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## Mestizaje Epistemologies Braiding Latina Women Narratives

Freyca Calderon

### Abstract

Latina immigrant women raising children who are attending or have attended schools in the United States are dealing with particular challenges of becoming bilingual and bicultural in a mainstream society. Their own personal experiences inform and shape their mothering practices and ways of educating. This article describes how the mothering practices of these women are part of their home pedagogies. In enacting these pedagogies, Latina mothers are the creators of a cultural curriculum of the home that entails ways of knowing, being, and doing that are not necessarily aligned with those that the dominant culture validates. These differing ways of being are essential for the development of the (bi)cultural identity of their children. Using diverse theoretical frameworks to theorize and analyze these narratives, I braid them together in the configuration of mestizaje epistemologies.

### Introduction

This article reports findings from a study exploring the experiences of Latina immigrant women raising children who are attending or have attended schools in the United States to discern how these mothers deal with the challenges of becoming bilingual and bicultural in a mainstream society. Using a narrative inquiry approach, participants shared personal narratives expressing their insights into their individual ways of educating. I propose here that these mothers are the creators of a cultural curriculum of the home that may not be aligned with those that the dominant culture validates; nonetheless, this curriculum is essential

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for the development of the (bi)cultural identity of their children. The research demonstrates that because of their own experiences in becoming immigrants, these women have also developed particular ways of knowing, being, and doing. These inform and guide their ways of mothering and create their own cultural curriculum of the home. In what follows, I theorize and analyze women's narratives in the configuration of mestizaje epistemologies by braiding them together with diverse theoretical frameworks. First, I provide a contextualization of Latina's ways of mothering. Next, a brief description of the theoretical frameworks and the methodology used in the study. Last, I introduce the themes emerged as results, braiding the narratives, and the implication to education.

### Contextualizing Latina's Ways of Mothering

Hispanics are the largest and youngest minority group in the United States (Brown & López, 2013). For this reason, it is important to consider that the cultural values and beliefs these young Hispanic/Latins<sup>1</sup> people hold are already impacting American society and will further impact it as this group continues growing. There are some key cultural characteristics that are worth noticing. For instance, mothers are primarily in charge of child-rearing and of transferring cultural traditions and values (Valdés, 1996; Houndagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). Hispanic culture is better described by the features of the collectivism model (Trumbull et al., 2001), in which raising a child is commonly assisted by other family and community members (O'Reilly, 2008). Nonetheless, mothers assume the main role of preserving values, traditions, beliefs, and behavior (Tummala-Narra, 2004) essential to their cultural background or heritage. In Hispanic/Latinx communities, this cultural knowledge is integrated in what is known as "*una buena educación*" (Elenes et al, 2001), and it is frequently believed that it comes from *la casa*, the family and one's household.

For many transnational Latina women, this task turns out to be more challenging since they live dual realities (Mackie, 1999). These women often encounter differences and contradictions between the local and the personal cultural context. These encounters push them to develop various cultural tools to cope with multiple socially-constructed and intersecting borders. These tools include, but are not limited to, mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987) and Chicana epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998). This personal process of developing cultural tools unfolds simultaneously as women enact their own ways of mothering and educating while negotiating between their own beliefs, values, and traditions, and the ones that are endorsed by the dominant culture, at the same time that they are conferring with their children's own ideas and desires. For instance, Tummala-Narra (2004) indicates that many immigrant mothers living in the United States, where people highly value independence and individuality, face the challenge of raising their children to be more interdependent and attached to a large family system. In

facing the ambivalence and contradictions mothering entails, Latina immigrant women make use of their cultural and intellectual tools in unique ways to assist them in making decisions and navigate everyday life situations.

