delaware, where she said neighbors drank and smoked outside. She had recently moved her family into a townhouse in a middle-class neighborhood that she shared with her entire extended family. The strategy of having multiple families sharing single-family homes is a common one used by Latino families to be able to afford to move their families out of low-income apartment complexes and trailer parks.

However, in moving to Delaware and searching for the safest neighborhoods in which to raise children, these women often faced new challenges of isolation or language barriers that hampered their day-to-day lives. Mercedes, in comparing her life in Delaware to living in Los Angeles, said: "Here life is more tranquil, more relaxed. And there, life is faster-paced, more people, more Hispanic people. I like

living here more, but there, there is more food, transportation, everything is easier.”

Elena and Alejandra also agreed that it was harder to get around in Delaware, to find Hispanic products and stores, and to communicate where so few people spoke Spanish.

Sofia, who lived with her young son and his father in a quiet apartment, spoke to me about her feelings of isolation. Her husband was often gone all day, sometimes for days at a time to work out-of-state, taking their only car with him. She had asked him if they could move to an apartment complex where she knew a friend lived and she would have better access to public transportation, but she said he felt that there were too many Latinos in that particular neighborhood. He felt that their current isolation was actually positive in creating a safe environment for raising their son.

Challenges

Latina mothers shared many challenges that they had to face raising children in a cultural environment that presented both practical and psychological struggles to navigate on a daily basis.

Language

By far the most commonly cited challenge was having limited English language skills. This is an area in which the different levels of acculturation became very apparent. For the three fluent English-speakers, this was obviously not a challenge. As Nicole, an American with Salvadoran parents said, “even though I am

Hispanic, I do know that I don't get treated the same as immigrants do simply because the language barrier isn't there, one, and two... you can't easily take advantage of a U.S. born citizen."

For the group with moderate English, learning the language was a challenge but they felt that they could get by. Alejandra, who came to the U.S. at the age of 15, reported that she had learned some English through TV and books, through working, and "from life." Mercedes said that her father had encouraged her to take English classes when she was studying at the university in El Salvador because he knew she would end up in the United States. Nevertheless, she said learning to actually speak was a struggle, and a challenge when she moved to Delaware:

Well, Los Angeles is a little different because in Los Angeles there are a lot of people who speak Spanish everywhere. When I moved here it was hard because I didn't speak English, and I'd go to a store and everything was in English, and I'd go to the doctor and everything was in English. That was very hard.

However, she learned enough so that she now felt comfortable using English at her job as a server at a fast food restaurant.

Elena, who says she speaks a little English, shared that she gets very nervous trying to speak and always asks for someone who can speak Spanish, but feels that she can get by if there is no one available. Victoria, who feels that she can understand and read English fairly well but has trouble speaking it, shared the following story. She had gone for an appointment with her daughter at a social service agency and when she arrived the worker asked her if she could speak English. When she said 'no' the worker indicated a six-page form (in English) that she should fill out. When she asked

if it all needed to be filled out, the worker told her that if she left any blanks then the form could not be processed. She shared what happened next:

Luckily, I could fill it out because the forms always ask the same types of questions. I knew that she didn't think I could fill it out, that I would just leave. But I didn't do that. I filled out the application and I gave it to her. I said, 'Do you need anything else? Do you need copies of bills? What do you need me to bring you?' And she was just staring at me. At the last minute she felt a pang of conscience, and she felt bad about the way that she treated me, that it wasn't right. When we left the office, my daughter said, 'That lady shouldn't be working there because they are supposed to be helping people, not making them feel bad.'

For the group of women with little to no English, things were even more difficult. Adriana and Sofia both shared difficulties accessing medical care because of the language barrier. Adriana was not able to attend the birth classes her doctor recommended because they were only offered in English. Sofia spoke about the experiences of arriving at the emergency room at 2:00 am when she was in labor with her son when the nurse refused to open the door for her and her husband because when the nurse asked for more information; only Sofia's husband (who knew some English) would answer. The nurse got mad that Sofia would not speak for herself, even though they tried to explain that she did not speak English. As a result of this experience, Sophia resolved to learn English.

Several women, particularly those with school-aged children, worried that they could not speak with their children's teachers, read the flyers that were sent home, or help with homework. The mothers with limited English actually sought help from their children, who often spoke better English than Spanish. Carmen brought her children with her to help when she went shopping, but when she asked them to speak to her in

English to help her practice, they refused, saying it was too strange to speak to her in English. Gloria, however, says that it is her son who is encouraging her to learn by speaking to her neighbors and the parents of his friends:

Sometimes he takes the initiative, because I think I'm really a very shy person. If they speak to me, I think that they're going to think badly of me and it's better to not speak. But my baby, the big one, he says 'Mommy, talk!' and I'm still nervous that they won't understand me.

Discrimination and Racism

Nearly all of the Latina mothers felt that they had experienced some racism or discrimination during their time in Delaware. Many of these negative interactions came as they attempted to negotiate social services or medical services for themselves and their children. Camila told of a particular worker at a social service agency that she found very racist, and was happy when that woman no longer worked there. Gloria, whose oldest son had many medical problems, had a particularly negative interaction with one doctor.

And the doctor said to me, "Why don't you speak English? Hispanics cause a lot of problems." And I got angry, and I said something to him. He told me that they were recording me, but I didn't believe him that they were recording in a children's room. He told me not to say anything that I would regret. But he used a word that the Americans have taught me is a bad word, and he told me that Hispanics cause a lot of problems.

But Gloria was also careful to point out that this was the only bad experience she had had, and that many people were very kind to her.

Alejandra also recalled that she had experienced both positive and negative interactions:

It's difficult sometimes, because although you don't want to believe it, discrimination still exists. It still exists. And sometimes...not everyone, because there are always good people and bad people. You'll have good experiences, but sometimes not. There are times when they make you feel less than, or they simply look at you and say, "Ah, what is this?"

Elena had also experienced this discrimination, but tried to use English as much as possible to protect herself against it. She said, "I'm not talking about everyone, but in this country there are many people...there is a lot of racism. So, I say that I'll try my hardest to speak English. I try. When I have a need I try to do it. And there are people who just see that you are Hispanic and, I don't know, they think less of you."

Daniela, who had the unique experience of being born in Delaware and attending school there, experienced discrimination even though English was her dominant language. She shared that she experienced "a lot of racist stuff" in high school, and actually felt that things had improved greatly for Latinos as their population in the area increased.

Unstable legal status and State interference

Although the women were not asked directly about their legal status as immigrants in this country, some of them shared what it was like when they or members of their family lived with the uncertainty of being undocumented. Alejandra lived with her entire extended family in a townhouse; it was the only way they could afford to live there. However, the house was in her name, as she was the only adult who was a citizen. She was also the only adult with health insurance in her household,

and mentioned that it was very difficult for her husband to find employment because of his status.

Elena had spent a short time in jail for driving without a license and worried constantly about deportation.

I live in fear. So, I don't want to have any more babies. They are lovely, they are beautiful, but I shouldn't because I am not secure in this country. And Thank God I have been given the three and my children are very important in my life. So, I am fearful that one day they will take them away, because I live with fear that in any moment they can surprise me and it's very difficult to live this way and have children.

Sophia was concerned about the effects of deportation on families in general. She told me, "If I was in front of Obama, I would ask him, "How come you say that you'll help children, that children are the future of this country, and yet you have so many orphans? I asked if she meant children orphaned when their parents were deported and she said "yes." She said, "these children, in these [deportation] centers...for orphans...what memories are they going to have? Who is going to claim these children from Obama? Stop the deportations! Stop separating families!"

Sophia also drew connections between deportations and what she saw as the over involvement of government in private lives. She had a nephew who had called the police on his mother after she threatened him with physical punishment, and she was indignant that the police should interfere in a family's life. While she recognized that there were some cases of child abuse in which a child needed to be protected, she equated social workers with government agents that would lead to the removal of the child or the separation of the family through deportation. She did not trust the police,

and pointed out that police in her own country would have been familiar with the community and would have been able to more accurately determine how to help in a given situation without tearing apart the family.

Distance from Family and Social Support

Sophia might have been particularly sensitive to family separation as she was separated from her own two teenage daughters who she left behind when she emigrated. She hasn't been able to see them in nine years. She left them with family in order that she could earn money to support them in the United States. However, she greatly regretted that decision. She talked about her own mother who had fourteen children, and was so poor that they all ate "tortillas with salt," (meaning that they could not afford any other food) but still her mother refused to "give away" any of her kids. Sophia related what it is like for the mothers and children separated by migration:

That's what the children say to their mothers, when they leave there and come here: 'Why did you leave?' 'Oh, but I didn't have anything to give you.' 'No, but I would have eaten tortillas and beans with you.' ... You come here and you see them when they're twenty years old. My heart, there is a bone in my heart [my heart is broken], and now what? So, no, I say to the mothers, 'If you have children in another country, stay with them, struggle with them. Tomorrow they will thank you.'

Sophia, like many of the other mothers, kept in touch with family by daily phone calls, but does not have the legal documentation or financial means to visit. I asked her if returning to Honduras was a dream, and she said, "No, it is a priority." But when I asked when she might return, she said not until her young son was grown

and married. Then she would return home, to land and a house that she owned, and live simply although she would have no money. In the meantime, she sent money home to her daughters and her mother, who relied upon her monthly remittances to buy her heart medication.

Three other mothers also mentioned how far they felt from their families and regretted that their families had never met their children. Gloria and Mercedes both said they planned to send their kids to visit their families when they were older. The children, as U.S. Citizens, could obtain passports that allowed them to travel more freely, whereas their parents and grandparents could not.

Several of the women who lived with extended family, or had relatives close by, felt that they had a good support system. A number of others mentioned that they lived close to their husbands' families, who would provide emergency support when it was needed, but this wasn't the same as having their own families around. Several mothers mentioned how raising children away from their families was a very different, and difficult experience. Victoria said:

Because regularly in my country, the mom, the aunt, will always help you, with anything. Well for me, I'm here and I say that these really are *my* kids because they have cost me, in the sense that I have had to get around and not leave them alone.

Sophia expressed a similar sentiment about the loss of family and social support when asked if having her family closer helped when she was raising her girls in Honduras.

They helped a lot. With my daughters, with me when I was sick. They cooked me food, sent me to bed, and took care of my daughters. Here it's different.

There are some Hispanics, but not many. Nobody has time for anybody else. Everyone is working. And your neighbor, if you know her...it's different. There, you know everybody.

However, some of the mothers, although far from family, had found or created social support and community in different ways. Elena and her family traveled back and forth to a church in Maryland several times a week because that was their source of support and community. Camila reported feeling isolated and regretted that her kids were growing up without her family around, but had reached out to other mothers with young kids who lived in her neighborhood. She said that they had come to rely on each other for support and childcare. In her words, "I got to know them, and like they say, if we don't help each other, who is going to help us?"

Childcare and Children with special needs

Being far away from family was particularly worrisome for mothers in terms of lack of access to people that they trusted to watch their children. Victoria and her husband work opposite shifts so that they can take turns caring for their youngest daughter. Even so, Victoria feels guilty leaving her daughter and argues that Latina mothers have a harder time separating from their children because unlike American women who find it normal to put their child in daycare in order to work, Latina mothers are not accustomed to that practice. In her home country where extended families live together, "When one leaves to work, the other one stays with the whole family. The other one goes out, and another one stays. But there are always people at the house." With the current arrangement she feels particularly bad for her oldest

daughter who hardly sees her since Victoria leaves for work just before her daughter returns from school. But she says that when she told her oldest daughter that she would put the baby in daycare so that she could work in the days and be home in the afternoon, her daughter protested and said that it was more important that she spent time with the baby.

Again, acculturation was an important factor in attitudes towards daycare.

Guadalupe, who came to this country at fifteen and spoke fluent English, understood the difficulties with finding affordable childcare, but had come to believe that daycare could provide developmental benefits. She said:

I don't know if its necessarily like a cultural thing, but it's better to....like when you work, it's better to have a daycare...and lots of time people ask "why, it's so expensive!" but its also a lot of benefit for the child. They can grow a lot of areas, like their social-emotional, whatever....So in the Hispanic cultures it's more like, "ok, a family member can watch her" and it's cheap, but then you're forgetting the educational part, which is a big part of the child's life and I think that's a big plus that I would say more to encourage it, to take your child to a daycare.

Nicole, an American-born Latina, also seemed to have less concerns about sending her three children to school and daycare while she worked.

Alejandra wants to work, and has the potential to find steady employment since she is the only adult member of her family who is a U.S. citizen, but she has four children under the age of five, and her husband questions how much she will even earn after she has paid someone to care for the kids. Additionally, her oldest son has autism, and she says that she cannot find anyone who will watch him. A number of the mothers mentioned their child's special or unique needs as the reason why they would

not leave their children with non-family members. They did not trust that their children would be properly cared for. Gloria did hire someone to care for her son (who is hyperactive and has multiple medical problems) so that she could return to work, but her boyfriend told her to quit after one day when she came home to find that her son had been hit and mistreated.

Transportation

Finding convenient and consistent transportation was also a challenge, particularly as mothers of young children. Many families had only one car, which the father would take to work, leaving the mother and children without an easy way to get around or get to appointments. Sophia said that she paid a woman she knew thirty dollars to take her to an appointment, but when the woman arrived late she missed her appointment (and was therefore denied WIC coupons) and still had to pay for the ride. I asked her why she did not try using the bus, but she said she felt she could not due to her son's hyperactive behavior and tantrums. Gloria pays someone \$150 to bring her and her children from Kent County to the Children's Hospital in Wilmington each time her son with medical problems has an appointment. I asked her if she had sought state services to help with transportation and she said that there was a van that would pick her and her son up, but would not transport her other children and she did not have anyone to leave them with.

Camila told me of a recent time when she had a friend drop her and her children at the dentist for their appointment, but the woman never returned to pick her

up, so she had to walk home with three young children. She is particularly worried about what she would do in an emergency without a car. She says that the bus system is confusing and inconvenient; to get anywhere she would have to leave hours in advance and transfer several times (with young children in tow). Living without a car leaves her feeling isolated as well:

Well, being here for me, I tell my husband, since I don't work, my life is very shut-in. In Mexico it's very different. In Mexico if you live on a ranch, you go out, you go visit your mom, your grandmother, someone else. And here no, here you can't walk anywhere; you're shut-in. To go anywhere you need a car.

Opportunities

Despite the many challenges that the women outlined, they clearly saw their decision to immigrate as bringing many positive opportunities for their children and their families.

Employment and Material Gain

The two main reasons that the women gave for immigrating to the United States and to Delaware in particular were: to be closer to family (theirs or their husband's), and to seek better employment. Often they were following husbands and boyfriends who were looking for work in construction or agriculture. Alejandra and Sofia both had husbands who worked in construction, and they worried often about where they would next find work because of the lack of day-to-day job stability. However, 11 of the 14 women had also been employed outside the home, either before

their young children were born, or currently. Those that were not currently working seemed eager to return to work and help by increasing the family income.

Mercedes, a 24-year-old mother originally from El Salvador explained how hard it was to provide for a family where she came from:

Now, life there is very hard. There is almost no work, and if you work you are earning only a little bit, and the children have a lot of limitations. And here, if you work, the children can grow up with more benefits, better in all aspects: food, clothes, everything is better here than there.

Mercedes shared that in El Salvador she might work for ten dollars a day, versus here she could make \$8 an hour working at her job at a fast food restaurant.

However, the work that most immigrant women found was difficult and demanding. When I asked Sofia whether she liked her previous job cleaning rooms at a hotel, she replied, “Oh no. It’s too difficult, and for \$6.50 an hour? No.” She had more positive experiences working under the table cleaning houses and caring for seniors, but the benefits of those jobs depended upon the generosity of her employer, and that varied greatly from place to place. Gabriela, a 36-year-old mother of four from Mexico had recently begun working part-time caring for horses at a racetrack. I asked her if she needed to speak English at her job and she said no, because only Latinos worked there. In fact, she had gotten the job through her daughter who had previously been employed at the racetrack but had been badly injured when she was kicked in the back by a horse. Despite knowing this danger, Gabriela was anxious to work and contribute financially to the family.

Services and Resources

Perhaps the greatest change that mothers identified in raising their children in the United States was the opportunities presented by access to services and resources. Almost all of the women's young children received Medicaid and WIC services, and some qualified for food stamps. Although these women live on very limited incomes, they took great comfort in the idea that there were services and agencies willing to help them with basic needs like food for their children. Adriana, who reported her family income at less than \$500 a month, explained how she was able to make the food coupons given to her by WIC enough to feed her family. Comparing life here to life in her native El Salvador, Mercedes said, "The other difference is that here there is help in the form of food for the children, they don't have to go without healthcare and food."

Access to medical care for their children was a major benefit mentioned by nearly every mother. When asked about why she preferred raising children in the United States, Gloria responded:

For medical reasons, when they are sick here they are seen quickly. There are more specializations than in another country. They have access to medications, and there is a better probability if they are sick with something genetic, here they can help them with treatment. These are things that in my country, they don't have.

Sofia's 2-½ year-old son had some developmental delays and received services from organizations that provided speech and occupational therapy. She was grateful because she knew these are services that he would never have received in Honduras.

Although the women were thrilled that these services existed, there were times that their access to these services for their children were curtailed by practical challenges such as transportation or the language barrier, and other times when they encountered resistance and discrimination from staff. However, overall, most mothers were very happy with how they were treated by the majority of people they interacted with, and dismissed their few negative experiences as a small price to pay compared to the greater opportunities for their children.

Perhaps because most of the children of these mothers were very young, the opportunity for better education was not mentioned as often as the benefits of other services. However, when I asked Maria whether she was happy she was raising her two-year-old son in the U.S. instead of in El Salvador, she replied:

I want him to study here, to prepare. Because for me, this country has a lot of opportunities...and a lot of doors are opened for children. So I want him to one day have a profession, something that he wants to study. These opportunities in my country are difficult. There is such poverty. Even if you want to study, your economic level doesn't allow it. There, there isn't help to go to school. That's the way it is. If he's there, when he's bigger and he wants to prepare himself, there isn't any help, help for them to follow the careers that they want. I want him to prepare, that he makes something of his life here.

Raising Young Children in a Different Cultural Context

The mothers were asked if they thought there were major cultural differences between their countries of origin and the United States. All of them answered “yes,” but had difficulty describing those differences in specific terms. Many referred to the opportunities available in the U.S. or structural differences such as reduced crime or corruption. Others mentioned specific holidays, such as Halloween or Thanksgiving,

which were not celebrated in their home countries. Alejandra was one of the few able to articulate specific values that she found different:

Sometimes I feel like freedom [is different]. Because although in Mexico we have freedom of speech, sometimes it doesn't count, and here it does. Your freedom is a precious thing. Here they have more respect for human rights and in my country sometimes there is too much corruption.

Alejandra also identified the importance of family and hard work in Mexican culture.