There is a documented effort to highlight the significance of the knowledge acquired from home, community, and personal relationships (Grumet, 1988; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Springgay & Freedman, 2012; Malewski, 2012;). For instance, Malewski (2012) recalls the ways in which his mother supported and empowered him through ways of knowing engendered and embodied that are not included as “public/official” knowledge. He argues for scholarly work that aims to break down mainstream canonical and disciplinary models of education. Although the need is acknowledged, the task is still messy and incomplete. The scholarship studying and theorizing mothering practices and the role of mothers as educators is still scarce. Grumet (1988) affirmed, “The experiences of family life, of bearing, delivering, and nurturing children, were absent from [curriculum theory] discourse” (p. xv). Grumet further encourages her readers to work on creating the kind of society we want our children to live in and the world we envision for them instead of conforming with the one we are experiencing. I believe that aligns with most mothers’ desires for their children as well. Yet, the current climate indicates there still is a lot of work to do in terms of equity and social justice in education, publicly and privately, particularly for minoritized groups. In recognizing the role of mothers as educators and focusing on ways of theorizing the learning that takes place in the home, educators could explore more ways of integrating such learning into more academic and formal schooling spaces. In that way, the recognition of the need to theorize and explore mothering as a performative act (Springgay & Freedman, 2012) is an invitation for scholars and practitioners to expand our understandings of what education means and to embrace multiple ways of being.

The role of mothers as educators is underestimated. This role has changed from that of mothers as primary educators to one of merely helpers with schoolwork (Moreno & Valencia, 2011). This is particularly due to the ways in which Latino/as are racialized in the United States (Villenas, 2001). The deficit culture perspective provides a frame that makes Latina mothers the target for parenting classes, as they are often seen as lacking the right skills to prepare their children for schooling, at least in the way the dominant culture expects them to do so (Monzó, 2013). The lived experiences acquired at home are too often disregarded as nonessential input for the individual’s learning process. Interacting with other people forms one’s epistemologies or ways of knowing pertaining to their communities or surroundings. However, not all communities are the same. Each community creates its own ways of knowing and doing. Sometimes those ways contrast with others, specifically when deviating from those of the mainstream culture. Based on this contextualization, I offer a brief account of the theoretical frameworks used to theorize and analyze the Latina mothers’ narratives and key elements in composing mestizaje epistemologies.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Western societies privilege a hegemonic ideology of White supremacy and patriarchy (hooks, 2000). Such ideology sets up inequities on a social level that reaches into individual lives. For instance, gender inequalities presume power relations that oppress, objectify, discriminate, and stereotype women based on a patriarchal system that positions men as superior to women. Yet, the implications of White supremacy and patriarchy at an individual level vary from person to person with the intersections of other social categories. The more salient intersecting social categories for this study are those related to gender, immigration and parenting status, language, culture, and ethnicity. Accordingly, I present here the variety of conceptualizations that shape the theoretical framework used to braid participants' narratives. Beginning with the big umbrella of feminist theory, I used various branches derived from it, such as (a) feminist epistemologies (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Grasswick, 2013) that recognize diversity in women's ways of knowing, their experiences, and knowledge production; (b) standpoint feminist theories (Kolmar & Bartowski, 2013) that acknowledge the significance of their social locations and its contribution to the construction of a specific perspective and understanding of the social, cultural, and political reality (McCann & Kim, 2013); (c) intersectionality (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) to examine the construction of subjectivity at the intersection of multiple social categories; and (d) feminist mothering (O'Reilly, 2008) to reconceptualize and validate individual practices of mothering. Furthermore, I draw upon Chicana/Latina feminist perspectives given the emphasis of recognizing unconventional ways of knowing that emerge from the everyday practices taking place in home spaces and communities and placing culture at the center of the analysis. I purposely selected theoretical notions that are significant to the personal lived experiences such as *Borderlands*, *Nepantla*, *la facultad*, *mestiza consciousness*, (Anzaldúa, 1987) and *Chicana epistemology* (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

In addition, Critical race theory (CRT) provides an important intellectual and social tool to deconstruct social structures and discourses (Ladson-Billings, 1998) enclosing participants' experiences and to better understand how the cultural deficit model permeates into their lives. In education, CRT challenges the dominant discourse by examining how theories, policies, and practices harm diverse groups (Solórzano, 1998). Focusing particularly on Latinos, Latino/a critical theory (Lat-Crit) "examines experiences unique to the Latino/a community such as immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture" (Pérez Huber, 2010, p. 77), revealing Latinas/os' multidimensional identities while addressing the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

These theoretical conceptualizations are also situated within a decolonizing framework that provides a space to tell stories, to give voice to the silenced to demystify, break stereotypes, and decolonize (Smith, 1999), and to expose and

validate other ways of knowing (Saavedra & Nymark, 2008). Using these theoretical notions within a decolonizing framework also requires the examination of the notion of education—the acquisition of a body of knowledge through a systematic instruction at a school or other institution- juxtaposed with *educación*—a process through which an individual forms and shapes a personal epistemology (knowledge, values, ways of being, and understanding the world within a specific context) and appropriates the culture in which he/she is immersed—as is understood by Latina mothers (Burciaga, 2007; Espinoza-Herold, 2007), and to the roles and extent of parental involvement that the educational standpoint and/or schools assign to. In order to legitimize the learning acquired at home and community sites, it is necessary to revise and contest the assumptions implied by the cultural deficit model (Irizarry, 2009; Flores, 2005) and find ways to integrate other models of involvement (Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011). By challenging traditional ways of knowing and legitimizing other ways of being and doing (Yosso, 2005), giving voice to ignored and marginalized Latina women, and validating pedagogies of the home and community, I situate this project as part of decolonizing educational research theorizing Latina women's everyday experiences while braiding them with their culture, identity, and educational mothering practices.

### Methodology

As human beings, we (re)compose our lived experiences through telling narratives about our existence that follow story structures (Bell, 2002). It is in storytelling that people create or find the meaning and impact of those experiences. It is how people make sense of them (Clark, 2010.) Hence, narrative is also a way of knowing (Hendry, 2009). Given that the core of my own inquiry is to explore the life experiences of Latina women with reference to their ways of mothering, I situated the study as a narrative inquiry within an interpretive paradigm, which allows the researcher to focus on understanding the meanings, purposes, and intentions people give to their actions and thoughts through their narratives (Smith, 2008). Following a paradigmatic analysis process (Polkinghorn, 1995) four themes emerged from the participants' narrative, which are described as part as their cultural curriculum of the home.

### Participants

Participants in this study were invited to partake in a personal interview based on two criteria: being a Latina immigrant and being a mother. An immigrant still has a strong connection with the country of origin. In many cases, the family remains in the immigrant mother's hometown and her desire to build a connection between her family and her children strengthens her bond to her cultural background. Ten women from diverse contexts/backgrounds were interviewed for this study. Five participants are from Mexico, two from Colombia, one from Peru,

one from Venezuela, and one from Ecuador. The age range among these women is between 35 to 60 years old, with children from elementary grades to college graduates. One of them is also a grandmother. All of these women are bilingual, although with various levels of English proficiency. The level of education among participants is varied from literacy without formal schooling to master's degrees and one doctorate.

### **Data analysis: *Trenzando historias—Braiding Narratives***

Godínez (2006) conceptualized *trenzas* “as an analytical frame of intersectionality, a multimethodological approach of *pláticas* (popular conversations), and the active engagement—voices of my researcher self and the participants of my study” (p. 28). She then linked *trenzas* with *mestizaje*, defining *mestizaje* as “a consciousness of an ethical commitment to egalitarian social relations in the everyday political sphere of culture” (p. 28). Drawing upon Godínez’s (2006) conceptualization of *trenzas y mestizaje* as a methodology for advancing cross-disciplinary studies that illuminate cultural knowledge, I braided participants experiences by juxtaposing them with the theoretical conceptualizations presented above. The process of analyzing and interpreting narratives with and through the lenses of the different theoretical notions and tools is what I propose as *mestizaje* epistemologies.