Although identifying cultural differences in a broader sense was challenging, when focusing on cultural differences in child-rearing beliefs and practices, the women had plenty to say. Practical everyday differences were noted in sleeping practices (co-sleeping vs. having children sleep in their own rooms), feeding practices and nutrition, alternative or “traditional” health beliefs, not taking children outside in the cold, and family size. For instance, Adriana shared how different it was here where she had been told that her daughters should sleep in their own room. She had grown up in a two-bedroom house with her brothers and sisters, mother and father, and grandparents, and said that everyone always had someone to sleep with. When asked if she thought her daughters having their own room was better, or if that change had been difficult, she said:

Yes, it's difficult, because for example, when I was little I slept with my parents but in contrast, they have to sleep in their own room and they say, “Mommy, I want you to sleep with us!” or “Mommy, I want to sleep with you in your bed.” And there no, because we had someone to sleep with and that's where we slept. We all slept together, and there was never, “Mommy, but I'm scared.” There we didn't have that.

When asked why she felt she needed to make this change, Adriana said that she was told by doctors and nurses that it was the right way for her children to sleep in their own room.

Sofia had been encouraged to spend more time outside with her high energy son by a nurse who came to her house to help with occupational therapy. Sofia tried to explain the nurse that in her culture, you did not take children out in the cold, particularly if they had been sick.

When it's very cold, not too much, but when it's cold, you must take care with the children. We have a belief that when the baby has a cough, he can't drink cold water, can't get near to the fridge, needs to have on socks or shoes, a long-sleeve shirt and pants. And here I see that's not true. They give them cold water, they eat ice, and go outside, and I just can't, this is my son, he'll die!

So when the nurse wanted them to go outside when there was a cold wind blowing, Sophia refused. She pointed out, "When he's sick and needs to go to the hospital, it will be me bringing him, not her."

Several of the women mentioned that they came from large families with many kids, but had decided for different reasons to limit the number of children that they had. Sofia, mother of three from Honduras, spoke about the poverty of her family when her mother attempted to care for fourteen children. Although she admired her mother's refusal to "give away" any of those children to make her life easier, Sophia also clearly felt that having so many children created a difficult economic burden. When asked if she wanted more children after her three, Elena said that she loved babies, but it would be unfair to her kids since she lived in constant fear of

deportation. Victoria expressed wonder at how her parents raised eight daughters and a son. She recalled telling her home visitor,

It's worth it to spend time with your kids because my mouth is filled with the best things to say about my parents, and in the future I want them [her daughters] to say good things about me.

Nevertheless, she was happy with her two daughters and could not imagine managing with so many children as her parents did.

Respect and “Liberal” Parenting

Many of the mothers mentioned respect as an important value in their culture. Alejandra and Adriana both thought this was a value shared between their own cultures and the culture of the U.S. Adriana said, “In Mexico and here, they are learning the same things, in different ways, but it’s still the same, because we have to teach them to respect people.” Sofia, who saw respect for parents as a very important part of her culture, was concerned that the balance between protecting children and respecting parents was upset in the United States. She felt that the whole family suffered when children were not taught to show proper respect for their parents.

Victoria complained that American parents were too “liberal” with their children. Her 13-year-old daughter often complained to her that her friends were allowed to wear make-up and certain types of clothing to school, and Victoria worried about that influence on her child. Maria said that her parents were much stricter than her, and that she was more relaxed about her children’s behavior, but saw that as more of a generational difference that was true also in her native El Salvador. Nicole, an

American of Salvadoran descent sometimes disagreed with her parents over the way she was raising her children, which she admitted was a lot less strict than how she was raised:

Cause you know, I feel like Hispanic parents are a lot stricter on the kids than any other culture really. I know every culture is strict in their own ways, but I just feel like Hispanic parents are like....they're either too strict or they don't care at all [laughs]. I feel like there's really not that in between. So, it's definitely one of the things that I try to, to be conscious of, the way I discipline them, like I try the groundings and the...like I try not to do the spanking at all... I really try more of the rewards and consequences type of raising, which is not the way I was raised at all, not even a little [laughs].

Camila, interestingly, felt that children and teenagers were watched more closely in the U.S. and that in Mexico they have more freedom, and parents there are more relaxed and “liberal” because they feel at home in their own community.

Family interconnectedness

Gabriela, a 36-year-old mother of four originally from Mexico, spoke at length about her concerns about her teenage daughter. Her daughter had moved out of the family home when she turned eighteen. Gabriela said, “Yes, there is different thinking here in the United States. And there it's not like this. There they stay here [at home] until they are older, they stay with their mom. Until you get married.” She said her daughter decided she was grown up and wanted to move out, but was only gone for two or three months before she returned. Gabriela said that her daughter “started seeing the other side. Yes, it's difficult [to live on her own]. That here she doesn't pay anything. Here I feed her, and they just have to show up to eat.” Gabriela felt that the

way that she raised her young children was not much different from in Mexico, but that dealing with older children and teenagers in the U.S. was much more difficult.

Unsurprisingly, given the emphasis on *familismo* in Latino families noted in the literature review, a number of other mothers referred to the importance and interconnectedness of family in their culture and how that differed from what they observed in the United States. Alejandra simply stated “family is very important to us,” but Victoria had a lot more to say on the topic:

Another thing also, in our culture when family needs help, there is always help. Although the children are 18 years old, it isn't important that they leave the house. Although grandparents are elderly, they stay with their children. And that is something I appreciate a lot because that is something that I feel sorry about, or not sorry but sad, when people are elderly here. When there are desolates in the grocery store and there is no one that is helping, no one that is carrying things for them. And in my country it is different. Grandparents stay with their children. Sometimes there are many [in the house] but there is always someone they can stay with, who will serve them, who will help them, attend to them, and the children when they marry can stay in the same house or in the same...they make their own house but there they have bigger lots, so if they stay you can walk ten feet and they have their house, so they can come and go.

Overstressed Families

Two mothers had very similar thoughts on the negative impact of a highly routinized and overstressed American lifestyle on their children, and were nostalgic for the free time they enjoyed as children with their families growing up in Mexico. Guadalupe shared:

It's very different because in Mexico it was...we don't have a lot of technology, and if we do, kids are not as exposed as here. They get to play different games outside in the streets and there's no problem and [they] get together with neighbors and play and pretty much alone in the evening. And

here its more like...work, it's more like a routine. OK, I have to work, I have to make dinner, shower and go to sleep, so it's like no time.

Many of these same thoughts were echoed by Alejandra:

Because here, children don't have freedom. It's like a very routine life. Their mother has to work, and they go to school, then home. If you have a good, a really good job, you might have the opportunity to take them out every once in a while. But no, in my country, even though parents work, they have more time to spend with their kids and there isn't as much pressure as there is here to say, 'I have to pay the rent, I have to...' In my country, you also have to pay for the same things, your rent, your lights, everything, but there is like more time to experience life with your kids, and you spend more time with them. And here there is more pressure, and just a minute with your kids, with so much stress caused by work. And how are you going to make your kids stay like this? [indicates kids sitting and watching TV] If you have the opportunity to find a house that has a little piece of land to play, well that's an advantage, but if not, you stick your kids in front of the TV. And that's very different from my experience.

Changes in Parenting due to Migration

The immigrant mothers were asked whether they believed their child-rearing practices and values had changed as a result of their migration. Despite the examples given above of the many differences of raising their children in the U.S., almost all these women claimed that their childrearing beliefs had not been impacted by migration. Some qualified that response by explaining the need to adapt or be flexible. In regards to whether her thoughts on how to raise children had changed, Victoria said:

In regards to what I think, no. I know that the way of living there is different than here. One tries to adapt to this lifestyle. In some ways it's better, speaking more openly about your children about certain things, but there are other ways in which I hold on to [values from] there.

Guadalupe, said she was trying to raise her children similarly to how she was raised, but she also knew she needed to be flexible. For instance, her mother never allowed her to sleep over at anyone's house, but she knew that was common among her daughter's friends and so she occasionally allowed her to as well. Maria and Mercedes both argued that their values and thoughts about raising children had not been impacted by the change in cultural context, because those were things that were more family-specific, and it was up to parents to determine.

Raising Bicultural Children

Nearly all of the mothers agreed that they wanted their children to be raised biculturally, and able to identify with multiple cultures and nationalities¹⁰. Here are a few examples of their responses when asked what culture they wanted their children to identify with, or whether they thought they could have both:

He should have both. He should know that he comes from both. He was born here, but you know when someone is from another country. You can't say, 'oh you're from the United States, you're going to learn this' when we come from another culture. So, he should learn both (Maria)

Yes! Yes, because, because she has to learn [the culture of] here because she was born here. She has to learn the culture of here but she needs to learn our culture because most of her family is from there. (Mercedes)

I would like them to have both, because there are things about my culture...well, I don't know everything about the culture of the United States. I

¹⁰ Several of the families had parents from different countries of origin (i.e. El Salvador & Mexico, Puerto Rico & Peru, Honduras & El Salvador) meaning that their children were exposed to at least three cultures and could be better described as "multi-cultural" as opposed to "bicultural"

was studying a bit about the culture of the United States...this I like, but at the same time, I also want to tell them about the culture of my country, because it is different. I think the best would be to mix them. (Victoria)

You can say that I have my thoughts and values very deeply rooted. And these are things that I'm trying to impart, but I know that my...they were born in one country. That I have to show them two different cultures, mine as much as the one they are going to have here. I can't just show them the culture of a country that they are not going to have here. So, it is necessary to be flexible, show them both, but without losing my beliefs either. So let them learn both. (Alejandra)

A few of the moms admitted that they would prefer if their children identified more with Latino culture. Sophia shared that she hoped her son adopted more of her culture because she felt that way he would understand her better and respect her more. Gabriela would like her children to have both cultures, but laughed when she said that they were really more American and would only eat American food like pizza. When asked if this bothered her, she replied, "No, I don't worry about it."

Other mothers noted that the decision was really going to be up to their children. Camila said, "I prefer that they identify as Mexican, but as I said, they are the ones who will have to decide." She also pointed out that this decision, and identity, might be different for different children in the same family. Her oldest daughter had grown up in the household only speaking Spanish, and had only learned English when she went to school, but her younger son now spoke better English than Spanish since he used English exclusively with his sister.

Gloria, a 27-year-old mother of three from Guatemala, also recognized that it would ultimately be the children who decided:

The truth is this, as they are growing up here, they are...their minds are open to this country. But we are showing them a little bit about the customs of ours. Although we won't show them 100%, maybe 20% or 30% out of 100. That's what we're seeing with my oldest child. He says, 'I'm from here. I'm going to go to where my mom came from, I'm going to go to see what it's like, what's there, what's not there, but I won't stay there.' That's what he tells me. And he's only just turning six. So, it depends on them.

Victoria was laughing when she recalled, "And like I say to [her daughter] 'If your dad is Mexican, and your mom is Mexican, what are you?' She says, 'American!'"

The Intergenerational Sharing of Culture

When asked, the mothers told of a number of ways that they shared their culture with their children. Cooking and eating food from their countries/cultures of origin was the most common way of sharing their culture with their children. As Alejandra said, "They should know that, things that we do like simple cooking. I don't want them to lose that." Nearly every mom had a story about sharing traditional food with her children, with varying levels of success. Nicole, an American of Salvadoran descent said, "a lot of the recipes that I cook, are recipes either that I grew up on or my husband grew up on. Which they love! They don't like too much to try, you know, other things." However, Gabriela said that while she will cook for her kids, they prefer "American" food like pizza. Daniela, an American of Puerto Rican descent, shared that it is very important to her children's father, who is Peruvian, that the children eat everything they are served.

Holidays were another way that immigrant mothers shared their own culture with their children. Many mentioned that they also celebrated "American" holidays

like Thanksgiving or Halloween, often at the request of their children who learned about them at school. However, they also gave examples of adapting these holidays around their own cultural upbringing. Gabriela allows her kids to celebrate Halloween by trick-or-treating, but also makes offerings to her ancestors, such as is the tradition with *Dia de los Muertos*. Guadalupe talked about the way her family incorporated holidays from both Mexico and the U.S.:

For example...we don't celebrate Thanksgiving in Mexico, but we do celebrate it here with my family, because everybody is doing it and talking about it so it's kinda like mixing both cultures. We do celebrate Christmas, but we also do the *posadas* from Mexican traditions, and on the 25th for Christmas we get together with the family like you do here, but we also do January the 6th [*Dia de los Reyes*/Day of the Kings].

Other mothers mentioned celebrating the *Posadas* or *Dia de los Reyes*, and most used holidays as a time to serve traditional food and gather with family. When asked how she shared her Salvadoran culture with her children Nicole said:

Definitely, the Holidays, that's a big thing...I think the only holiday we don't really celebrate any differently is Thanksgiving. But Christmas and New Years we go to our families and we do the whole big party where we do the *tamales* and the *pupusas* and stuff like that, and do the traditional feast with them.

Finally, Mercedes mentioned that in her native El Salvador they celebrated birthdays slightly differently, so it was important to her that her daughter's upcoming second birthday was celebrated as it should be according to her culture.

Language was another major way that mothers shared their culture with their kids. According to Maria, "First things first, they should speak Spanish. They should speak Spanish, because that is our language." Other moms mentioned encouraging their kids to speak Spanish at home because they saw them becoming more and more

comfortable in English. Speaking of her three-year-old, Sofia said, “I want him to talk to me in Spanish. He’s already speaking in English, and I say ‘ No! No!’” When Victoria’s oldest daughter speaks English at home, Victoria warns her to speak Spanish,

Because when we go to our country, there are a lot of things you don’t understand, like big words. I would like you to learn to speak to my family in Spanish. I don’t want you to talk to me in English because at the same time those around us will feel bad for not speaking it, and sometimes people think that when you speak in English you might be saying things that you shouldn’t.

Being able to speak Spanish in order to communicate with extended family was important to a number of other mothers, particularly those who were more acculturated and at times spoke English with their children at home. Guadalupe said, “it’s not only the benefit of them knowing both languages but with the family, both our families don’t speak English.” Nicole felt that teaching her children Spanish was more difficult since her husband and her were both bilingual,

We’re trying to teach them Spanish and English...it’s not that simple, especially because my husband and I are so fluent in English, so it’s a lot harder for us to teach them both languages. But they do, they get a lot of Spanish from my parents, and my in-laws as well because they speak both languages but their main language is still Spanish.

Daniela was the only mother who communicated solely with her children in English, she claimed her Puerto Rican Spanish was “bad” and she preferred that her kids learn more correct Spanish from her Peruvian husband and his family.

Reflecting on Early Head Start

The third research question of this study focused on how immigrant Latina mothers negotiated their interactions and experiences with the Early Head Start program. How did they feel about the advice and services that they were provided by home visitors, and did they feel that their own cultural beliefs were respected?

New Parenting Practices and Information

When the mothers were asked if the advice and information that home visitors shared was new information that was different from their own thoughts and beliefs about childrearing values and practices, all the women claimed that the information they were receiving was very much congruent with their own parenting practices, with a few exceptions. Nutrition and discipline were the two main areas that mothers identified learning new information and strategies. Overwhelmingly, they welcomed this information, although some noted that implementing new strategies was sometimes easier said than done. Although the women claimed that the advice that they were receiving was not surprising or new information, they nonetheless found it helpful.

Several women noted that the guidance of home visitors was particularly useful for first time mothers who may not know much about the development of a baby. Victoria shared how she had learned about expected milestones and the development of her child and that had helped her. Mercedes said, “I think it’s very good, me I like this program because there are things that truthfully as a first time

mom you don't know and it really helps you a lot." When asked if she found the program helpful, Elena answered:

That is a very important question. Yes, she [the home visitor] has really helped me a lot, a lot about how to help my baby and her growth. It is different because there in Guatemala there isn't this type of help, so when you see it here you say, "Wow, how beautiful that they take you into account." And I feel that it is better because usually when someone has their first baby, this help is very important because they don't know anything.

Nutrition

Many of the mothers mentioned that one area in which they did learn new information from their home visitors was in regards to nutrition. Alejandra explained how some of her cultural views on nutrition and health had been influenced through the program,

In Mexico sometimes we say, 'if he's fat, he's healthy,' but that's not true and sometimes you might give them things that they shouldn't have because 'if he's fat, he's healthy,' and that's not true. And now we have been trying to, well the program has been trying to change some things, well for me this is what it has changed, is one of the things that has changed my culture and the culture from here. I don't like vegetables, and I also don't make them [the kids] eat them because I wasn't taught that, to eat vegetables. And here, yes, I'm learning that it's important.

Adriana also noted that she's trying to get her family to eat more vegetables because of what she's learned in the program, although she also admitted that it was a difficult change for the family to make. She felt that she had the confidence to tell her home visitor when something was not working for her family, or to ask about other ways she could try cooking new things that might help.

Discipline

The topic about which the most mothers claimed to have been influenced by the Early Head Start program was in the area of discipline. Several of the mothers shared that they came from families and cultural backgrounds where physical punishment was the norm, so the different forms of discipline suggested by Early Head Start were new to them. Mercedes said:

In El Salvador they punish children differently when they don't listen. If they don't respond to directions there, they punish them differently and here no, here if one is behaving badly they punish them by taking away a toy, or the TV, things that they like.

When asked if she liked this new strategy for discipline, she replied:

Yes, I think so. Yes, I have liked it and it has helped a lot. For example, the one [home visitor] who comes to work with the girl, she has taught me how to correct her because she is a little...how do you say it...she has a bad temper. And when she wants to do something, she grabs things and throws them. So she [the home visitor] has shown me that I can sit her in a seat, have her sit and stay there until I tell her that she can get up. And that has helped because she knows, she knows when I sit her down that she was doing something wrong. Yes, it has helped me.

Discipline was a complicated topic for Daniela because she had grown up in what she referred to as an abusive household and she was determined to raise her children differently. Nevertheless, the new strategies for discipline that she was learning were sometimes still surprising and a struggle to implement. When asked what new things she had learned from the program she said,

Umm...kinda like about the hitting part...you know that was not how I was raised, so I have no experience of "Oh, oh you've been good today so we're gonna go get your toy." No, I didn't have that. If you've been good, you're good. If you've been bad, you got your butt whooped.

Since Daniela had been raised with much different strategies and values, she sometimes struggled with how to discipline her children non-violently, but her home visitor had been helpful in guiding her.

Yes, it took some talking and she showed me lots of other ways that I can do it, ...you know we talked about it, she showed me some ways. Actually, now we do a chart. She showed me how to do a chart. You know, he did good, he did this...so he can earn like a prize or something....so that was very helpful.

Gloria shared how nice it was to receive positive feedback from her home visitor about the way she talked to her children. She said, “how I educate my children, is I tell them not to touch anything if it’s bad, and I talk to them, they will obey. And she [the home visitor] told me that she likes the way I’m teaching my children. That she sees that I talk to them and that I first give them a chance to try to listen to me.”