As researcher, I use English and Spanish languages. First, to honor our cultural background; second, as a writing device used to examine participants’ narratives (as presented in the excerpts), my personal experience, and the methodological framework of *trenzando* (braiding) the theoretical notions with participants’ narratives that revealed the creation of a personalized cultural curriculum of the home.

Narrative inquiry guided this research that explored how 10 Latina immigrant women negotiate with the contradictions they encounter in everyday life while trying to maintain their own cultural identity. Through participants’ narratives, I identified four main themes that unveiled a cultural curriculum that these women unfold at home. The findings describe the main themes as the pedagogies of the home that Latina immigrant mothers practice and integrate into their cultural curriculum. Chicana/Latina feminists have battled to expand the academic notion of pedagogy to include everyday ways of learning and teaching that occur in a variety of activities that still remain un-theorized as pedagogical forms (Galvan, 2001), or ways of educating. I use these pedagogies of the home to braid the personal narratives with theoretical conceptualizations described before to illustrate the *mestizaje* epistemologies that compose the cultural curriculum of the home.

### **Braiding Mestizaje Epistemologies to Unfold the Cultural Curriculum of the Home**

In this study, the pedagogies of the home are the specific actions that Lati-

na immigrant mothers enact when interacting with their children, their ways of being, doing, and knowing that extend beyond formal school settings and that place culture and cultural knowledge at the center, juxtaposed to the dominant culture. These pedagogies stand as a foundation of the cultural curriculum of the home. By endorsing these pedagogies of the home, Latina immigrant women act as educators and (re)producers of cultural knowledge that often differ from the dominant culture and thus, position them as different, minoritized, and/or marginalized within the mainstream. When enacting those pedagogies, Latina women are constructing the cultural curriculum of the home. The pedagogies of the home revealed in the narratives include:

**Language:** Participants claimed the native language as the most important aspect to teach their children, so they could interact and have a relationship with the extended family, as well as be able to have a better understanding of their cultural heritage. Although the asset of being bilingual is seen as a plus, it stands as secondary.

Participants see Spanish as their first language, therefore, it is natural for them to speak it to their children. Mariana, a bilingual teacher from Ecuador, expressed it very simply:

*Yo les hablé español desde el principio, para mí era lo más natural... yo estoy con ellos diez horas, entonces puro español. Y cuando llegaba mi esposo les hablaba inglés, y ahí es donde naturalmente el niño adquiere los dos [idiomas].* (Ent. 7-1).

I spoke Spanish to them from the beginning, to me it was the most natural thing... I was with them for ten hours, then just Spanish, and when my husband got home he spoke English to them. In that way the child acquires both languages naturally

Mariana gave little thought to the language she used when communicating with her children. Since speaking her native language *era lo mas natural*, “was the most natural thing to do,” it was like an unconscious decision to her. Yet, the reason behind it is more significant than just a natural thing to do. The language she chose is a pedagogical and cognitive tool (Vygotsky, 1980) that she is not only using for teaching, but also to help the children acquire it as part of their cultural knowledge. In so doing, she is enacting LatCrit theory and Chicana epistemology.

For other women the experience has been very different. When both parents speak Spanish and, in some cases, are not even proficient in English, the perspective is the opposite. Nydia is a Mexican woman whose husband speaks only a little English. Both she and her husband insist that their children should be as proficient in Spanish as they are in English.

*Mi esposo no quiere que los niños hablen el inglés en la casa, dice—no quiero que después me vayan andar con que no pueden tener una conversación en español. Y si*

My husband does not want the kids to speak English at home, he says, “I don’t want that later they won’t be able to have a conversation in Spanish.” And it happens because



*pasa porque la mayoría de mis primas no pueden tener una conversación en español...* most of my cousins cannot have a conversation in Spanish...  
(Ent. 6 -17).