Overall, the mothers reacted positively to new suggestions for how to discipline their children, although some admitted it was sometimes a struggle to deal with frustrations and avoid physical punishment. Others, although they were willing to try, had trouble explaining new methods to family members who thought they weren’t being strict enough, or believed in alternative methods. For instance, when Sofia struggled with the behavior of her son with developmental delays, her mother suggested that his behavior would improve if she prayed and asked God for his help and guidance. However, some of the mothers were eager to share their new techniques with other family members. Gabriela, told of how when her husband wanted to spank their son for fighting with his cousin, she told him not to, and to use time out instead.

Relationship with Home Visitors

When home visitors did suggest new strategies or practices, what was it like for these immigrant mothers? Did they feel that they could raise concerns or objections? Did they feel respected by the home visitor? In response to these questions, the mothers unanimously felt that their home visitors respected them and their beliefs. Most felt very connected with their home visitors and described a warm and close relationship with them. Maria said that if she ever was uncomfortable with a suggestion that she “would have the confidence to talk with her about anything.”

Similarly, Alejandra shared:

For me, I have the confidence and...yes, more than anything confidence to say, ‘This I don’t like, this I do.’ She gives me confidence, security, to be able to say ‘this yes, this no.’ Although in my case, I haven’t found anything that I’ve said, ‘no, I don’t like this.’

Daniela and Nicole, both Americans of Hispanic descent, shared that they approached the home visitors’ suggestions with an open-mind, because they knew that the home visitors were only there to help. Nicole said that she tried to implement the suggestions a few times before she decided whether it worked for her. When asked if she felt comfortable disagreeing with her home visitor, Daniela said, “I’m not really a disagree person. I try to take what you tell me and let it sink in and kinda use it.”

However, she also shared how her and her home visitor had worked through new approaches to disciplining which challenged beliefs that Daniela had from her own childhood, but which she was eager to try with her own children.

Gloria and Victoria both mentioned how having their home visitors raise concerns about their children's development was a potentially difficult thing to discuss. However, they both welcomed the input of what they saw as trusted, well-informed observers. As Victoria said, "I told her, if you see something or you know that something is not right with my daughter, I won't be upset about what you tell me." Victoria knew that the home visitor had her child's best interests at heart and she wanted to be proactive about getting her child help.

Home Visitor Ethnicity

Latina mothers were also asked whether the ethnicity of their home visitor mattered. Did they feel that they could relate better with home visitors from their same ethnicity, or their same nationality/culture? Alejandra had mixed feelings on this topic, and had this to say about her home visitor, "we've had almost the same experiences. And I have gotten Latino people, that just like me they know a little bit about us, and we are compatible." On the other hand, she later added:

It's not specifically that they should be Latinas because for me, the only difficulty is the language. If not, maybe I would feel the same about a Latina person as about a person from another race that had helped us. I think I'd still have a positive experience in the program. For me, I don't think that would change, the only difference for me is the language.

Several other mothers agreed, that really what was important was that their home visitor spoke Spanish well and could communicate with them.

Gloria also agreed that language was the most important thing, but hinted that a shared cultural background did help in improving communication.

Truthfully, our way of thinking is similar, almost the same. Well, the first teacher [home visitor] that I had was American. Now, the teacher that I have is Hispanic. There is a little more connection because we speak the same language.

When asked to clarify whether it was the language or culture that created that connection, she added:

The first teacher who taught him was very very nice, but there were certain details that I wouldn't understand from her, and she wouldn't understand from me. But, I tell you, the teacher I have now, yes. We connect a little more. But they teach the same. They teach the same because the one from before and the one from now, they treat the children with affection and they try to see the advances they are making from week to week.

Mercedes and Victoria argued that the culture or ethnicity of the home visitor was not really important, what mattered was the communication and connection that there was between home visitor and parent.

Suggestions and Reflections

Overall, Latina immigrant mothers were very positive about their participation in the SFEHS program. When asked for ways the program could be improved to serve the needs of their family and other Latino families, most said they were satisfied with the program as it was and could think of no suggestions. Even those that had suggestions were quick to convey that they greatly enjoyed the program, and were happy that these services were provided for their children.

Adriana mentioned that she wished that the home visitor had more time to spend with her child, and specifically that she would like to see more interactions between the home visitor and her child, which she could observe and learn from. This

raises an interesting perspective since Early Head Start emphasizes focusing on the relationship between parent and child, so home visitors are trained to avoid too much direct interaction with the children. Nicole suggested the need for more home visitors who spoke Spanish. She thought that there were probably many more Latino families that would be interested in the program if there were Spanish-speaking home visitors to serve them.

Elena mentioned that she loved participating in swim lessons with her child, a class offered by SFEHS in conjunction with the local YMCA. She looks forward to participating in more socializations and meeting other mothers. Gloria also mentioned the swim lessons, saying she would have liked to participate but because she had multiple children she was not able to offer the one-to-one ratio that the program required. She also has not participated as fully in socializations as she would like because her oldest son's medical appointments keep her very busy. Victoria, who described something that sounded very much like socializations when asked what she would add to the program, admitted that she had never attended any of the socializations because she did not have a working car for transportation. The challenges of childcare and transportation that these mothers faced in their everyday lives were also limiting their ability to participate fully in the Early Head Start program.

Home Visitors

Analysis of data gathered from home visitors revealed the following themes: Latino Family Culture, Home Visitor Backgrounds and Relationships with Families, Supporting Latino Families in Early Head Start, and Gender. Findings on gender will be analyzed in the discussion chapter along with those from the same theme gathered from Latina mothers.

Demographics

In total, seven home visitors participated in either individual interviews or small focus groups. Five of these home visitors worked in the program located in New Castle County and two worked in Kent County. All were female, and all were mothers themselves, having at least one child. Three listed their age as being between 30-39 years, three between 40-49, and one was between 60-69 years of age. One had a high school degree, two had associate degrees, and four had bachelor degrees. Three of the seven had worked as home visitors for more than five years, whereas one had between 3-5 years of experience, and one between 1-3 years of experience. Two home visitors had just started working in that capacity in the last year.

Six of the seven home visitors who were interviewed spoke native or fluent Spanish. The other home visitor was interviewed because although she did not speak more than minimal Spanish, she worked with Latino families when the mother spoke English well. This home visitor was born in the U.S. and identified as non-Hispanic. One other home visitor was born and raised in the U.S. and identified as “half”

Hispanic because her father was Hispanic. The five remaining home visitors identified as Hispanic or Latino. Four of these five were of Puerto Rican descent: one was born in the U.S. but spent substantial time during her childhood in Puerto Rico, another came to the U.S. at a young age, and two did not come to the U.S. until they were adults. The final home visitor was born in Colombia, but came to the U.S. as a young child.

Latino Family Culture

All of the home visitors who were interviewed felt that culture played a major role in the parenting values and practices of the Latino families they visited. Overall, the home visitors had very positive impressions of Latino family culture and specifically the care with which Latina mothers treated their children.

Cultural Characteristics of Latino Families

Several home visitors noted that working with Latino families was easier and more rewarding than their experiences with non-Hispanic families because of the openness and welcoming nature of the Latino families. Ana¹¹ said,

So, what I have noticed is that the Hispanic families they, you know, they let you come to the house and bring the relationship is just...it's just completely different, they are more outgoing. So, the Anglos, they are more like closed. They are not exactly like...the culture is...to me culture is the difference.

¹¹ Home visitors have been given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

Isabel agreed that Latino families were more open, and noted a number of other positive characteristics she had observed in her work with these families,

Most of my Hispanic families, they're very punctual and they never miss a visit. You know, they're very...when you say, and if they're not there, they're always calling me or texting me, making sure that, you know, I know that they're not going to be there, and then when I go in they're very hospitable and you know they sit down with you and they talk to you and they open up. With my non-Hispanic, it's a struggle sometimes to, you know, have them engage with their children.

Isabel felt that culturally Latinos were particularly “warm,” while the American families she worked with were more defensive. She hypothesized that the American families had more experiences working within the system, and therefore were more jaded towards outsiders and had experienced judgment when seeking help in the past. In contrast, she saw that Latino families relied more upon each other and their community, and also that from their cultural perspective Latina mothers who stayed home with their children were “doing what they're supposed to be doing” as opposed to being criticized for not seeking outside employment to escape poverty.

A specific attachment or closeness with their children was also considered to be a trait of Latino families, and Latina mothers in particular. Kate noted that she had observed, both as a home visitor and during time spent in Central America, that assumptions she had been taught in school about people with a low socioeconomic status did not hold true in her experiences with Latino families.

You know we're always learning that the way that poor people...that a lot of times, the way people treated their kids and the child abuse and the stress and everything like that came from poverty came from that place...but these are people that are very poor and they were so loving to their children, so caring and even more...and I have a child now, I can't even be as loving as that. It

just comes from a place that is natural, just their natural way of talking to them is that, “oh you know *mi vida, mi cielo* [my life, my heaven]” all the time, even when they’re bad or misbehaving I should say. But the patience and even like their child is their life and they want to bring them everywhere and so I was...had it occurring to me necessarily, we don’t have to always say, “oh its because you know the socioeconomic, they’re in a place...and this is why they don’t treat their children well.”

Samantha thought that the importance placed on children might be particularly strong because of the ties lost through migration, that being away from other family and friends meant that the level of attachment to children grew. She described Latina mothers as very “nurturing” and when asked to explain what she meant, replied:

You know, constantly going on, the touching them, the kissing, the...you know, it’s not just feeding them, OK let’s get done. It’s like caressing their hair, the face, they pat them, they hug them, they touch them. They, you know, the baby gets up, they change them and it’s the lotion, right away. They clean the baby with a little damp towel and there’s the lotion so the baby smells pretty. They’re changing their diaper. I mean, the attention they give to this infant, it’s...it’s just beautiful.

Other home visitors mentioned the prevalence of co-sleeping and breastfeeding in Latino families, and how this helped contribute to as sense of closeness and care.

In describing the differences between the Latino and American families that she served, Isabel said,

I mean I don’t know, specifically I feel Hispanic families are more nurturing, I’m going to take care of you and the American families are more, you need to grow up and learn how to...like they’re already thinking, you’re going to grow up and I need you out of here by 18 or I need you to be self-sufficient. I can’t wait until the bus gets here just so you can get on it, and then I have my Hispanic families, “oh, but he’s so little to go to Head Start. Like I can’t imagine him going on the bus by himself!” And my American families are like, “ When is the bus coming?!” (laughs) So you know, it’s been like being able to balance, it’s one or the other, you know. You have ones that are really like, you know, not that there’s anything wrong with, but still breastfeeding

until they're 2 years old and then my English families are like straight to the bottle.

Samantha also mentioned the way the Latina mothers were concerned about sending their preschool aged children on the bus to Head Start, and would arrive at the bus stop early to make sure they were there when the bus arrived. Laura noted a difference in the attention given to children, and the expectation in American families that parents worked while the children were in childcare. Since most of the Latino families were two parent families, the expectation was that mothers would be home with their children, or at least there to get them off the bus (although interviews with the mothers showed that many of them worked at least part-time, but scheduled that work around their families' schedules).

Kate noted differences in the ways that children were looked upon in Latino culture as compared to mainstream American opinion:

Its also part of the larger culture here that really thinks of children kind of as something you have to endure, a pain in the neck. You want time away from them; you need time away from them. If you're going to go out, you definitely want to find them a babysitter, you don't want to bring them or you can't enjoy yourself. It's always about getting them out of the way so that you can live your life. I mean that's really....and people speak to the idea in the United States of "we love children," but they're not the center, center of our life, because we want to do a lot of things with life and we want to have kids kinda riding along, ok. But, and this doesn't just come from the extensive time I've spent in Central America it's also when I was in Spain, it was the same thing. Like, people are out in a bar for happy hour, their kids are there playing on the floor and nobody thinks anything of it because we would never do anything without your child because they're like the most precious thing in your life.

Kate explained how this closeness with children extended into the teenage years and beyond. She noted how American children are encouraged to be independent from a

very early age, sleeping in separate rooms and being cared for by non-family members. Kate pointed out how children are pushed to be independent, and then parents are upset when their teenagers do not want to spend time with them, or shut them out of their lives.

Home visitors were also aware of the conflict created in Latino families when teenagers raised in the United States attempted to move out of the family home.

Samantha described this situation as it affected her families:

Very unfamiliar, very strange, against some of their own values, because they keep their children home. So for them to have a teenager that wants to move out at 17, 18 and do whatever the heck they want to do because they're old enough and they want to be with their friends, stay overnight with their friends, go move in with a friend....That's you know, it's something they fight on a daily basis when they have that teenage child, because families live together until you know I have a job and I have money and I'm going to get my own house...So, it's strange for them that a child wants to move out of the house. Why would you want to move? You're provided for here, you have....so it's very strange to them, and they do not encourage that....I've had families with teenagers and that's a daily battle.

Kate reiterated how this struggle grew out of different cultural understandings of parenting, with Latino parents encouraging their children to stay at home at least until they got married, but American parents feeling that they had "failed" if they had not raised a child that was ready to move out on their own by a certain age.

Julie noted that from her perspective, Latino families tended to be more tuned into their kids and thought that this was perhaps due to always being around extended family and growing up around young children. She shared that she had noticed at socializations and family events that older siblings in Latino families often took

responsibility and cared for younger siblings or relatives, often without even being asked.

This emphasis on the importance of family in Latino culture was echoed by other home visitors. Samantha said,

And another thing that....the culture of our clients has, is family. Family is the most important thing. They're here and they don't make a lot of money, but compared to what their families are making back in their home country, they live with all the luxury. They will always send money home. They might not have enough for their groceries, but they'll send money home. You know. It's like, I'm looking at the mom like OMG you don't even have....and another thing I wondered at one time was...how do you have a birthday party and have this that and the other for your child, how do you do that? Easy. Everybody pitches in. I didn't know that. Everybody pitches in. When it's a baptism, there are like 5 or 10 godparents. One brings the shoes. One buys the dress. One buys the cake. One buys the food. One buys the drinks. I'm like, wow! No wonder, yeah, that way, yeah. So, the child has this many god parents, even if only one goes to the altar, but she's got all these god parents that they all helped, you know. I'm like, that is beautiful.

Julie also noted the importance of family in providing a support system.

That's one, but I also see they, if there is any family around, even if it's not necessarily the most comfortable relationship, the assumption is that they're going to play a role in either being a support system to the extent that they can or they want them to be, but that those...that their children play with the relatives' children that it's just kinda a given it seems to me, and I think to a greater extent than some of my English speaking families, where they may have family around but they may not get along with them and so they've made a conscious decision: No, I'm not going to depend on my mom because she has this issue or that issue or we disagree.

In addition to cultural differences, home visitors also identified a number of characteristics or challenges faced by the typical Latino family that they worked with.

Samantha expressed some frustration with the family goal setting process, and the

progress that families were expected to show in a relatively short period of time and faced with so many obstacles.

So, another thing is that....they try as best as they can...trust me, their interest is to make a better lifestyle, for their families, for their children. But when we ask them...when we do the Family Map and we ask them about education, when they have no legal status or anything like that, how are they going to achieve that? How are they going to achieve employment? How are they going to go to college? Some of our expectations are not in the realm of possibility. They're not, definitely not. The fact that they find work, that there are jobs out there for them. They're still going to live on minimum wage for as long as they can hold a job. Education, most of them maybe completed elementary school, elementary education. They don't know the language, and they will not leave their baby to go get a GED or something like that. No, they have to be there for their child. Um....so, when we're talking about doing an evaluation at the end of each program year to see where they stand with their goals: education, job, housing....for some of them it's status quo. You can't buy housing, you can't move to an apartment when you live on minimum wage. But, one buck at a time, day to day, to save for first month and deposit, in a bigger place or a better place. You're barely making it at this one, and then, "I need to move up to a bigger place or a better place because now I have three kids or five kids, I can't." You know, they simply cannot...they can't achieve it. So, it's...unrealistic.

Ana pointed out how limited literacy, in Spanish or English, made it difficult for mothers to take advantage of all Early Head Start resources, for instance to follow a recipe that required a lot of measuring. Other home visitors mentioned how a combination of lower literacy skills and limited English also made it hard for mothers to help their older children with their schoolwork.

Limited educational attainment did not constrain the attention that Latina mothers gave to their young children's development. Isabel noted that if mothers, "see that they're not making sounds or babbling, they're always asking, 'Is that normal? What can I do?'" So they're really concerned about how they're growing and how they

are developing.” And Samantha recalls having to reassure a mother that her son’s speech was still in the normal range although he was not saying as many words as the mother thought he should. With another of Samantha’s families, despite a language barrier, they were very dedicated to making sure that he received the special services he needed.

With the Hispanic family, if they call, for example, if the kid needed therapy or an evaluation, they call. If they didn’t do the language thing, they would call me and say, somebody called, I don’t know what they want to do, can you find out? And I would say OK. They would not miss their appointment.

Samantha felt that the Latino parents, and mothers in particular, had a different way of approaching parenting and encouraging school readiness. According to her, while many Americans begin teaching their young children elements such as numbers, letters or colors, “The Hispanic culture doesn’t do it that way. They learn, and the moms will tell them about colors and things that they have in the house, but the children learn on everyday living.” Kate said that she purposefully focused primarily on “educationally developmental stuff” in her work with Latino families because that was an area they were lacking in as a result of their lower educational backgrounds. However, she felt that the closeness of families and the care that they gave their children resulted in healthy social-emotional development that helped these children be prepared to learn once they went on to Head Start. Of her experiences with Latino children in Head Start preschools, she had this to say:

So let’s say they had no Early Head Start background, they had no intervention from zero to three, their parents really hadn’t done anything that stimulating with them at home. They just cleaned and cooked and talked to them, and whatever, ok. So, they came in without all the benefits that our parents were

getting and they were a little bit behind the curve, but very quickly their language got up to speed, everything got up to speed really quickly and I feel like it was because of the social-emotional. They didn't have brain issues from abuse and neglect, or being yelled at or being treated meanly, whatever, so...they came in ready to learn and got up to speed really quickly. So, I think that that's why I don't focus on that. You don't want to focus with your parents on things that they don't need as much, you want to focus on things that they do.

Acculturation

According to the home visitors, their families had different levels of acculturation to American values. When asked if the families that she worked with wanted to pass on their culture and values to their children, Samantha responded:

Yes, and I encourage that. That's their culture, that's their family. You know, their values, their ethics and they are very good values, very good ethics, beautiful culture. Especially when it comes to family is most important than anything, ok? And work ethics, they're very hard workers. They'll work sun to sun to make that minimum wage, just to make sure they can afford their rent and the food and what have you.

Kate and Isabel both noticed ways that the families they worked with were being "Americanized" from their time in this country. For example, Kate talked about the pressure to push kids to be independent, including making sure they slept in a different bed.