Nydia refers to some members of her family that live in the U.S. and do not speak Spanish even though it is the only language their mother knows. She critiques those relatives for not embracing the native language since it is their mothers' tongue and they are hindering the communication between family members. Nydia uses her mestiza consciousness when recalling her relatives that comply with the dominant culture and don't make their home language and cultural background priorities. Nydia embraces and (re)produces her cultural knowledge by continuing to speak Spanish and requesting her children to do it as well.

Conversely, for Isabel speaking Spanish has become an opportunity to develop another bond that strengthens her relationship with her son. She says it is a kind of complicity between mother and son that her husband cannot be part of,

*Mi hijo, que yo digo es algo muy Latino, me dice, "Mami, no le enseñes [español] [a papá] porque después él va a saber lo que estamos hablando." Es como una complicidad, no? La complicidad de los Latinos, No le enseñes porque después luego no podemos hablar español delante de él* (Ent. 1-9). My son says, "Mami, don't teach [Spanish] to [my dad] because then he'll know what we are talking about." I think that is something very Latino. It is like complicity, isn't it? The complicity of Latinos, don't teach him because then we could not speak Spanish in front of him.

Isabel's son finds speaking Spanish to be a special link with his mother and does not want to share it with his father, as the father does not speak the language. By not wanting his father to join this special part of the relationship he has with his mother, the child is beginning to identify differences not only in terms of language but also in terms of culture and power structures, which is part of developing a mestiza consciousness as well.

These mothers defy the deficit model by endorsing the practice of Spanish as much as they can. They are also teaching their children to become border-crossers and in that way challenge the dominant structures that validate English-only policies. Through promoting and practicing the use of their native language, Latina immigrant mothers are not only enacting pedagogies of the home, but also creating a cultural curriculum of the home that is part of their children's heritage.

**Family bonds:** In Latino communities, the family plays a significant role in raising children (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001; Hidalgo, 1997), and not only the nuclear family, but also the extended one. For many Latino families it is very important that members of the extended family keep in touch and gather from time to time to stay close and maintain strong relationships. Latina immigrant mothers in this study highly appreciate the relationships their children establish with grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins; especially if they live far away and that rela-

tionship cannot be constantly nurtured by the interactions of everyday life. For instance, Isabel, a sensitive Colombian woman, said:

*He tenido la gran suerte y la determinación de enviarlos a Colombia y se quedan en casa de mi mamá casi todos los veranos... y I'm amazed porque yo digo wow, ellos están más conectados que yo, pero yo logro eso con el sacrificio de mantenerlos en contacto con personas de nuestra cultura y que ellos valoren. Y con la familia, que es lo más importante. Si yo no tengo dinero para otras cosas, trató de tener dinero para que ellos viajen, para que mi mamá venga, porque es importante esta figura de la abuela en nuestra cultura, entonces de esa manera yo logré mantenerlos en contacto (Ent. 1-8).*

I've been lucky and determined to send them to Colombia, and they [my children] stay at my mom's house almost every summer... and I'm amazed because, wow, they are more connected than I am now, but I get that through the sacrifice of keeping them in contact with people from our culture and they value it. And with the family, that is the most important. If I don't have money for other things, I try to have money for them to travel, for my mom to come, because it is important this figure of the grandmother in our culture. So, in this way, I get to keep them in touch

Isabel also talks about her children being without the maternal protection for a long period of time and how that causes an emotional detachment from her but also an emotional attachment of her children to her family and culture. From her mothering perspective, her children are defenseless before the cultural differences and foreign language, but she notices how well and fast they adapt to them and learn. Isabel also notes the effort in terms of the family budget. She is conscious about not being able to do other things because sending her children to visit her family is a priority for her. In this statement, Isabel is reflecting her own differential consciousness and Chicana epistemology by acknowledging that she is doing something that is not within the mainstream custom (i.e., sending her small children to spend months away from their parents). However, she is also convinced that this action is culturally and emotionally meaningful and beneficial as her children are developing bilingual and bicultural. This particular action could also be considered under a feminist mothering perspective as she recognizes that her children might be without maternal protection during their visit to see extended family, as the master narrative of motherhood would indicate. However, she anticipates the benefits the children will gain by being away from her and understands the significance of those benefits.