Julie, who works only with Latino families where the caregiver speaks English well, felt that culture still played a big role in how they raised their children. However, Laura, who considered herself to be very bicultural, felt that she had a few families that were very acculturated, and that the main difference in that household was just the language. She noted that while the family may celebrate birthdays and holidays

according to their cultural background, on any given day they were “typical American.”

Laura shared the following perspective about variations in the levels of acculturation between families:

It depends what age the parents were....It depends on the age of the parents. If the parent is like a younger parent, or has their education here and were more, they came here when they were younger so they have more of the American influence in them, they're raising their kids more Americanized. In the families that have the kids in Mexico and brought them here, and they're still more set in their ways, then they're showing a little bit more their culture.

She shared the story of one mother, who she soon found out was more acculturated than she let on:

I have a mom who will straight up play like she doesn't know English and I've heard her on the phone having a whole conversation. Excuse me? And with manners and everything perfectly the way it was supposed to be said, and probably better than I would have answered that phone call. And I'm like, what?! What are you doing? They're tricky! I think that some of them think that if they know, that then we won't help them, and I'm like, no, if you know you better let me know so maybe you might be showing me something.

Laura also pointed out that at times there are different levels of acculturation in the same household/family, such as when one parent came to the U.S. at a younger age or was born here, while the other was a more recent immigrant. According to her, another important factor in how “traditional” families were, was whether parents came from a rural or urban background in their country of origin.

For most of the home visitors, a primary indicator of how “Americanized” a family was could be seen in the distribution of gender roles in the home. Ana pointed out that newer immigrants tended to have more rigid gender roles, with these Latina

mothers being more likely to stay at home and be overly dependent upon their husbands. Laura said that in general mothers were less traditional than fathers, and more open to their children being exposed to American values and culture.

In the small focus group, Laura and Ana agreed that they found immigrants from Puerto Rico and other Caribbean nations to be more “Americanized” than Mexicans and Central Americans. They were talking particularly about attitudes towards women working and having children in daycare. Coming from Puerto Rican backgrounds themselves, they expressed some frustration at what they saw as the over-reliance of the mothers in these families upon their husbands and boyfriends. Valentina explained some differences she had witnessed between her own experiences with her own children and those of the families she served:

This is something very curious to me because we, in Puerto Rico, we try to get like all those steps like when they’re crawling, to stand up and walk...Almost all of the ones that I have there are from Guatemala. They’re always saying, ‘but my children they did not crawl, they just got up and walked.’ And I’m like, ‘Huh, is this a cultural thing?’ Cause they almost all of them are saying the same, the same thing. So, I tried to get a little less strict, they can crawl and see if they can have more fun, and do stuff for them, and then I got them crawling, and then after that they said, ‘Oh Valentina, they’re everywhere, I cannot stop them, they’re touching stuff’ and I say, ‘Well, but they’re having fun though!’ (laughs) But they liked that too, because they saw them moving. Because they were comparing, ‘Oh, but that child, my child does not move in that way, does not even try to crawl and he’s doing it. How can I get him to do that too.’

Kate also reiterated that it was important to recognize that the Latino parents that the program served were primarily Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Mexican. She noted that Latino families from Puerto Rico or South America would probably be

markedly different. Furthermore, she specified, it was important not to generalize from these families to all Latinos because,

A really big factor in the culture of our parents is that they're a certain faction of the population, in that, they're the more low educated, and from Central America and for the most part, walked across the border, for the most part. Maybe they got here later somehow. They're not the ones here on student visas. Yeah, so they're not from wealthy families, they're not from obviously, nobody at Head Start is, but they're not the education level....so that plays a big part, so that's what we have to be really careful with because they're this segment of the Latino population.

Home Visitor Background and Relationship with Families

Home visitors brought their own cultural backgrounds, as well as personal and professional experiences to their jobs as they worked with Latino families. Many felt a connection to the families that they worked with, while others noted differences that made it hard to relate at times. These similarities and differences played a role in the development of the relationship between home visitor and mother, a relationship which was crucial to the successful delivery of Early Head Start services, but was often complicated, yet rewarding, to negotiate.

A number of the home visitors had experience working in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms before they became home visitors. Valentina, who had been a home visitor for less than a year, admitted that the transition from teacher to home visitor was a bit difficult at times. This is what she had to say when asked if her role as a home visitor was very different,

Yes. A lot different, because the first thing is we have focused more on teaching the parents, to do things with the children, and also like making sure that if there is any delay that they attend it, and they have the help they need or the attention they need...and being in a different environment in the houses. I

mean, it's like a little hard for them to get their attention, to do what they have to be doing, distractions and all that.

Laura, who had also worked as a Head Start teacher, now had several years of experience as a home visitor and preferred her new role as she said she never had time as a classroom teacher to really get to know and bond with the families of the children in her care. Similarly, Kate, who had worked as a family service provider at a Head Start in Baltimore said that previously her caseload of nearly 70 families had prevented her from having quality interactions with each of them.

The home visitors also drew upon their own experiences as mothers in their interactions with clients. Their experiences with their own children made them sympathetic to the idea that not all of the “expert” advice worked with each child, or every family. Ana, who has three adult children, stated that she understood that anything involving children does not always work as expected.

Home visitors also used their status as mothers to relate to the mothers they worked with, finding that parents were more open to trying new things if they perceived that the information was being shared by a fellow mom, as opposed to a detached expert. For instance, Isabel mentioned that she tried to keep things relatable when talking to other moms, asking them what methods they were using and saying “maybe I’ll try it with my kids.” Similarly, Laura felt that she could relate easily to the mothers in her caseload, because like them she was a mother of young children:

I am giving them personal, personal lessons, experiences, and I share with them as well that I have a three year old just like you have. I’m going through the same thing you’re going through. So, let’s work on this together and I’m holding your hand and you’re holding my hand and we’re doing this together. I

think that's one of the differences between me and the other home visitors as well, that I have a child their same age so I can relate more to them, behavior-wise because I can let them know that I'm seeing the same thing. "This is what I'm trying, why don't you try it?" Or if then when I come back the next time, they'll be like, "No, you know what you tried I tried as well, but then I did this, see if that works with your baby." So we share back and forth information I think that is my biggest issue. I think my families grow more comfortable with me giving them opinions and my thing is that they know I'm going through it at the same time....I feel more open-minded to me because they know I'm doing it too.

Laura also felt that the Latina mothers she works with look to her for advice because they know that she came to the U.S. as a young child and was raised in a bicultural environment similar to their own children.

I think that the families see me more as like, OK, my children can turn out like her, like my children could possibly turn out like her. Because her parents, and my families know, I can't....my dad to this day doesn't talk to me in English, my grandmother doesn't talk to me in English and I'm with my family, at family events, its all happening in Spanish. We are completely a true Hispanic-American family and I try....I share, and I'm like, I told them...I didn't, cause some of the parents sometimes get discouraged that the kids are only learning more English, but I was like, "No, cause my dad talked to my children who are mixed with African-American and Spanish. My kids have no choice but to talk Spanish. I was like, I didn't have a choice but to talk Spanish, so if you talk to them in Spanish at home, they might act like they don't know, but they know.

In fact, Laura said that at times she needed to call upon the mothers she worked with to help explain cultural references made by her fellow home visitors who had come to the U.S. at a later age. She said her fellow home visitors were already teasing her about being "gringa," so when they started using a Spanish term she didn't understand, she called up one of the mothers for an explanation.

Valentina, who was a relatively recent immigrant from Puerto Rico herself, felt that she could engage a lot better with her families because of her cultural background.

She said:

I mean, I don't know if it's the way I am. I really like to...be with people! (laughs) And my culture is that way. We really enjoy meeting people from different places, and getting to know them, share different things that we have in common, what things are different. And from there, I use that a lot to get to know my families and have impressions about it and the way that we raise the children, the way that they do, so it takes like more topics for us to talk about stuff. Even to....build this relationship with them so that they feel secure, so that they feel that they can talk to somebody and they can get the help they need.

She said that she had not felt that same connection and openness with the non-Hispanic families that she was working with. Valentina felt this connection with her families, despite the fact that she admitted that there remained cultural differences between herself and her clients who were mostly Guatemalan or Mexican.

When Samantha was asked whether there was a shared culture between herself and her clients despite the fact that she was from Puerto Rico and they were mostly from Mexico and Central America, she replied:

There is. There is a root that is very common to all Latino culture. Some of it is...umm...the maternal instinct, how we care for our children. Understanding our lifestyles, because Latinos countries are all the same. You're either poor poor....you're either poor or you're rich.

In her case, Samantha also called upon a shared experience of poverty and social class to relate to the mothers she worked with.

I grew up poor. I didn't have social services, but I grew up poor. It was like one income, four kids, and I wore my brother's hand-me-down clothing for the longest time. We only got one big thing at Christmas and not a whole bunch of little five and dime stuff. Do I understand that lifestyle? Yes, I understand how

they live. I lived like that for many years. Some people are like, “Are you sure?” and I’m like, “Yes I did baby, trust me.” I had section 8 housing when I got married because I was a student. They gave us section 8 housing, and I had food stamps, and I had to go get in that line for my food stamps, and pay with my food stamps and stuff like that.

Home visitors had mixed opinions on whether it was always best that the home visitors for Latino families always come from a similar cultural or ethnic background.

According to Samantha,

I mean, not that it has to be that way, but it makes it... It doesn’t have to be, but it makes the job easier. It makes it easier to approach them, to reach them. It makes it easier for them to open up. Because, even though they know you, they work with you, they know the agency, they know the services, so they feel comfortable, but in the back of their little heads it’s always that...trust issue.

Kate, who considered herself “half” Latino was the only home visitor who did not feel that her cultural upbringing played a role in how she interacted with families. At the same time, she admitted that she was conscious of the fact that as a college-educated American representing an agency, the information she shared was often perceived as ‘expert knowledge.’ She was actually happy when families expressed some resistance, because she wanted to know that they were asserting their own opinions.

Julie, who did not identify as Latino and spoke little Spanish, felt that her cultural upbringing “absolutely” played a role in her interactions with families. As an example, she noted:

I was raised in a family that we sat at a table and ate, we always had mealtimes together. Sometimes that’s been a struggle with families, but I don’t think that’s a Spanish thing either, and I don’t feel like that’s necessarily realistic to think that most families are going to comply to that as the ideal, and I do see during our socializations that that can be an issue in that children don’t want to sit at the table and eat. They want to wander around with food, and that has a whole other set of problems that goes along with it.

However, Julie also felt that there were some advantages to coming into the relationship with no assumptions of a shared cultural background with the family. She shared, “What’s nice is that they have been very open in sharing things with me, so they’ve kinda educated me along the way.”

Kate agreed that there were advantages to an ‘outside’ perspective.

Being Latino doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re culturally competent because if you grew up here, or you are very...or you’re from a very different background from the clients, you actually could be worse in that role than an American because you think that you understand them when you don’t, where the American isn’t coming from a place of thinking that they understand.

Valentina, who had been through this Early Head Start program as a parent with her young children before becoming a home visitor, was asked if her family had a Latino home visitor. Her response:

No, I didn’t. But she was awesome. We still love her, and she always respect us, and she always tried. If there was something that she couldn’t do right away, she will find something so that we can understand it, and make sure that we got what we needed.

Samantha, who felt that her Latino background helped her relate to clients, also conceded that the program had a really good blend of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic staff, although she still felt that knowledge of Hispanic culture helped a lot in their work with these families.

Building relationships

The success of any Early Head Start program rests in the ability of the staff to build relationships with families and parents. This is even more true for home visitors who rely upon families to open their homes and their lives on a weekly basis.

According to Samantha, her favorite part of her role as a home visitor is, “Being able to develop a relationship with the family. To share with them, to be able to help them in times of need, and to still take care of the baby.”

Samantha, who had experience working with both Latino and non-Latino families, felt that establishing an open and honest relationship with the Latino families was actually easier.

My experience in establishing a relationship, it’s easier to do with the Latinos than it is with the Americans. I have worked with the Americans in the past, with American families, non-Latinos, let’s put it that way...and the relationship is not the same. The Latino families open their homes once they get to know you, they open their homes and their guards you know. They will share almost anything with you...their needs, their wants, what is happening with the families. With the non-Latinos, they just see you as a parent educator, if they need someone to connect with social services they’ll ask, but the relationship is not the same.

Another home visitor, Laura, discussed how she felt that characteristics that she shared with the families helped them accept her and adopt a casual and open relationship with her that helped ease the delivery of services. Laura said:

Of course I put my own twist to everything, and I’m surely one of the most funky home visitors I’m sure, because A. I’m the same age as these parents, B. I have children the same age as these parents. So when I go, yeah, it’s all professional, but then I feel like parents are more lax. Like I can go into the house and this mom’s in pajamas and she’s like “Laura, it’s fine, you already knocked.” I’m like, “It’s cool, let’s get this activity in” and then we’ll talk and we’re on our way.

Julie, who was not Latino, spoke about the ways in which she built up the mother’s trust in her by emphasizing that she was there to provide information and advice, but not to judge. As a result, she was “surprised how open and honest” the mother was even in regards to areas such nutrition where Julie could “understand why

a parent would feel a little bit hesitant” opening themselves to criticism. Julie said, “I kinda laid some groundwork during that to kinda ease any concerns she had that might feel uncomfortable for her.” That groundwork in building trust paid off in an open and honest relationship that allowed for productive discussion about parenting choices.

Laura shared that she had found some limits to the open and honest relationship she enjoyed with her families. Recently, the home visitors had begun use of an interview protocol or instrument called the Family Map Inventories, which was designed to be useful in identifying family strengths and risks in order to help establish areas in which to concentrate on for family goals. Although most of the home visitors had come to appreciate the benefits of this tool over time, there remained some concerns that the questions asked in the interview were too personal, or left the families feeling open to judgment. Laura helped identify why this could continue to be a problem even in families who were usually very close and honest with their home visitors. She said, “that’s because even though the parents are open to tell me stuff, it doesn’t mean that they want that stuff written on paper or something.” She gave the example of asking parents about how much television their children watched, and having the mothers reply “two hours” because they knew that was how much the doctor had recommended, even though Laura knew that the TV was on all day. Laura felt that even though they would be honest with her if she asked in a casual way, the minute she pulled out a survey and wanted to write things down the family was much more guarded.

One of the goals of Head Start and Early Head Start is to partner with parents and support them in making their own decisions. Isabel had this to say:

I think our program is really good in making sure that we're there to support and not judge and not being like "oh, you're doing this." There's really no wrong way to do it. Just making sure that whichever way you're doing it, you're doing it the best of your ability.

All of the home visitors clearly recognized the important role of parents in their partnership, and most commented on the need for mutual respect in order to make that relationship work. Home visitors saw themselves as a resource or support for parents who were then free to make their own decisions.

As Kate said,

You could just sit there and spout as much information as you want, they only hear what they need information on and they're usually going to tell you that or you are asking questions. I mean that's the model that we're supposed to be following, that we're asking questions to get at what it is that they want to know about because they're going to be most absorb information on subjects that they want to know about.

Having the parents dictate which subjects they would focus on was one strategy for trying to equalize the partnership. Another was to make sure that the focus remained on the family, or the relationship between parent and child. As Isabel shared:

We're usually there to support the family so that they can support their children, so for me I get more insight and I can help more when I talk or partner with the mom directly and I can show her how to do things, instead of doing it for them, for the kids.

The idea was to empower parents with resources and support so that they could support their own children's development as opposed to having an outside professional intervene directly with the child, cutting the parent out of the partnership.

Through this partnership and mutual respect, over time the home visitors took on a supportive role that at times filled gaps left by the social support lost through immigration. Isabel said that her favorite part of being a home visitor was, "to be able to support a family that might need the support from their resources and yeah, because some of the families don't have any family, so to be a support for them and kinda bounce ideas and partner with them." As Laura said, "You become the family's family."

However, there were times when blurring the lines between a professional and familial relationship could be problematic. Julie recalled hearing of issues other home visitors had when they obtained certain resources for one family and that family talked to other families, leading to thoughts that the home visitor was being unfair or playing favorites. She added:

Yeah, I think part of it is a boundaries issue and you have to feel confident and comfortable that....and I've said that to the people that I've had conversations with that, it's really not your job to justify what you're doing to another family and to get into that conversation. You're kinda getting in a not so great place where it's a confidentiality issue just at its core in that you're now discussing another family with that family. So as quickly as you can you kinda have to get out of that conversation, but the other part is just you feeling comfortable with what you're doing as your job and not feeling the need to rationalize that to anybody.

Laura shared that she had not had any problems setting boundaries or feeling like families were taking advantage of her close relationship with them. However,

Samantha noted that there were times she was invited to family celebrations where she felt uncertain about the best way to proceed.

I have mixed emotions. I would love to be there and share with the family, the celebration of the baby's birthday. On the other hand, they have extended family, community, sometimes the party goes into the night or what have you. There is alcohol and stuff like that, and we have to role model. I can't, I do not want to place myself in that position. So, I try to avoid those parties. Plus then, if you go to one then you have to go to every one.

Despite this dilemma, Samantha felt that overall families knew and respected boundaries. She has gotten emergency calls from clients on days she is otherwise occupied, and she says the families always understand that she has other responsibilities. Although often they will try to set social service or medical appointments to accommodate her schedule if they think that she can help them navigate the system.

Supporting Latino Families in Early Head Start

Home visitors spent a lot of time and energy trying to connect their Latino families to other resources and services in the community. As Valentina said,

To me, what I really like from this working with the Hispanic families, is giving them resources that they don't know about that maybe, probably will help them better if they need something, like having somebody else there to really help them when they need something, it makes me feel good.

However, helping Latino families to access resources and services was often complicated as a result of the language barrier and their lack of familiarity with the community.

As immigrants, the Latino families, in general, were not as familiar with the resources available to them and did not have as strong a social support network to draw upon for this information. Samantha pointed out,

It all depends on what community they are in, if they know people that can help them. You know, sometimes it can be extended family or friends, neighbors that are helpful you know, that are nice at assisting them because sometimes people just don't want to know and can't help you or anything and other times you meet somebody who says, "oh, I know where to go, you should go here and you should call there" so depending sometimes on the family or the community, they can get more service than if they're like in home not asking or talking to people which happens to some of them.

Laura agreed that knowledge of the available resources and how to navigate the system often varied from family to family. She said,

I feel like the American families they know things, they know more resources, they can get around more and communicate more. But some Hispanic families know more than American families it just depends on how comfortable they are with their surroundings.

Even when resources were identified, the parents' limited English made obtaining services difficult. Samantha said that if her clients were unable to make an appointment or understand something concerning services for their child, they would ask for her help, or would even schedule their appointment at the time of their regular home visit. Nevertheless, the language barrier remained a problem, as children may miss out on or have a delay in services due to a lack of appropriate staffing. For instance, it was difficult to schedule an evaluation for a bilingual child because of the need to have staff with the ability to do a speech evaluation in both English and Spanish.