Similarly, Nydia, a Mexican mother of two children, states that she and her husband also make the economic effort of taking the children to their home country for them to form a cultural attachment to values and to the family. With this effort, both parents promote in their children the development of a cultural consciousness as the children gain exposure to experiencing both cultures and making comparisons. They want their children to value *convivencia* with their grandparents and learn the morals of the family. In this way, Nydia and her husband

are providing opportunities for their children to develop their social and cultural identity strongly tied to their cultural heritage.

These mothers talked about the significance of maintaining strong relationships with extended family and a direct connection with the culture to provide opportunities for their children to have Borderlands experiences (Anzaldúa, 1987) that are not only geographical, but also cultural. While spending time with family in other country, children get to experience other ways of being and doing, a different routine, and another language that ultimately will impact the creation of their own ways of being and doing and the formation of their hybrid identity (Irizarry, 2007). By experiencing two (or more) cultures, children become aware of the characteristics of each one. They compare, contrast, and differentiate features of both in order to make their own decisions in terms of what aspects of each they want to adopt and embrace, and what elements they want to adapt and morph to shape their own hybrid cultural identity. Some Latino families look for diverse strategies to help their children establish this bond with grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other relatives despite the distance. Family interactions also contribute to the pedagogies of the home as grandparents and other family members share through conversations, stories, *cuentos*, *dichos*, and *consejos* their traditions, values, history, and personal experiences that inform and aids the construction of cultural knowledge.

**Educación:** In Latino cultures, people hold in high regard a good *educación*, or “*una persona educada*” (Valdes, 1996). An educated person is one that knows how to behave in any situation, has good manners and is respectful, honorable, and considerate to others, among other characteristics. Sofia Villenas (2001) indicated that Latina mothers believed that, “to have *una buena educación* (a good educational base) meant having the social skills of etiquette, loyalty to family and kin, and most important, respect” (, p.13). Reese et al. (1995) concluded that parents’ understanding of the concept of *educación* include mainly a strong moral foundation as the underpinning of formal education and later success in life.

In providing children opportunities to have *una buena educación*, Latina mothers enact their pedagogies of the home. *Educación*, as the core of the pedagogies of the home, is not an act whose implementation is pre-planned, nor does it have step-by-step directions. After all, children do not come with a manual included. Hence, every mother makes use of any personal and cultural knowledge, insight, or intuition she has at hand when it comes to her ways of mothering. Participants described what is important that their children learn in order to become “*bien educados*” highlighting *respeto* (being respectful) as one of the main components of *una buena educación*.

Latina mothers strongly believe children must learn how to be respectful. Nonetheless, the notion of *respeto* does not have a common definition among participants. For instance, Lucia, when asked what she wanted her children to learn from her, said:

*El respeto por si mismos y también por las otras personas, no importa si es un niño o es un adulto, el respeto para las personas, siempre. El respeto personal para poder luchar por lo que quieren, y aprender que no hay límites, que son capaces de todo lo que se propongan (Ent. 3-3).*

Respect for themselves and also for other people. It does not matter if it is a child or an adult, respect for others always. Respect to be able to fight for what they want and learn that there are not limits; that they are capable of all they want to do.

Lucia relates the notion of self-respect in order to achieve and reach personal goals and then to respect others regardless of age. For her, having self-respect would help a person in knowing that he or she is capable of pursuing any goals in life. This notion of self-respect that Lucia refers to is both complex and layered. At the most foundational level, she believes in showing respect to others no matter who they are. This is the fundamental aspect of *una persona educada, respetar a los demás*, respect others by greeting them, by talking properly, and by showing good manners and habits. Another layer of self-respect has to do with taking care of one's body by getting good nutrition, generally maintaining healthy habits, exercising, avoiding drugs, and so on. On a deeper layer it has to do with realizing the potential of the self and having respect for it so that it can flourish.