Other times, a referral from the child's doctor is difficult to obtain because of barriers to communication. Samantha mentioned one case where she had a child that clearly needed an evaluation, but "In that particular time it was like this doctor wasn't moving, like nobody was concerned, and I would tell them mom, to check with the doctor, and then I don't know if she would mention it or not, she told me he didn't say anything." Isabel also mentioned the difficulty parents had communicating with medical professionals. When asked what barriers Latino families encountered to obtaining services, she said,

I think maybe the lack of communication between the doctors and the parents sometimes. It's just like, OK, I'll just take them because I have to. Because they're really not a resource because sometimes they can't ask the questions...it just depends if the nurse that speaks Spanish is there, or you know...so we kinda go over it during the visit and say, "Are there any concerns? Is there anything that you need that you didn't understand?" or sometimes we'll even call to see. Because sometimes they say, "she told me I think I need to come back next week, but I'm not sure"

Several of the home visitors mentioned accompanying families on their appointments to help minimize the barriers they faced, however others emphasized the need to encourage parents to be more self-sufficient, since the ultimate goal was to empower parents to obtain services and advocate for their children on their own.

Although Isabel at times accompanied mothers to their children's appointments, she would use those visits as opportunities to model necessary skills.

You really have to go in there advocating, and that is something that I try to teach my moms, to make them feel empowered, that they do have that right to ask questions, and that doctor is there for them to ask questions, not to let them brush them off, because it happens to us, it happens to Americans, I can't imagine how they feel when they get in there.

Julie said that her favorite part of being a home visitor was “seeing a parent’s transition from being unsure of themselves to kinda getting their feet and feeling comfortable understanding their kids and passing around that information whether it’s with doctors or schools or me.” When asked if the mothers she worked with often reached that point, she replied:

If I stay with them long enough, yeah. And it looks different in each family. It can be kinda subtle depending on, like I have a couple of families that moms are definitely introverted, so if you’re not paying attention you won’t see it, but yeah, I would say I see it a lot.

Negotiating Different Cultural Beliefs about Parenting

There were several cultural beliefs and parenting practices that home visitors identified as common in their work with Latino families that challenged their own preconceptions of proper parenting or were contrary to the general recommendations of Early Head Start. These included: home remedies for illness, feeding practices and nutrition, and co-sleeping. Interestingly, none of the home visitors reported any real negotiations about discipline practices. This is particularly striking considering the number of mothers who mentioned how their ways of disciplining their children had been influenced by their involvement in the program and advice from their home visitors.

As one example of the dilemmas that home visitors sometimes face, Isabel discussed her uncertainty in a situation where the mother told her she was considering using a home remedy for her toddler’s pink eye instead of seeking medical attention. She said,

When it comes to the medical aspect of it, oh my gosh! You know, just if you have pink eye, you go to the doctor, you know...my families, they don't go to the doctor, they find some other way, home remedy that I sometimes don't agree with that might be more....I'm scared because I was raised here, I wasn't raised in Colombia, so I'm not used to the whole remedy-kind of thing. Herbal, yes, however, when you're talking about chants and stuff like that, then that's a little bit....I had a family that said if you rub the tail of a black cat in their eye, you know that's going to cure them from the cyst in their eye, and I'm just like, "You're just going to go and randomly pick a cat from the outside and do that?!" I mean, like that's concerning! Where is the line between, is this really the right thing that you're doing.

Although that particular case was an extreme example, she said it was not uncommon for mothers to use family recipes for ailments that included mixing alcohol into remedies to give to the kids, and at times she was unsure about balancing respect for the cultural beliefs of the family with the need to ensure the safety of the child.

Another more common area of negotiation of cultural beliefs and practices concerned feeding practices and nutrition. Education around nutrition is a big part of Early Head Start, particularly in recent years with rising rates of childhood obesity. Kate mentioned how this was a particular concern for the Latino population who were sometimes emigrating from countries where high-calorie foods were scarce, and where feeding your children until they were chubby was considered a sign of love, and a sign of health. She said that it was difficult to reverse this cultural attachment to food and overfeeding young children, but knew that parents were getting the same message not only from home visitors but also from doctors, nurses, and from announcements on the Spanish language channels on TV.

Julie was one of several home visitors who noted that Latino families tended to introduce solid foods to babies much earlier than was typically recommended by

American doctors and nutritionists. Home visitors disagreed on whether Latino mothers were more likely to expect their young children to feed themselves or whether they continued feeding them by hand when they were toddlers. However, Samantha had a story about a young Latina girl in the Head Start where she worked previously who startled all the teachers by pulling out a sharp steak knife and using it to cut her food at lunch one day. Samantha saw that the girl was obviously comfortable using the knife, but nevertheless was very worried about her safety.

To help support home visitors and teachers in educating families on nutrition, SFEHS had a nutritionist who acted as a consultant. However, several home visitors mentioned difficulties in translating the recommended guidelines and practices the nutritionist suggested into culturally appropriate ideas for their families. Ana had this to say about when the nutritionist accompanied her on home visits:

When the nutritionist comes with me to the home visit. When she tells the mom how to measure what she's going to cook, and how to measure the amount of food they are going to give to the children, they do not agree because they are not used to it and they do not like the idea of measuring. So probably those people do not have that experience with all those families. And of course they do, they reduce the amount of food and they follow the directions by providing nutritious food and but...when you talk about cooking by measuring and all that, it's very difficult for them, because they are not used to it.

Samantha complained that the recommended recipes for families, and the food that they served at socializations, was often different from what the Latino families she worked with usually ate or were comfortable with.

We have a nutritionist that gives us guidelines for the snacks, not once have I seen chips and salsa, ok! (laughs) And a lot of the families have learned to eat a lot of the stuff, and they know that's the way they're going to be fed in

school and that's healthy for the baby and what have you, but....we need to make our menus a little bit more international.

Many home visitors mentioned co-sleeping as a cultural practice prevalent among their Latino clients that differed from mainstream American parenting advice. Julie, who works with both American and Latino clients, said that it differed by family, but she certainly saw that this practice was more common among her Spanish-speaking families. Other home visitors had a range of opinions on co-sleeping that influenced how they approached this practice among their families. When Isabel said "A lot of Hispanic families love to sleep with their children" during a focus group, Valentina chimed in, "Yes, I do!" Isabel put her own thoughts this way:

One of the biggest ones is co-sleeping and then I put my own thoughts into it, like my belief is you know, I'm ok with co-sleeping, I'm not...I was....like I never, I didn't even co-sleep with my children, but I don't see anything, as long as everybody is being safe. Now for an infant, there are certain precautions like I do, but you know...you have to, some families don't even have the space, or the rooms to have the children in other areas. So, I need to make sure that if they are co-sleeping or if they are all in the same room, that they're doing it in the safest way possible and they have certain precautions when they do it. But co-sleeping is a big one, it's a big one.

Kate was critical of the way low-income people were often warned of the dangers of co-sleeping during a time when the prevalence of attachment parenting is increasing among those with more education. She felt it was important to be honest about the risks associated with co-sleeping without condemning the practice.

When home visitors became aware of these cultural practices, which may not be completely in line with the recommendations that they were sharing from Early Head Start, they adopted a number of strategies to talk to parents about them. Most

drew upon the strength of their pre-established relationships to help make that exchange as productive and painless as possible. Home visitors also felt that in general their families were open to their suggestions, although they were not afraid to assert themselves or let the home visitor know if they were not interested in something.

Laura shared:

I can only speak on my families. They're fairly open-minded about any feedback or anything that I give them. Do they follow through all the time? No. But they don't be like "Oh you're trying to run in my house." They're really open-minded and a lot of them do take suggestions.

Laura said that her families were more open to her suggestions because she would never tell them what to do, and she tried to approach talking to them as a fellow mother who was just sharing something that they might like to try. She also said that they do occasionally speak up when they feel that something is not working, and she welcomes that feedback.

In terms of co-sleeping, Isabel felt that it was the decision of the family, but she tried to make sure that they were well-informed about the risks. As she put it, with parenting "There's really no wrong way to do it. Just making sure that whichever way you're doing it, you're doing it to the best of your ability." With the case of her families that were considering home remedies, she said she took the following strategy.

Well, I usually ask reflective questions, and I say, "well, tell me a little bit more about that" you know, and "what do you think about that?" Because sometimes when they're asking it's because they want some sort of...they want me to say yes or no, which I never do. I just say, "tell me a little bit more, what do you think about it?" And most of my young families are like "I don't know?"...So I'm like, "Well, would you consider taking them to the doctor

first, you know, and trying that?” Like what are your other options, you know. And then they usually come to. And then I let them decide for themselves.

Later she added,

I always just try to get them- as long as there’s no danger to the child- I let them come to their own conclusions. You can never, I can never go...and “No you can’t do that. You can’t use these.” I’m just like “ Be careful, these are the consequences.” Or “ Do you want me to find out more information about it? ...and then let them make their own decision.

Julie had a very similar approach, of providing information instead of judgment, when she spoke with a mother she worked with who she knew was feeding solid foods to a child younger than is generally recommended in this country. When asked what she said to the mom when she found out, she replied:

I shared that this is a possible risk factor for allergies and we do know that the stomach doesn’t produce digestive enzymes to digest that so well, so what she might see more than if she introduced it later on is some stomach upset and gassiness. And as long as it’s something she’s discussed with the pediatrician then that’s the most important thing, that you let your pediatrician know because that could have an impact on, you know, how he metabolizes medicines and some other kinds of things. But this is also her third child, so...it’s not her first dog and pony show.

Kate has worked as a home visitor for less than a year and perhaps may not have the same depth of relationships established with her families. When asked how she approached controversial topics like co-sleeping, replied:

They’re not going to tell me. I’m not going to ask. I know they do it, I don’t care. I’m not going to keep making a big point about it, because I know they’re hearing it everywhere, and I just...I’m not concerned.

Ana, who mentioned that her parents were often confused or uninterested in the nutritionist’s suggestions, was asked if parents felt comfortable speaking up and sharing those thoughts during the home visit. She explained that while the nutritionist

was there they didn't; "They just listen, they don't...they just listen to the nutritionist, but they tell me." The relationship that she had created with the families gave them the confidence to share their true thoughts on the activity with her, but they would not confront or challenge an outside professional with their opinions.

While home visitors generally recognized that families should be supported in making their own decisions about parenting practices, there remained a tension between respecting that difference and ensuring the safety of the children. For instance, Isabel thought that parents had the right to decide to co-sleep with their infants, but admitted:

It's a subject that sometimes makes me nervous, especially when they're really little, because I think about what if something were to happen, and would I be held responsible for that, you know like, co-sleeping when they're so little, like SIDS is such a big thing...So it's just, it makes me nervous because if something were to happen, I don't know how liable I would be as your home visitor to be, to have made sure that they're doing what they're supposed to be doing, so that's always...that one makes me nervous. And then, am I documenting enough to see that, yes, I went through SIDS with the mom.

Home visitor feedback on SFEHS and Early Head Start

Home visitors were also asked if they had encountered practices that they were uncomfortable promoting or suggesting based on their own cultural backgrounds or personal beliefs. The vast majority said no, they found the recommendations of Early Head Start to be very much in line with their own child rearing philosophies and practices they had used with their own children. Several mentioned that they had co-slept with their children and saw nothing wrong with it, and one mentioned that she had mixed feelings talking to families about using 'time out' as a disciplinary strategy

since she knew that it had been counterproductive with one of her children. However, she was pleased that in recent years recommendations had shifted so that ‘time out’ was no longer favored.

Home visitors were also asked if there was anything that Strong Foundations, as an organization, could do better to meet the needs of Latino families, and to help support home visitors as they worked with these families.

Working with the language barrier

All of the home visitors mentioned how difficult it was for their Latino families to navigate resources with limited English language skills. Since most of the home visitors were fluent in both English and Spanish, they often acted as guides or interpreters to help smooth over these difficulties. However, a few home visitors pointed out that there were still ways in which Strong Foundations needed to work on eliminating the language barrier in their program services.

Since Julie did not speak Spanish well but worked with Latino families in which the mother spoke relatively good English, she had some unique experiences to share. Her primary concern with the language barriers with her families had to do with evaluating the language abilities of bilingual toddlers. She said that she had to rely on parents to be accurate about the language abilities of their children and she worried that it was possible that they might not catch a language delay. She mentioned that she had brought this concern to the attention of her supervisor, but together they had not been able to identify a real solution. Bringing an interpreter on a visit was possible, but

the assessment was to be done over time, and introducing a stranger into interactions with the child often caused them to speak less, thus making the assessment of the interpreter inaccurate as well.

On her part, Isabel expressed some frustrations that while there were good intentions to make all program materials and activities accessible to clients who did not speak English, in reality that did not always happen. She found that at times the extra work of translating flyers, recipes, and other materials fell on her. She wished that the program was more systematic about making sure that all materials were available in all necessary languages ahead of time. These concerns were not confined to her Latino clients; she said:

So, if we don't have Haitian families right now, we should still be working on a Haitian handbook because hey, we might have one. You know, it's part of our community. So, we're very reactive instead of proactive.

EHS family events and socialization¹² activities

The other aspect of the program that home visitors acknowledged needed some further attention to become more culturally inclusive was the weekly socialization activities. Samantha said:

One thing that is different with this particular Head Start program is that most of our clientele is Hispanic and when we have a socialization, it's not

¹² "Socializations" were a term used by SFEHS staff and families to refer to weekly family events that were designed to be educational and encourage interaction between children and families. This should be differentiated from the ethnic socialization processes ongoing within families.

culturally....ummm...targeted. They're still following Anglo- or non-Hispanic parameters for the, from the activities to the food, to the... The way we announce that they're coming. We expect them to RSVP. They don't RSVP in advance, you know, they'll decide at the last minute whether they want to go or not. And we serve....I mean, they enjoy the pizza, but we serve them sandwiches and stuff and they're like...they'll eat it just until they get home so they can eat real food, OK.

Samantha pointed out a number of factors that made the socializations less appealing to her Latino families, from the food to the activities, to the location and the lack of transportation. She pointed out that even if they had access to a car, many Latina mothers were not comfortable driving on the highway, and so would only come to activities located close to their homes. For those who would have to take the bus, trips that required multiple transfers made the process too difficult and lengthy for families with young children.

Nevertheless, she felt that some small changes would help entice more families to participate. For instance, she shared,

When we have the kites, a lot of the fathers come in and share that with their children. Like this Friday we're going to have soccer balls. Tell me a Hispanic family that's not a fan of soccer, especially now with the World Cup, you know? They will all be there for that. Things like that. You know, little bit here, little bit there. We can have two activities. I try to have two activities. We had bean bag toss is something else and we had big kites, so if somebody is not interested in flying a kite then they can play with the bean bag toss or something else. For the soccer ball, this Friday, we also have nature walk, so if you don't want to play soccer you can go on a nature walk.

Samantha had noticed that the Latino families were much more likely to participate if they held the socialization at a park instead of indoors in a classroom. However, holding outdoor activities was not possible during the winter months, and

particularly because Latino families were extremely resistant to bringing their children out in cold weather. Julie, also noted this complication, as well as the fact that this concern had been raised and discussed by the home visitors in the past.

I think that there's an awareness. I think one of the things that we did and we changed in the last year or two is that we noticed in the colder months that most Hispanic families would not come out with younger children. They just...their practices, that that's not healthy, that's not safe....just a bad idea, and not that all our families are Spanish speaking, but a lot of them are. But it was decided that well, winter months are more the kind of time when you see more depression, people are cooped up more, kids are cooped up more. So the decision was made that we continue to have them during those months, which this will be the 2nd year.

As home visitors discussed some of these issues it became clear that although Strong Foundations was working hard to try to accommodate their culturally diverse families, there were a number of challenges faced by home visitors and families that were ongoing and were not going to be easily solved.

Pros and cons of the home visiting model

The home visitors had a lot of appreciation for the advantages of the home visiting model. Most had previous experience working with low income families, either as classroom teachers or in non-profit organizations, but expressed that conducting weekly home visits allowed them to bond with families and feel like they were making a difference. As Laura said, "I think it's more individualized here. Like, I get to know these families so I know what they need." The flexibility and autonomy given to home visitors was also seen very positively. Kate said, "It is really flexible

here. It's like you're provided with all this stuff and then you decide what to take and give."

In contrasting her experience as a home visitor with Early Head Start to her years as a family service provider at a large Head Start in a preschool setting, Kate saw both pros and cons to the less standardized home visiting process. She valued that home visitors were not "micromanaged" and were trusted to know their own families well enough to design and deliver the appropriate lessons. However, she also pointed out that it was hard to monitor each home visitor and know how successfully each was accomplishing their job. This was particularly true when home visitors were asked to deliver information that they might not feel a particular expertise on themselves. Kate shared:

We're expected to go out in the field and impart some information but it doesn't mean that you necessarily have that information to start with, or know how to present it in a way that is dynamic and is really going to get the light bulb on for someone. So, if I...I as the family service coordinator at Head Start did not have to give the workshop, I could find an expert in the field and they could come in and do this fabulous presentation that made everyone like, whoa! I can't believe that.

On the other hand, she balked at the idea of formalizing home visits with into a "curriculum" that had to be delivered the same way by each home visitor.

In terms of working with diverse people and culture, Kate also wondered about the different approaches of each home visitor.

So, the larger organization of SFEHS speaks to a place of that, and has some basic parameters for cultural competency and multicultural training on that, but it's really, it's hard to know what's occurring.

When asked if increased training would help ensure everyone was on the same page, Kate expressed skepticism about most multicultural trainings or trainings on working with Latino people, because she had been to a number of them which she found overgeneralized and reinforced stereotypes rather than recognizing the diversity of the population.

Laura was appreciative of the openness and lack of discrimination that she perceived at SFEHS, an atmosphere that she said began with the support of a top administrator.

I'm thinking about Pearl who doesn't even speak Spanish, who makes sure that her... These are her kids, she makes sure they're all good and she's like, ok we need resources for this family and let me find out what I can get and I'll let you know what I can get for them. I think it really starts from her, it comes down from the top and she is open to work with anybody no matter what. It's no... it's no prejudice nothing, in this whole building, like I don't even... in this whole office I don't see it, so I think that they're open to work with everybody, no matter what.

An Administrative Perspective

After interviews with home visitors were completed, a follow up interview with a SFEHS administrator was conducted. Pearl is one of the administrators of the program and has worked in various capacities within Strong Foundations for more than fifteen years. She was able to give unique insight into the philosophy and development of the program over time, as well as providing an administrator's perspective on working with culturally diverse families. Themes that emerged from her interview included: The Unique Strengths of SFEHS, Navigating Cultural

Differences as an Administrator, Expectations of Home Visitors, and Areas for Improvement.