Moreover, Nydia articulated an important concern in relation to the notion of respect that is also associated to cultural differences.

*A veces es difícil, fíjate, yo a veces veo a mis hijos y digo yo qué difícil educarlos y decirle respeta, no hayo cómo decirles... cómo le dices a un niño que tiene que respetar cuando tiene otra idea del respeto, de lo que es eso, si me entiendes? ¿Como? ¿Cómo le explico para que vea que no es un regaño, que no es que lo estoy tratando mal? Es simplemente que sea un niño bien educado. Y cómo le hago si el piensa que eso no es respeto,—si no estoy haciendo nada malo mamá!—pero... (Ent. 6-10).*

Sometimes it's hard, you see, I see my children and say that it is difficult to educate them and tell them about respect. I don't know how to say... how do you tell a child that he/she has to respect when s/he has a different idea of respect, of what respect is, you know? How? How do I explain to him/her and show that it is not a scolding, that I am not mistreating him/her? It is just that I want him/her to be an educated child. And what do I do if he/she thinks that is not respect, "I am not doing anything wrong, mom!" But...

Nydia voices that sometimes it is difficult to explain to her children what she means by being respectful because they may understand a different meaning of the word. Sometimes children do not think the way they act is disrespectful while parents do think it is. Nydia tries to talk with her children about it, but mainly she ponders how she is doing her mothering job; she critically reflects on what she can do to explain and teach her children what she means when she asks them to be respectful. This example of Nydia's reflection is evidence of how she develops a mestiza consciousness. She is aware of the culturally different understandings of the notion of *respeto* and the ambivalence these differences bring into her ways of

mothering. Nydia also dwells in *Nepantla* as she ponders how to negotiate with her children to find a common understanding. In addition, Nydia demonstrates her development of Chicana epistemology as she realizes that the social context in which her children are growing up is not reinforcing or complementing an understanding of the values that she is trying to instill. Still, she strives for them to have what she believes is *una buena educación*.

### Cultural Consciousness

This term appeared when participants narrated a situation in which their children were realizing that one culture differs from the other in some sense, when they were making comparisons between the two cultures, or when they questioned their mothers for doing things differently than “other people,” usually referring to people in the United States, and/or mainstream culture. Being aware of cultural differences is one of the ways in which one begins to develop a mestiza consciousness. Traditions and differences are the two distinctive categories identified within this theme. In Latin American countries, for instance, one tradition is that youth stay living at their parents’ home while attending college (unless they go to a different city.) Only few years ago some universities started building or adding dorms to provide housing accommodations for their students. Ema recounted an occasion when her daughter began college and they encountered this particular cultural difference:

*Ahí te sale lo de la gringada. Ella viene y me dice, “Mamá, yo estoy buscando departamento, que sé yo, donde vivir.” “Si hijita, ok, le digo, esta bien.” “Por qué no vienes conmigo?” “Pero para que voy a ir contigo hija, si tu vas a vivir ahí, yo te ayudaré ya cuando encuentres.” “No mamá pero yo no se cuánto tu puedes afford it?” “What?” “Si, pues, yo no se cuánto puedes tu pagar?” “What?” Y le digo, “Hija, de qué estas hablando?” “Si, yo no sé cuánto vas a poder pagar de departamento.” Le dije “[hija] perdóname, pero eso en mi, in my book, en mi país, no existe, tu te quieres ir; hijita te doy los besos, te doy la bendición, váyase, tu eres independiente, independiente significa que aquí nada, te seguiré pagando la universidad, pagare el 75% que me descuentan, tu pagarás el 25, uuuhhh!!!” Así que tuvimos que aprender a vivir juntas como adultos, porque ya era una niña grande (Ent. 10-9).*