The Unique Strengths of the Strong Foundations Early Head Start program

Pearl identified a number of unique aspects of the Strong Foundations program, including being situated within a university setting, an emphasis on collaboration with community partners, and a commitment to self-reflection and innovation. In her words,

Where it's situated makes it unique. The fact that it was built on and started out from a very collaborative approach is also unique. That we're working with community based partners, that has been from the get-go. To bring the university in with the community based providers and to work collaboratively within the...with parents and things. While that's a tenet of Head Start and Early Head Start and all of that, it really, that collaborating within the community makes that a big important piece that makes collaborating with parents kinda the focus. So relationships have been the focus from the beginning and that whole idea of the grantee isn't the expert necessarily, but the grantee is the conduit for bringing all the different people together and using all our different resources and expertise to really provide a quality program.

Pearl pointed out that there were other Early Head Start programs in which a university was the grantee, but it was unusual among programs funded in earlier waves of federal funding. More recently there had been a number of institutions with research capacity, such as universities and large hospitals applying for grantee status. Strong Foundation's long-standing affiliation with a major university has influenced its development from its foundation, particularly in the early adoption of research-backed practices and curriculum, and a philosophy of innovation and self-reflection that meshes well with more recent expectations for Early Head Start programs.

This philosophy of innovation has kept the program in line with, and at times ahead of, Early Head Start standards. However, Pearl recognizes that a major strength of the program is its dedicated staff, who are “committed to the work that they’re doing with children and families.” At times, this staff is challenged or frustrated by the constant changes that the program is undergoing in its pursuit of quality. Pearl shared:

One of our guiding principles, guiding philosophy, is that we never quite reach quality. We never... it’s an ongoing... quality is an ongoing journey. It’s not an ending point for us. So, we’re constantly looking at what we’re doing, reevaluating it and going to the next thing. So the bar keeps getting moved. And sometimes that can be frustrating for staff. I remember a time when a person clearly said to me... We were working on things and it was like an ‘Aha!’ moment. She said, “Oh, I get it now. We’ll never make it.” I said, “What do you mean?” “Well, you keep moving the bar.” And she was absolutely right, but that’s not to say that what they were doing wasn’t good, it was just she was absolutely right. We reach that bar, we evaluate if that’s where we want to be and then the bar changes to the next level, or to the next thing that we want to be looking at and doing better. So, yes, it’s built into our program based on our guiding principles and I’m not sure every program has that as a guiding principle.

Navigating Cultural Differences as an Administrator

When asked how she thought that SFEHS considered the role of culture in working with families, Pearl shared that SFEHS had served Spanish-speaking families since their services first began, and had worked to hire bilingual staff and “staff that represent the communities that we’re working in.” In more recent years, they had seen the number of Latino families increase, mostly due to the increases in bilingual staff that had been added and therefore the ability of the program to serve more Spanish-speaking families. Additionally, the program had also served a small number of families from different cultural backgrounds, including the Middle East and China,

which each brought their own challenges navigating diverse languages, religious beliefs, and understandings of family.

Pearl was clear that the most difficult factor of working with culturally diverse families as an administrator was the language barrier. She was frustrated that she could not communicate with all families directly and wondered how the feedback that she received from home visitors and staff might be influenced by their own cultural viewpoints as much as those of the family itself. When asked if home visitors were matched with families based on cultural background or ethnicity, Pearl said no. Families from the waitlist were assigned to the next available home visitor who was able to work with them based on language alone. If multiple home visitors were available, then there would be a consideration of “goodness of fit” between the particular risk factors of that family, and the strengths of the home visitor.

While Pearl showed an awareness and concern for cultural differences among the families in the program, she also argued that culture was often intertwined or conflated with other factors such as educational attainment or socioeconomic standing. She admitted that she had recently been reminded of the difference in average educational attainment between Spanish-speaking immigrant families and most of the American families that they worked with. She had been peripherally aware of that difference in the past, but it had taken sitting down with staff to examine why delivery of certain aspects of a curriculum was so challenging to realize that low educational attainment was a major factor for Latino families.

She felt that families and home visitors also each brought other background experiences to relationships that influenced their interactions. For instance, convincing staff to share concerns openly was difficult when some of them had been in positions in the past in which supervisors saw this feedback as complaints or admissions of failure. Similarly, she said that there was a need to work

with staff to really understand that we have to meet parents where they're at, wherever that may be, and some are going to have more trouble opening up. Some [parents] are going to be sharing everything, and how do you set those boundaries? And others are going to be testing, you know, they are rude and they are....rescheduled appointments and all that to test: Are you going to....Is this program really going to be there? Because in their interactions they've never really had someone follow through. Or they've not had an agency that really worked with them. Kinda the same thing with getting a family's voices. You've got to work with the family for them to really see that yes, they have a voice.

Pearl mentioned that early on in the program, there was a great emphasis on understanding "differences and similarities between our different backgrounds" and training in basic cultural competency. She said,

So we have over time had trainings, ongoing training over the course of seventeen, eighteen, years since we have had the program, on culture and cultural competence and diversity and different things, so it's kinda woven into things that we do over the course of time of things."

Pearl admitted that it had been over two years since they had a staff training that directly addressed cultural competency, but she countered that due to low staff turnover, most of the staff had previously attended these trainings. Additionally, she felt that it was more important that these conversations be ongoing and interwoven into program decisions, rather than a one-time training.

In addition to making sure that all program materials were translated into languages that made them accessible to all families, Pearl also said that considerable thought was put into looking at materials to see “whether or not there are some cultural biases to what we may be looking at in the curriculum or that sort of thing, or the ways we need to tweak it so that it, it goes with the experiences families are having.” She said that for the most part curricula are developed with White middle-class European culture in mind, and that simply translating the language of the curriculum is not always sufficient. One time, she recalled,

When we really start looking at that or talking with staff about that, there were some cultural rubs, for lack of a better way to put it. And, so staff was struggling with it, without really being able to tell us what they were struggling with, and we were struggling with.... Well, I can't get a handle on why this is difficult. So we had to spend some time talking about it and trying to figure out where, where it's not meshing and why it might not be meshing and what are some of the things that we can do to help bring it together

At times it was difficult for the administration and staff to identify curricula that met Early Head Start standards as well as meeting the needs of the program, staff, and families, but Pearl appreciated that Early Head Start gave individual programs flexibility to choose curricula and program models that best fit needs in their community.

Expectations of Home Visitors

Pearl could only think of one or two families in all her time at SFEHS that she thought may have left the program as a result of different cultural understandings. One family, she explained, had very different expectations for their relationship with the

home visitor, and the services provided by SFEHS. The family had worked with other agencies and was looking for services for their child. They did not understand the Early Head Start philosophy, which called for a partnership between home visitor and parent, and carried the expectation that both would be actively engaged in all sessions. In another case, she believed that a staff member inadvertently offended parents of another religion when she attempted to engage them in a certain way. The home visitor and other staff attempted to repair the relationship, but the damage was done.

For the most part, Pearl was confident that her home visitors were working hard to establish relationships with parents and get to know their families in order to deliver information in a manner that was accessible and culturally relevant. When asked how home visitors would be expected to handle a situation where a family's beliefs differed from the best practices suggested by Early Head Start, she replied:

So, our expectations are that they spend some time getting to know and understand where the cultural difference is...particularly if it's something that maybe they need to approach something about education and information that we as a program are supposed to be giving out...That they can spend some time really reflecting with the parent and trying to understand where that parent, where the parent's information is coming from, what their practice is coming from, where is that...and trying to then find out...look at the best way in which to share information that may be different from that cultural practice.

Pearl clarified that many cultural differences did not need to be addressed at all; home visitors could simply acknowledge them and reassure parents that different ways of raising children were perfectly acceptable. Behaviors and practices only needed to be addressed if they were a health and safety issue. This understanding was

aligned with that of the home visitors who had also shared that cultural differences only became a concern in matters of health and safety.

Pearl also indicated that she was aware that co-sleeping was one of the primary issues around which contradictions sometimes arose between the recommendations of EHS and cultural practices and traditions. When asked if home visitors would ever be held liable or responsible if a child in one of the families they served was ever injured as a result of a cultural practice, Pearl clarified that the only time home visitors had a liability was in terms of reporting child abuse and neglect. In other circumstances, it was important to make sure that parents had information about the risks associated with certain practices, but ultimately the parents were responsible for their choices. She said,

What we stress in a lot of respects is that, you know, parents have choices and we all make choices all that time. So...no, our job is to make sure that parents are aware of the information and understand it so that they can make informed choices and decisions for themselves and their families.

Areas for Improvement

When asked how she felt the program could better support staff in their work with Latino families, Pearl shared that she would like to see improvements in the program's reflective supervision. While home visitors met regularly with supervisors to discuss their caseloads, Pearl said she was not confident that these reflective supervision sessions were proceeding in the way she ideally envisioned them to work. She said she hoped to incorporate more video taping into home visits, as well as

supervision sessions, in order to allow both home visitors and supervisors to review and reflect on what was happening. She said,

I think there's something to seeing yourself in action, when you can get past seeing yourself, I think it gives you a whole different perspective on what is happening. And being outside of it to look at stuff, parent's cues that you may have missed at the time. That will then improve practice for families...for home visitors. That's where, that's what I'd like to see.

Pearl felt that encouraging home visitors to review their interactions with parents could allow them to become more aware of their body language and monitor if the information they were sharing was being received in the manner it was intended.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences and perspectives of immigrant Latina mothers participating in an Early Head Start program in Delaware. Specific focus was given to examining how mothers and home visitors from the program negotiated different child rearing practices and parental ethnotheories in the context of a home visiting model of a comprehensive child development and parent education program. Interviews and small focus groups were conducted with a total of 22 participants, representing the perspectives of mothers, home visitors, and an administrator, in order to better understand these interactions.

Summary of Findings

The demographic data gathered from the Latina mothers while they were being interviewed revealed three loose groupings based on level of acculturation to American culture. Latina mothers in the highly acculturated group had been born in the U.S. or entered this country as young teenagers and were able to speak English well and had a much easier time accessing services and navigating life in Delaware. Mothers from the groups with moderate and low levels of acculturation entered this country at a later age, often with lower educational attainment, had more limited English skills and faced many more obstacles raising children in Delaware.

For immigrant mothers, living in Delaware meant leaving behind social support, and was in many ways an inconvenient location for new immigrants. However, mothers were happy to be raising their young children in an environment that they deemed to be safe and tranquil. Still, mothers spoke at length about the challenges of language, discrimination, distance from family and social support, and difficulties with transportation leading to isolation. These challenges were balanced against increased opportunities for employment and a chance to escape from poverty, as well as increased access to services and resources for children.

Raising young children in a different cultural context was a challenge for immigrant Latina mothers. They were concerned about cultural differences that they perceived, such as a decrease in respect for parents and more liberal parenting, the expectation of independence by teenagers, and overstressed families that did not get to spend much time just being together. Although Latina mothers were clear that they wanted their children to be raised biculturally, mothers stressed that their parenting values had not changed due to migration. They attempted to reinforce their own cultural backgrounds within their children through speaking Spanish, cooking and eating foods native to their cultures, and celebrating traditional holidays.

In reflecting on their experiences with Early Head Start, Latina mothers were overwhelmingly positive. They felt that most of the information shared by home visitors aligned well with their own parenting values. They were open to some new suggestions from program staff, and reported positive changes in terms of forms of discipline and new knowledge about nutrition. The Latina mothers had very few

suggestions for the ways that the Strong Foundations Early Head Start program could better serve immigrant families. The few suggestions included adding more bilingual staff, and helping families with childcare or transportation so that they could be more involved in socialization events.

Latina mothers reported strong relationships with their home visitors and were confident that they could speak up or voice concerns or objections if home visitors suggested a practice that they did not agree with. There was some ambivalence about the importance of home visitor ethnicity, with some mothers reporting that it did not matter, only that staff must speak Spanish well enough to make communication easy. Yet other moms felt that sharing a cultural background with their home visitor created a sense of closeness and understanding that added to their relationship.

The Early Head Start home visitors all had very positive things to say about Latino family culture. They spoke of their Spanish-speaking and bilingual families as being particularly warm and inviting, and noted the great attachment Latina mothers had to their children and the emphasis on family in Latino culture. Home visitors shared that despite lower levels of educational attainment, Latina mothers were very concerned about their children's development and education, and were dedicated to keeping appointments and scheduled home visits.

Home visitors also noted the differing levels of acculturation among their clients. Some mentioned that their families were more "Americanized" than might be expected, although others seemed critical of traditional gender roles that kept mothers dependent upon their husbands. Home visitors also noted that the level of

acculturation between families sometimes varied based on national origin, and pointed out other factors that contributed to diversity in the experiences and characteristics of Latino families in the program.

Home visitors drew upon their own experiences as mothers to help the Latina mothers relate to them and trust them. Many home visitors also had previous experience as classroom teachers in early childcare settings and they valued the increased time and attention that they were able to have through home visiting to get to know each family. Some home visitors said that having a shared cultural background with clients helped them develop their relationships with families, and others drew upon personal knowledge of the difficulties of poverty. Those that did not come from a Latino background personally admitted that there were some challenges to understanding the culture at times, but they also saw occasional benefits from having an ‘outsider’ perspective.

All home visitors recognized the importance of building strong relationships with the families with which they worked. These relationships were based on trust and honesty, and home visitors emphasized the need to support parents’ decisions and not judge them for their actions. With such close relationships, there were occasionally some challenges in maintaining certain boundaries and protecting the confidentiality of all families.

In order to support Latino families in the Early Head Start program, home visitors worked hard to connect them with needed services, helping them navigate the language barrier and at times accompanying them to appointments with other

agencies. The ideal goal, however, was to empower parents to advocate for themselves and their children.

In negotiating different cultural beliefs about parenting, home visitors noted a number of examples of potential conflicts, including: the use of home remedies, feeding practices & nutrition, and co-sleeping. Home visitors drew upon their strong relationships with families to raise concerns about these issues, and found that parents were generally open-minded and receptive. When they encountered a potential conflict between best practice suggestions and the parents' cultural beliefs, they shared information about potential risks and asked reflective questions to attempt to ascertain a solution. Ultimately, they respected the parent's right to make decisions for their children, although they expressed some concerns about what their liability might be if a parent were to ignore their suggestions when the home visitor deemed that there might be some threat to the safety of the child.

Most home visitors reported that their views on child rearing were very much aligned with the practices they were teaching through Early Head Start. They did report some difficulties in delivering the services to Latino families, mostly as a result of the language barrier. For home visitors who did not speak Spanish, there was a concern with identifying speech delays in the children, and at least one home visitor noted that it often fell to her to make translations of documents or program materials, which were not always available in a timely manner in the correct language. Several other home visitors noted concerns about the socializations, which were perceived as sometimes falling short of being culturally appropriate or fully accessible.

Home visitors appreciated the home visiting program model, which allowed them the time to get to know families on a deeper level, and the ability to individualize resources and curricula to the family's needs. However, there were also some difficulties with being expected to have expertise on many different topics, and variation in knowledge between home visitors could lead to great variability in the delivery of services. One home visitor shared that it was difficult and at times frustrating trying to set goals with Latino families who faced so many challenges including language, legal status, and limited educational and employment opportunities. Overall though, home visitors had a general appreciation for the program and supervisors that supported them in their work with Latino families.

The administrator interview added an interesting perspective by outlining the unique strengths of this particular Early Head Start program, which included being situated in a university setting, an emphasis on collaboration with community partners, and a commitment to self-reflection and innovation. The administrator revealed that a guiding philosophy of this program was the drive to always be looking to improve quality, which meant continually raising the bar, a process which at times frustrated the staff.

For the administrator, the language barrier was the most frustrating aspect of trying to work with Latino families because she could not speak with these families directly. She shared that families were not matched with home visitors based on ethnicity, but on shared language and "goodness of fit." She also felt that cultural differences were often enmeshed with other family characteristics in such a way that it

was difficult to isolate the factors at play. For instance, she had recently become more aware of the significantly lower educational attainment of most Latino immigrant parents compared to other low-income American parents.

The administrator also shared that while cultural competency trainings had been held with the staff in the past, it had been several years since that had been repeated. Nevertheless, she felt that an awareness of cultural differences was interwoven into many of the program's aspects for instance in the examination of curricula to make sure that it was relevant and applicable to the needs and experiences of all families. She expressed a desire to utilize videotaping in the future to help home visitors reflect on the manner in which they were communicating with parents and whether they were receptive to or missing cultural cues.

From an administrator's perspective, different cultural practices by families were only a concern when it was an issue of health and safety. Home visitors were expected to spend time understanding where the families were coming from, so that they might share information on risks and alternatives in such a way that the family might be receptive to them. Ultimately, it was important to respect that parents are responsible for making the correct choice for their own family, and that a home visitor would only ever be held liable if they failed to report child abuse or neglect.

Comparing Different Perspectives

There were a number of parallels and a few distinctions in the different perspectives that were represented in this study. Mothers, home visitors, and the

administrator all acknowledged the important role that culture played in parenting practices, at the same time each perspective was characterized by an openness to new practices and different manners of doing things. All three perspectives also emphasized the importance of relationships, particularly the relationship between the parent (usually mother) and the home visitor, as laying the foundation of trust for future discussions. Finally, all three groups easily identified language as the primary barrier to the delivery of high quality services to this immigrant population.

In terms of distinctions, when discussing negotiating different cultural practices, home visitors and administrators both mentioned concerns about balancing respect for parents with concerns about health and safety. Mothers did not share this concern, at least not in terms of the risks associated with cultural practices. All three groups did mention co-sleeping as a topic that illustrated differences in cultural parenting practices. However, while mothers mentioned changing disciplinary techniques as a result of their interactions with home visitors, home visitors discussed home remedies and feeding practices. Both groups raised the topic of nutrition, but from different perspectives.

Interestingly, Latina mothers had the least to say about suggestions for the SFEHS program. It could be that they were reluctant to be too negative in front of the researcher, and it is likely that they had less practice engaging in critique, but for the most part they just seemed genuinely happy and grateful for the services they were receiving. Home visitors made their suggestions in practical and concrete terms, focusing on language accessibility and more culturally relevant socializations. Finally,

the administrator had a more innovative suggestion in terms of improving reflective supervision, predicting that this could bring indirect benefits by improving the delivery of services to Latino families.

Discussion of Salient Themes

Although the findings of this qualitative study reveal a great many things about the lives of immigrant Latina mothers in Delaware and their interactions with home visitors from Early Head Start, this section will delve deeper into a few of the more salient themes, contextualizing them within the theoretical framework utilized for this study and other recent research findings. The themes discussed here are: Settling in a New Immigrant Destination, Acculturation & Biculturalism, Gender Roles & Mothering, and The Promise of Home Visiting with Latino Families.

Settling in a New Immigrant Destination

Latina mothers had much to say with respect to the first research question of this study that focused on their experiences as immigrant mothers of young children in Delaware. They spoke to the challenges and opportunities of raising children, not only in a different country from where many of them were born, but also far from the ethnic enclaves of more established immigrant communities which might soften the cultural clash that they experienced and ease the burden of everyday transactions. Although a surprising 7 of the 12 first generation immigrants (two mothers were born in the U.S.) immigrated directly to Delaware, those that had experiences in urban areas with more

Latino residents remarked on the contrasts in lifestyle. Most preferred the relative tranquility of Delaware for the raising of young children, but recognized the increased difficulties and isolation of life in a new immigrant destination.

Marrow (2005) explains how political and economic factors spurred the geographic diversification of Latino migration, a trend that has intensified as immigrants discover the low costs of living and high quality of life available to them in new destinations. Ecological systems theory provides a useful foundation for considering how structural changes in the global economy impacts these families and individuals. Shifting macro-economic forces have driven the feminization of the immigrant labor force (Cerrutti & Massey, 2001) and have led to the growing geographic diversification of the immigrant population since the late 1990s away from the large ethnic enclaves of “gateway cities” to new immigrant communities in the Midwest and Southeast of the United States (Hirschman & Massey, 2008).

However, findings from these interviews with Latina mothers in Delaware, as well as research by Cerrutti & Massey (2001) suggest that the rational actor economic model does not always accurately reflect motivations for female migration. Horton (2008) argues that mothers’ migration from Mexico and Central America is often motivated by the desire to provide an “ideal childhood” for their children, a notion which she feels is heavily influenced by global media’s portrayal of Western consumerism. While the immigrant mothers in this study were content with the formal services and resources for their children that they gained through migration to the United States, as well the relative safety of environment that was particular to

Delaware, they may also be sacrificing their own mental health and well being.

Ornelas et al. (2009) examine depression in Mexican immigrant mothers of young children living in North Carolina and find that “the risks or challenges associated with migration and acculturation include family separations, loss of social networks, economic strains, and exposure to discrimination” (p. 4). Furthermore, they note that these challenges may be exacerbated in new immigrant destinations that lack the supports available to immigrant families in communities with more established Latino populations. In this example, it is clear to see how the development of the family and child is influenced at multiple nested levels.

While Hirschman & Massey (2008) argue that research suggests a relative level of tolerance and respect towards migrants in these new immigrant communities, these conclusions seem to be drawn primarily from surveys of the perspective of native-born Americans towards their new neighbors. The feelings of marginalization and discrimination experienced by Mexican immigrant mothers in North Carolina recorded by Ornelas et al. (2009) mirror more closely my own findings with Latina immigrant mothers in Delaware, many of whom reported at least one instance in which they faced discrimination or battled stereotypes based on their race/ethnicity or immigration status.

A few years before data collection for this study began, there was a controversy in the southernmost county of Delaware that illustrates well the sometimes subtle but still jarring forms of discrimination that Latino families in this state may face. Pictures of signs posted by playgrounds outside local elementary

schools emerged online and were picked up by national media (Costantini, 2012). In English, the signs read, “Parental or guardian supervision is required for the use of this playground equipment. Play at your own risk.” However, the Spanish translation below this was: “You must have a permit to play in this field. Violators subject to police action.” For immigrant families terrified of interacting with police and government officials for fear of deportation, this was not an empty threat.

Facing public outcry, the school superintendent acted quickly to remove the signs, and some dismissed the discrepancy as a poor job of translation. However, others pointed out the parallels with “Whites Only” signs present in the U.S. South in the not-so-distant past, particularly as these signs appeared in a conservative county with an increasingly visible Latino community. Whether an error of translation or something more sinister, these playground signs illustrate anecdotally the inhospitable environment that Latino families often face. While the dramatic increase in the Latino population in these areas in recent years may decrease the isolation and discrimination that immigrant mothers experience, the task of raising children in a place where cultural, linguistic and structural barriers abound remains a daunting one.

LatCrit and critical race theory help deconstruct these experiences of discrimination that many of the mothers recount, highlighting the importance of their voices and their stories, which are often marginalized by the dominant narrative. As a result of their race/ethnicity, gender, language and immigration status, these women rarely have any recourse when faced with racist statements and attitudes. Confronting the perpetrators of these discriminatory actions or remarks is particularly daunting if

they are figures of authority, or in the position of gatekeepers to services and resources that the Latina mothers need for their families. LatCrit, CRT and critical race feminism all draw attention to the power differentials at play in these interactions.

Acculturation and Biculturalism

Additional research questions focused on how migration had impacted the mothering beliefs and practices of immigrant mothers, and how they chose to pass on their cultural beliefs and practices to their young children through ethnic socialization. Interestingly, despite the numerous differences mothers noted in raising children in the United States, most felt that their cultural beliefs and parenting practices -their underlying parental ethnotheories- had not been greatly impacted by their migration experience. However, they did acknowledge that their American-born children would inevitably be impacted by the cultural environment in which they were being raised, ultimately adopting aspects of both cultures.

Notably, nearly all the mothers were very clear about their desire to raise bicultural (or multicultural) children, and seemed to take it for granted that a healthy bicultural identity was both possible and ideal. These findings were in strong support of Alternation theory, as opposed to a vision of cultural assimilation, which assumes an inevitable loss of family cultural identity.

Given the pressures towards assimilation to the dominant society, and previous assumptions that acculturative gaps between immigrant parents and their children increased conflict in the family, it is interesting that each of these Latina mothers was

so positive towards the development of bicultural identity in their children. Findings by Lau et al. (2005) and Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao (2008) also question the acculturation gap-distress hypothesis in Mexican and Latino families. The findings of the present study suggest that immigrant mothers are supportive of their children's bicultural identity and encourage their efforts to learn English.

At the same time, these women provided examples of how they preserve and pass on their own ethnic identity to their children. Umaña-Taylor et al. (2009) examine familial ethnic socialization from an ecological perspective and find that family socialization processes play a significant role in ethnic identity formation for several generations after immigration. This conclusion was reinforced in the present study whose findings showed that immigrant Latina mothers shared food and holidays from their countries of origin in order to help their children develop positive ethnic identities and retain important aspects of their culture. The present study also contributes to the literature by examining how these processes play out with very young children.

Gender Roles and Mothering

The theme of Gender Roles and Mothering was not discussed in the findings chapter because it emerged more as an underlying dimension of what was being discussed, instead of being directly addressed by mothers. Home visitors were much more direct in their identification of gender roles as fundamental to what they saw as cultural differences with Latino families, and some were quite critical of the

dependency of Latina mothers on their husbands or partners. At the same time, home visitors also tended to romanticize and idealize the maternal instinct and warmth of Latina mothers, reinforcing a vision of self-sacrificing motherhood that fit within traditional gendered norms.

LatCrit theorist Hernández-Truyol (1997) explains the cultural concept of *marianismo*—based on the ideal of the Virgin Mary—that “glorifies Latinas as strong, long-suffering women who have endured and kept Latino culture and the family intact” (p.915). Hernández-Truyol (1997) quotes Gil and Vázquez (1996) who note that the gendered cultural glorification of women (and particularly mothers) as self-sacrificing has prevented Latinas from pursuing their own ambitions and desires. Furthermore, they note that this cultural expectation is generally most strongly enforced by other women. That is precisely the case with the home visitors who simultaneously encourage the Latina mothers to exercise their independence, while also reifying their devotion to their children.

Beginning with the decision to migrate in the first place, gender roles and power differentials play a role in the lives of these Latina mothers. Several of the women mentioned that their migration had not been completely voluntary, but rather was a forced decision to join their husband/partner already in the United States or to move with their husband/partner in order to not be left behind. Victoria shared, “I didn’t want to come, but if I stayed there I was going to be alone. My family was here. My husband was here. So, I came here.” This lack of true agency in the migration

decision can make the process of acculturation and adjustment to new surroundings that much more difficult and stressful.

Some home visitors were critical of the traditional gender roles that they saw playing out in their families. Laura said that the Hispanic women she worked with tended to be more dependent on their husbands, as they are expected to stay home with the children, they do not drive, and they “have to wait for their husbands to decide anything.” Ana agreed, “It’s like Laura says, they are very dependent on their husband. Because...women stay home most of the time, they take care of the children, and the house and everything in the house.” Both Ana and Laura noted that the fathers in these Latino families worked very long hours and were often gone from morning to night, or days at a time. This made outside employment for the mother impractical, but also gave the women more freedom to make their own decisions in their husband’s absence.

Laura felt that the fathers were often much more traditional in their views, than the mothers who had exposure to different values and American culture through their school-aged children, friends, and by shopping. Although the fathers worked outside the home, it was often in jobs where they were surrounded by other Latino men, and therefore they actually had less exposure to different forms of acculturation. Laura and Ana did both mention that there was a spectrum of acculturation and gender roles among the mothers that they worked with, with mothers from Puerto Rico, or Americans of Latino descent being more “Americanized” than those from Mexico or Central America.

Interestingly though, a majority of the mothers in this study were either currently employed, or had worked outside the home in the past. However, only three of the mothers worked full-time and two of these were the American-born Latinas. Other mothers worked part-time, often taking shifts when their husbands were available to watch their children. Several home visitors mentioned that most of the Latino fathers in the families that they worked with were not very involved at all in caring for their children, but some mothers provided evidence to the contrary and in general it seemed that mothers preferred to leave children in the care of their fathers rather than seek childcare from non-relatives. Although it seemed that some Latino fathers were more involved in childcare than home visitors gave them credit for, there were no families in which the father was the primary caretaker. Similarly, the possibility of fathers foregoing outside employment to stay home with the children while mothers worked full-time was never raised as an option (even in families where the mother's immigration status or educational attainment may have meant her earning power and job stability exceeded that of her partner).

Most of the women who were not currently working expressed a desire to be employed and contributing to the household. However, as discussed in the findings, identifying someone that they trusted to watch their children while they worked (in the absence of extended family) was extremely difficult, and the decision to leave their children gut-wrenching. Victoria talked about the guilt she feels not having as much time with her older daughter while she works, a guilt that she says is magnified for Latina women who expect to be with their children. Elena, who is staying home with

her youngest child, says that she's loved every minute spent with her daughter, and she feels she missed out on a lot of memories with her older children when she worked outside the home. Isabel, a home visitor, brought up the interesting point that Latina mothers who stay home are looked upon by their families and culture as "doing what you're supposed to be doing" as opposed to impoverished American mothers who are often judged harshly for not finding a job to provide for their families.

This cultural double standard was echoed in other comments by home visitors, who might critique the lack of independence enjoyed by the Latino moms, but also simultaneously romanticized the devotion that Latina mothers showed to their children. Samantha said, "I mean the attention they give to this infant, ...it's just beautiful. They are so dedicated. They are so maternal. That maternal instinct is there 100%." Samantha shared how by the time the child was preschool aged, the mother was thoroughly exhausted from dedicating herself completely to the child. Kate shared how she was amazed at the loving, caring way that Latina mothers spoke to their children, even when they were misbehaving, saying, "It just comes from a place that is natural, just their natural way of talking to them."

Lending some credence to these observations, when the mothers were asked what they enjoyed about motherhood, their whole demeanors changed. Many had huge smiles and misty eyes as they described being with their children. While certainly there are social pressures in every culture to exaggerate the positive aspects of motherhood, and emphasize the love for one's children, these mothers were noteworthy in their enthusiasm. Alejandra sat surrounded by her four young children,

burping her 3-month-old baby while talking about the difficulties of providing care for her five-year-old autistic son, but when asked what she liked about being a mother she didn't hesitate for a second. "Everything!" she said. When questioned on how she remained so positive despite all her hard work, she replied:

I wouldn't change anything. I wouldn't change it. Why? I don't know. For me, they come first, more than anything. And no, I wouldn't change anything. It makes me happy to see them, playing, fighting, because they are healthy. That's what I'm concerned with, that they are healthy, and also that they are happy, more than anything that they are happy.

Clearly, despite the difficulties in raising young children, particularly as immigrants far from home and missing extended family, these women drew comfort and fulfillment through their roles as mothers.

While potentially problematic in its reification of the "self-sacrificing" maternal figure, this characterization of maternal devotion among low-income immigrant mothers also challenges dominant discourses about "fit" and "unfit" mothers. In the past, oftentimes parent education programs have adopted a deficit approach that questions the parenting ability of the low-income or minority women who are being served. However, it seems that in this EHS program Latina mothers are actually often exalted as the ideal.

For home visitors, there is an inherent contradiction as they glorify the maternal devotion shown by Latina mothers who adopt more traditional gender roles, while they also work to support the increased independence of these immigrant women through employment, education, and access to outside childcare. The Latina mothers also strive for increased independence and the ability to contribute to their

families economically, but are hesitant to relinquish a role from which they obviously derive great pleasure, and one with such strong cultural expectations and norms.

The Promise of Home Visiting With Latino Families

The third and fourth research questions addressed by this study focused on the interactions between mothers and home visitors, and the perceptions that each group had of this relationship and the negotiation of parental ethnotheories and cultural values. The researcher was particularly interested in whether mothers felt these visits were an intrusion on their cultural beliefs and autonomy, or whether they felt their status and decisions as mothers were respected. The responses from mothers clearly showed that they felt respected by home visitors, appreciated the support and information that home visitors offered, but were also confident that their foundational parental ethnotheories remained relatively unaltered. Home visitors, at least in this particular program, clearly respected the mothers' autonomy and decisions, even if they did not always agree with them.

Although initially there was some assumption on the part of the researcher that the structure of home visiting itself could be seen as intruding into personal and private spaces, both mothers and home visitors illustrated how this service option actually empowered immigrant mothers who may not have felt so free to maintain their cultural views in a more "traditional" early childhood program option. According to the home visitor Isabel,

It also gives them the control to say when they want us to go. You know, they feel more comfortable....we're in their territory. If we were meeting

somewhere else they would be in ours per say, so I think they feel more comfortable because it is their home.

Home visitors, as opposed to most classroom teachers, were also prepared to converse with parents in their native language, and most were bicultural themselves or at least had experience working with Latino or immigrant populations.

Therefore, this research supports the conclusions of Astuto & Allen (2009) who theorized that home visiting has unique possibilities for immigrant families who might otherwise be reluctant to access early childhood education. Bicultural home visitors in particular may act as “cultural brokers” who are empathetic to cultural values and the acculturation experience, but can share knowledge of how to navigate American society and gain access to basic services (Paris, 2008). In this study, as well as in other research on the topic, the importance of matching home visitors with families by ethnicity remains ambiguous. Most home visitors and mothers reported a increased bond when they shared a cultural background with each other, however, most mothers also felt that they could have a positive relationship with a home visitor who did not share their ethnicity so long as there was no communication barrier and the home visitor was respectful and friendly.

One of the clearest findings of this study was the importance of the relationship between mother and home visitor in laying the foundation for negotiating any cultural disagreements over parenting practices. When home visitors had worked hard to establish open and honest relationships with parents based on mutual trust and respect, Latina mothers were very open to suggestions about new parenting practices, even if

they ran contrary to the cultural practices with which they had been raised. However, home visitors also needed to be prepared to respect parental decisions about child rearing even when they did not share them. Home visitors generally accepted that their role was to provide information, and guidance when it was asked for, but refrained from passing judgment or asserting authority over parents. Home visitors did occasionally struggle with defining the boundaries of their role in occasions when they felt that the health and safety of the child was in question.

The importance of a strong relationship between caregiver and home visitor is likely true regardless of the ethnicity of the family, however this importance may be amplified among Latino families because of the cultural values discussed earlier in this paper. Clearly, the value of *personalismo* captures the importance of personal relationships that go above and beyond professional channels or expectations. The cultural importance placed on personal relationships and shared history is one reason why interactions with home visitors might feel much more comfortable for Latino mothers as opposed to the impersonal interactions with social service agencies which is often emphasized as more “professional” in an Americanized cultural setting. Similarly, while the cultural value of *respeto* may cause Latina mothers to be reluctant to question the advice of home visitors, this barrier is decreased when home visitors work to establish trust and show mutual respect which mirrors more familial, as opposed to professional, relationships.

Finally, home visiting may play a particularly important role for immigrant mothers as home visitors provide social support and access to basic services in a

manner that helps to replace social networks and family resources lost through migration. As a result of this displacement from traditional sources of informal support during pregnancy, the post-partum period, and when dealing with young children, immigrant mothers are at risk for isolation and mental health issues. A culturally competent and empathetic home visitor can provide emotional support and guidance, but also link immigrant mothers to formal institutional supports to help relieve the burden they are experiencing. Garcia and Levin (2001) write, “Latino caregivers residing in the United States have a high degree of social support from their spouses, but far less support from other relatives, co-workers, and friends than other Head Start families. Head Start staff provide a needed and important source of support for these families.”

This research identified that immigrant mothers were willing to sacrifice the social and emotional security and comforts of living within their home countries, or immigrant communities within the United States, in order to locate their families in a safe and tranquil environment. These women also recognized the resources guaranteed to their children in this country through formal programs providing food, education, and health care as a primary reason why they chose to raise children here. In this way, they made the decision to exchange the comforts of informal support networks for the opportunities of formal resources. The home visitors of Early Head Start in many ways bridge the distinction between the informal social and emotional support which characterized immigrant mothers’ home countries, and the impersonal but valuable formalized resources which are available in their adopted one.

Implications of Research Findings

Low-income Latina immigrant mothers confront a myriad of challenges to raising their children successfully in a culture that does not necessarily resonate with the values and practices that they grew up with themselves. The loss of informal social support networks makes reliance on formal services and resources a necessity. This finding aligns with previous literature by Garcia and Levin (2001) about lower levels of external social support reported by Latino caregivers in the U.S. This loss may be magnified when families migrate to regions without established immigrant communities to help guide and buffer them from acculturative stresses. The implication of these findings is the potential for positive impact that formalized social supports like EHS can have in the lives of immigrant families.

In addition to loss of social support networks, these mothers must also negotiate power imbalances based upon their gender, social class, and ethnicity. Past research has examined how immigrant families often must adapt to changing gender norms as a result of acculturation, particularly when mothers of young children are employed outside the home (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Grzywacz et al., 2009; Portes, 1997). The current study gives voice to the emotional struggle that immigrant Latina mothers face as they are eager to contribute to their families economically, but also must confront their own desires to remain present with their young children and cultural norms that strongly discourage non-familial childcare.

Home visitors were critical of male family figures whom they found to be more conservative in their gender role expectations compared to the mothers, and

home visitors encouraged mothers to acculturate to certain American values in order to gain a measure of independence from their husbands and partners. At the same time, home visitors idealized the maternal devotion that they witnessed from Latina moms, reinforcing the cultural expectations that these women prioritize the care of their children over anything else. These findings imply that immigrant Latina mothers, even those not working outside the home, may be more open to acculturative changes—particularly in regards to changing gender roles—than their male partners. However, the cultural norms associated with prioritizing their roles as mothers, and specifically in avoiding non-familial childcare, remain important factors to consider when designing programs that attempt to serve the needs of Latino families in culturally appropriate ways.

Researchers have identified several cultural values common in many Latino families, including: *familismo*, *respeto*, and *personalismo* (Calzada et al., 2010; Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Olivos, 2009; Smokowski et al., 2008). These cultural values were also present in the families interviewed for the current study. Not only were these values that mothers attempted to pass to their children, but they were also evident in the relationships that developed between mothers and home visitors. Latina mothers who reported the most positive experiences with Early Head Start were also those who had the strongest relationships with their home visitors. This relationship often went beyond a strictly professional relationship, but relied upon values of *familismo* and *personalismo* in which home visitors were considered to be trusted friends and even members of the family. Home visitors at times struggled to maintain

some professional distance, but also valued their relationships and realized that the success of their interactions with families depended on stepping outside of a strictly professional role.

While the concept of *respeto* mostly refers to the respect that must be shown parents by their children, in this case it also refers to the reluctance that immigrant mothers might have to contradict or challenge the authority of home visitors who were seen as educated experts (and gatekeepers to needed services). Home visitors were aware of this power differential and attempted to reciprocate respect for mothers and their decisions and values in raising their children. Most mothers reported feeling respected, and shared that they felt confident in raising concerns or objections with their home visitors. This ability to dialogue and negotiate different cultural practices in child-rearing was possible because a relationship had been built with a foundation of trust and respect. In this case, the implications of the research are clear: prioritizing relationship building and mutual respect is crucial for the success of work with immigrant Latino families.

This emphasis on empowerment, trust, and a strength-based approach to parent education has been shown in other research to be successful among culturally diverse populations (Canning & Fantuzzo, 2008; Sheely-Moore & Ceballos, 2001). While the administrator of this EHS emphasized that thought was put into ensuring that teaching materials and curricula were culturally relevant for all families, it was clear from conversations with the home visitors that there were still aspects of the program that required home visitors to adapt or pick and choose what to discuss with parents. Home

visitors felt that they were given enough flexibility in their roles to tailor information to the needs of each family. However, this flexibility also meant that the experiences of each family varied greatly depending upon their home visitor and the quality of their relationship. In this case, recommendations for success are less straightforward. In order to negotiate cultural differences, home visitors and staff must be given some flexibility to tailor activities and advice to specific families. However, this individualization also makes evaluating outcomes or determining best practices extremely challenging.

For Early Head Start and other child development programs, this study brings encouraging findings for the ability of these programs—if implemented with mindful attention to and respect for cultural differences—to provide crucial services to the growing immigrant Latino population. This study reaffirms previous research that identifies home visiting as a model of service delivery which shows particular promise in meeting both the practical and sociocultural needs of Latina mothers and simultaneously benefiting Latino children who are less likely to participate in other forms of early childhood education (Astuto & Allen, 2009; Bill et al., 2009; Paris, 2008).

Recent policy shifts have favored expanding formal early childhood education for low-income families, based largely on research that suggests that preschool enrollment can decrease school readiness gaps which often emerge between children of different racial/ethnic groups and socioeconomic status (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). However, the current study suggests that home visiting programs may be a

more culturally appropriate service option for less acculturated Latino families who are not comfortable with non-familial childcare.

The specific Early Head Start program studied in this research serves as a positive example of how a culture of respect for parents and cultural differences can be promoted by the staff, laying the foundation for strong relationships between home visitors and parents which allowed for the open discussion and negotiation of different cultural models of parenting with positive results. Despite this general success, it is also clear from the findings that maintaining the balance between respecting parental beliefs and ensuring the healthy development of children in the program is an ongoing process, which home visitors must be prepared to continuously consider.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Limitations of the current research include its relatively small sample size and lack of generalizability since many of the experiences were specific to Delaware, and perhaps to this particular (and somewhat unique) Early Head Start (EHS) program. The sample was also drawn from mothers who had voluntarily sought parenting support from EHS, and therefore may have been more inclined to seek assistance from formal avenues, or may have better access to resources because of their association with EHS. It is possible that the mothers and home visitors who agreed to contribute to the study were more likely to have positive things to say about the program, or that they felt more comfortable sharing positive experiences with the researcher. However, there were also many examples of the sharing of sensitive or critical information,

which suggests that in general participants were remarkably open and honest in their responses. This research focused purposefully on the experiences of mothers, but as such lacks the perspective of fathers or other family members who may be involved in the care and ethnic socialization of the children.

Areas for future research include replicating the study with other EHS programs to determine the variety of experiences between programs and how to maximize the benefits to participants. It is possible that the unique structure and mindset of this particular EHS program meant that the experiences of both home visitors and immigrant mothers is not typical of most EHS programs.

Additionally, conducting similar studies in other regions would help isolate the differences of experiences for immigrant mothers based on geographic location and community resources. Finally, while a focus on child outcomes was outside the scope of this study's purpose, being able to examine the potential effects of mothers' perspectives of the respect given to their belief systems and the strength of their relationships with their home visitors would be invaluable for the continued improvement of Early Head Start programs.

Although the qualitative nature of the current study limited the scope and sample size, findings from this research could be invaluable in helping to design larger, more generalizable studies on bi-culturalism, acculturation in a family context, and social service provision to immigrant families.

Contributions of Current Study

Despite its limitations, this research fills important gaps in the existing literature by adding the voices of these women to a growing understanding of Latino families in the United States. Latinos make up over 17% of the U.S. population (López & Patten, 2015) and many of those are families with young children. Understanding the acculturation processes of mothers, children, and families is an important part of supporting the integration of these families in a way that maximizes benefits for both individuals and society as a whole. This study contributes to the literature by exploring aspects of the acculturation and ethnic socialization of young children, and clearly shows most Latina mothers in this study favor their children adopting a bicultural identity. Furthermore, this research highlights the experience of immigrant families in Delaware, a non-traditional immigrant destination with a dearth of literature on its growing Latino population.

The fact that this study utilizes an ecological systems framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) shows the importance of understanding the multiple nested layers of influences which are particularly pronounced in the lives of immigrant families, from macro-level geo-political and economic policies which drive migration, to institutional level policies on language and culture, down to the micro-level interactions between mother and child as they negotiate a new cultural environment. This study also applies critical race feminist and LatCrit perspectives that consider the power inequities that often place immigrant women of color at a disadvantage in

advocating for authority to maintain their own parental ethnotheories and child rearing practices.

With particular implications for applied purposes, this research captures the perspectives of both mothers and home visitors, exploring what really goes on inside the “black box” of home visits (Hebbeler & Gerlach-Downie 2002) and illuminating interactions which are particularly difficult to study and yet crucial for the understanding of ways to maximize the effectiveness of such programs. Finally, with over a third of Early Head Start children and families identifying as Latino, this study helps fill a crucial need to understand these families and their experiences within EHS, exploring the potential and challenges of providing home visiting services with this population.

Conclusion

While much media attention and public debate has been focused on immigration reform and specifically on ways to limit the number of unauthorized immigrants who enter the United States, much less emphasis has been placed on the ways that immigrants and their children can be successfully incorporated into our society. It is imperative that governmental resources and non-profit support services, even in regions with relatively new growth in the Latino population, are aware of the linguistic and cultural barriers that these mothers and their children face, and attempt to accommodate their needs. Ultimately, the promotion of health and well being of all families benefits the entire community.

Interviews with Latina mothers reveal that these women appreciated the opportunities and security gained by raising their young children in the United States—and in Delaware specifically— even if this meant that as immigrant mothers they faced challenges that might have been reduced by living in a more familiar environment. Furthermore, most were eager for their children to identify as bicultural, although they also encouraged their ethnic socialization by teaching them Spanish, and sharing traditional food and holidays. Latina mothers compensated for some of the losses of informal support systems due to migration by relying more heavily on formal resources and services, including the relationships they built with their Early Head Start home visitors. Strong relationships with home visitors and the perception that their beliefs and authority were respected led mothers to share positive impressions of their involvement with Early Head Start. Home visitors reported success negotiating cultural differences by recognizing parental authority and discussing sensitive topics after establishing relationships based on trust and openness.

This research shows that immigrant Latina mothers can benefit from, and value, services such as Early Head Start that recognize and respect their cultural beliefs and help them to navigate the challenges of raising bicultural children in a new cultural environment. With growing numbers of Latino families with young children in the United States, we must develop culturally appropriate resources to decrease the achievement gap of Latino children and promote the development of healthy bicultural identities. This study shows the possibilities that arise from empowering Latina

mothers and recognizing their agency and authority despite the external constraints placed upon them based on ethnicity, social class, and gender.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LATINA MOTHERS

A. Introduction:

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. I am working on a research project for my doctoral dissertation in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Delaware. I am interested in learning more about your experiences as an immigrant Latina mother and in particular about your experiences as a participant in Early Head Start. I want to be clear that if I ask you any questions that you find too personal or don't want to answer then feel free to let me know. Also, if at any point you'd like to take a break or end the interview we can do that as well.

In order to protect your confidentiality, I won't be using your real name in my final project. Would you like to pick a fake name for me to use for you or your child/children?

I want to assure you that nothing that you say here today will be repeated back to staff or home visitors at Strong Foundations Early Head Start¹³ in a way that they can identify who you are. I have worked as a home visitor for SFEHS in the past, but I am here today only as a researcher. I would really like your honest opinions and experiences with the program, and nothing that you say will effect whether you continue to receive services from SFEHS.

In order to not miss anything that you're saying and make sure that I don't misquote you, I'd like to tape-record our conversation. Again, you will not be identified by name on the recording and I will take all necessary precautions to ensure your confidentiality. I will also destroy the recording after I have transcribed it (written down exactly what was said). Would it be OK if I begin recording now?

B. Questions and subquestions:

I have a few questions that I have prepared that I'd like to ask you, but mainly I am interested in your experiences and opinions. There are no right and wrong answers and the more you can tell me the better. I'll let you know if we're getting too far off topic, but feel free to talk about anything that you think is relevant. Details and examples are especially wonderful.

¹³Pseudonym for organization used only in appendices.

1. Icebreaker

- Tell me a little about your child/children?
- What's your favorite part about being a mother?

2. What is your experience like as a Latina mother in Delaware?

- How long have you lived in Delaware?
- Where did you live before you came here?
- Were all your children born here, or did you raise any children in (country of origin)?
- How is raising children here different from in your country of origin?
- How has migration impacted your cultural beliefs and practices, particularly how you raise your children?
- Do you think these changes are positive or negative?
- Do you feel like you have a good support system here? Who do you turn to when you need help?
- Have you sought help or resources from organizations or social service agencies besides Early Head Start? (Do you receive TANF, WIC or Medicaid?) What have your experiences been like with those organizations or agencies?

3. How do you share your culture with your children?

- Are you eager for your children to adopt American culture, or hesitant? Why or why not?
- What are some things that you do to share your own culture?
- Do you want your children to think of themselves as (nationality of origin country) or as American, or both?
- Do you think that someone can keep aspects of two cultures at one time?
- What are the main differences between American culture and the culture that you come from?
- How do these differences impact the way you parent?

4. How do you feel about the parenting advice and instruction you receive from Early Head Start home visitors?

- How are the things that EHS home visitors teach and advise similar or different from your parenting beliefs before you entered the program?
- Is there anything that they have said about raising children that has surprised you? What was it? Why was this surprising?
- Is there anything that home visitors have advised that you disagreed with? How did you react when you heard them? Did you feel that you could tell them that you disagreed?
- Do they feel that your own cultural beliefs are respected by home visitors and by Early Head Start in general?
- Are there any parenting practices that you have changed as a result of

something you learned in the program? Are there any practices that you've chosen to continue even though you had been advised to change them? What are they and why did you feel strongly about keeping them?

- Do you think that there is anything that NDEHS and its home visitors could do differently that could help you feel like your own cultural views are being acknowledged and respected by the program?

5. Demographics & acculturation

These next questions just let me know a little more about you.

- If someone asked you about your race or ethnicity, what would you say?
- Where were you born?
- When did you come to the US? How old were you?
- Do you consider yourself to be _____ or American?
- What language do you mainly speak in your home?
- Do you speak English at all? If yes, how did you learn?
- Do you work outside of the home? What do you do? Do you need to speak English at your job?
- What is the highest level of school you completed? Was that in the US or in _____?
- Do you have friends or family that are not Latino?
- Are you married? Is your husband Latino? Where is he from?
- Which of these best describes your family's monthly income in a typical month?
 - No income
 - Less than \$500
 - Between \$500-\$1000
 - Between \$1000-\$1500
 - Between \$1500-\$2000
 - More than \$2000
- Do you often worry about meeting basic needs like food and rent/mortgage?

C. Closing

That is about all the information that I need, do you have any questions for me?

I want to thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences. Please feel free to call me in the future with any questions or if I can be of any help to you.

Appendix B

INTERVIEW/FOCUS GROUP GUIDE FOR HOME VISITORS

A. Introduction:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this focus group.. I am working on a research project for my doctoral dissertation in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Delaware. I am interested in learning more about your experiences as Early Head Start home visitors who work with immigrant Latina mothers. I want to be clear that if I ask you any questions that you find too personal or don't want to answer then feel free to let me know. Also, if at any point you'd like to take a break or end the interview we can do that as well.

In order to protect your confidentiality, I won't be using your real name in my final project. I'd like to ask each of you to commit to keeping confidential any discussions or information that is shared during this focus group. I want to assure you that nothing that you say here today will be repeated back to other staff at Strong Foundations Early Head Start in a way that they can identify who you are. I have worked as a home visitor for SFEHS in the past, but I am here today only as a researcher. I would really like your honest opinions and experiences with the program, and will work to protect your confidentiality.

In order to not miss anything that you're saying and make sure that I don't misquote you, I'd like to tape-record our conversation. Again, you will not be identified by name on the recording and I will take all necessary precautions to ensure your confidentiality. I will also destroy the recording after I have transcribed it (written down exactly what was said). Would it be OK if I begin recording now?

B. Questions and subquestions:

I have a few questions that I have prepared that I'd like to ask you, but mainly I am interested in your experiences and opinions. There are no right and wrong answers and the more you can tell me the better. I'll let you know if we're getting too far off topic, but feel free to talk about anything that you think is relevant. Details and examples are especially wonderful.

1. Icebreaker

- What is your favorite part about being a home visitor?

- Do you enjoy working with caregivers and children equally, or is it easier to work with one or the other?

2. Working with Latino Families

- Do you work with both Latino and American mothers?
- What do you think are some of the main differences you have noticed when working with Latina families and mothers?
- Do you think that culture plays a significant role in how these mothers interact with and raise their children? What are some examples?
- Are there particular traditions or customs that some Latino families have that seem different from the things that you have been trained to present by Early Head Start?
- How do you negotiate discussing those differences with Latina mothers?
- Do you think your own cultural upbringing plays a role in how you interact with Latino families and mothers? How?
- Are there things you have been trained to teach that you disagree with or find surprising? What are they and how do you deal with that?
- Do you think that NDEHS in general does a good job working with families with different cultural backgrounds and respecting their beliefs about childrearing?
- Do you have any suggestions for ways that NDEHS might work with Latino families and mothers better in the future

C. Closing

That is about all the information I need, do you have any questions for me? I want to thank you again for your time and for sharing your experiences. Please feel free to call me in the future with any questions or if I can be of any help to you.

Appendix C

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY FOR HOME VISITORS

HV real initial: _____ HV chosen “fake” name: _____

1. If someone asked you what was your race or ethnicity what would you say? Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino?
2. Where were you born?
3. If you were born outside of the U.S. how long ago did you move here? How old were you when you moved here?
4. Do you consider yourself to be _____ (Puerto Rican/Guatemalan/Mexican, etc.) or American? Or both?
5. How long have you lived in Delaware?
6. What language do you mainly speak in your home? Do you feel more comfortable speaking English or Spanish or equally comfortable in both?
7. Are you married or in a relationship? Is your significant other Latino? Where is he/she from?
8. Do you have children? How many, and how old are they? Were they born in the US?
9. What is the highest level of school you have completed? Was this in the U.S. or in another country?
 - € Middle school
 - € High school/GED
 - € Associate’s degree

- € Bachelor's degree
- € Graduate certificate or degree

10. If you don't mind sharing, what age category do you fall into?

- € 20-29 years
- € 30-39 years
- € 40-49 years
- € 50-59 years
- € 60-69 years

Appendix D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EHS ADMINISTRATORS

A. Introduction:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am working on a research project for my doctoral dissertation in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Delaware. I am interested in learning more about your experiences and thoughts as an administrator of an Early Head Start Program. I want to be clear that if I ask you any questions that you don't want to answer then feel free to let me know. Also, if at any point you'd like to take a break or end the interview we can do that as well.

In order to protect your confidentiality, I won't be using your real name in my final project. Although all efforts will be made to protect your confidentiality, due to the limited number of administrators in this program, you should be aware that it may be possible for others knowledgeable about this program to determine your identity.

In order to not miss anything that you're saying and make sure that I don't misquote you, I'd like to tape-record our conversation. Again, you will not be identified by name on the recording and I will take all necessary precautions to ensure your confidentiality. I will also destroy the recording after I have transcribed it (written down exactly what was said). Would it be OK if I begin recording now?

B. Questions and subquestions:

I have a few questions that I have prepared that I'd like to ask you, but mainly I am interested in your experiences and opinions. There are no right and wrong answers and the more you can tell me the better. I'll let you know if we're getting too far off topic, but feel free to talk about anything that you think is relevant. Details and examples are especially wonderful.

Introduction

- To begin, can you tell me how long you have worked at SFEHS and in what capacity?
- What can you tell me about this program's history?
- Do you think SFEHS is somewhat representative of most EHS programs or are there ways that set it apart?

- What would you consider to be this program's strengths and challenges?

Culture

- Do you think Early Head Start, and this program in particular consider the role of culture when working with families?
- In what ways does this program consider and accommodate cultural differences in families?
- What is the most challenging part of dealing with these differences from an administrative point of view?
- Are there specific examples that you're aware of when cultural differences presented a challenge in delivering services, or keeping a family in the program?

Home Visiting

- Are home visitors trained specifically to work with culturally diverse families? Why or why not?
- Is HV ethnicity considered when assigning caseloads?
- How would a home visitor be expected to negotiate a situation with a family whose cultural practices are different from SFEHS or EHS suggested best practices?
- How much flexibility do you feel home visitors have in the curriculum or best-practice guidelines that they deliver to families? Is that flexibility intentional?
- Would a HV ever be held responsible or liable for a family decision that resulted in harm to the child?
- Do you think there are ways that the administration or supervisors can support home visitors more as they work with these families, or are those supports already in place?

C. Closing

Is there anything else about the program that you would like to share with me? Or do you have any questions for me?

I want to thank you again for your time and for sharing your experiences. Please feel free to call me in the future with any questions or if I can be of any help to you.

Appendix E

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE IRB APPROVAL LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Halliwell Hall
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: June 5, 2014

TO: Megan Barolet-Fogarty, M.A.
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [608392-1] Latina Mothers in Early Head Start
:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: June 5, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE: June 4, 2015
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # (6,7)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.