There you get the “gringada.” She comes and says, “Mom, I am looking for an apartment. I don’t know, where to live. “Yes, daughter, ok,” I said. “Why don’t you come with me?” “But why would I go with you? If you are going to live there, I’ll help you when you find one.” “No mom, but I don’t know how much you can afford.” “What?!” “Yes, I don’t know how much you can pay.” “What?!” I said, “daughter, what are you talking about?” “Yes, I don’t know how much you can pay for an apartment.” I said, [name] I am sorry, but that in me, in my book, in my country, does not exist. You want to go, daughter, I give you kisses, I give you my blessing, go ahead, you are independent; independent means that here nothing. I will keep paying your university. I’ll pay the 75 percent that they deduct from my paycheck and you’ll pay the other 25, uuuhhhh!!!” So we have to learn how to live together as adults, because she was a big girl.

Ema recounts how she managed when her daughter brought up the issue of wanting to live independently, but at her mother's expense. Ema is clear when detailing that this idea is something she had never considered before, as it is something unusual in her home country nor in the Latino culture. This passage is also evidence of how children are influenced by the sociocultural context they are immersed in and acquire its ways of being and doing as something natural without even questioning them or comparing them with the home culture. For Ema's daughter living in her own apartment seemed like the next thing to do once enrolled in college, she did not consider all the implications that it entails. Ema's response to her daughter's assumptions was to help her understand that to her that was not culturally customary. This instance is also an example of a border-crossing experience, since Ema encountered two contrasting ways of doing. Ema also mentions how after this conversation she and her daughter both had to readjust their lives together as adults; she acknowledges that her daughter had different needs at that time. This adjustment involved cultural negotiations informed by Ema's Chicana epistemology and her mestiza consciousness.

The values, traditions, customs, ideas, activities, and actions participants want their children to acquire as part of the cultural knowledge are the pedagogies these mothers enact and embrace given their own personal and cultural background and heritage. However, these practices of teaching/learning the native language, establishing a strong bond with extended family, acquiring an *educación*, and developing cultural consciousness, are more than pedagogies of the home. Their depth and significance, their content and its meaning, and the way in which these pedagogies of the home are implemented compose curricula of cultural knowledge these Latina immigrant mothers (re)create and (re)produce at home but also carry with them everywhere they go. A cultural curriculum of the home once embraced is also embodied; therefore, it could never be left at home. It embeds the self.

### Implications to Education

As creators of such cultural curriculum, Latina immigrant mothers are the constructors of their own roles as educators and attest their commitment and involvement in their children's education, contrary to what the deficit model pervades. Because these ways of *educar* or being involved are not the ones traditionally defined by mainstream schools (Lopez, 2001) in the U.S., the knowledge implicit in the cultural curriculum of the home is absent in formal education processes. The narrative of effective schools is to foster and engender a caring environment and equal opportunity for all children to succeed (Lopez, 2001). Yet, the reality for minoritized and marginalized groups is that such an environment does not exist when parents are not at liberty to design and determine the ways in which they can be involved and the role they should play in their children's *educación*

and education. Consequently, the promise of equal educational opportunities remains far from being achieved.

Mothers (re)produce social and cultural capital as they create and embody their own ways of mothering or compose a cultural curriculum of the home. Rather than being fixed or prescribed, a cultural curriculum of the home is constantly under construction. The experiences of the everyday life nurture and (re)shape it incessantly. Disregarding the cultural curriculum that children bring from home keeps enduring the deficit discourse that infiltrates in formal education institutions. If teachers and educators will be willing to integrate the cultural curriculum of the home it will enrich the school curriculum in numerous ways impacting the whole learning community. Such inclusion will contribute to conceptualize education as culturally responsive to social justice. All students will learn from/about other ways of being and doing, thereby composing *mestizaje* epistemologies rather than favoring the dominant, Western, canonical, and colonial curriculum.

Similarly, to the funds of knowledge project (Moll et al., 1992), educators should attend to diverse forms of curricula within and outside social institutions placing academic knowledge and ways of being in conversations with oral and life history and cultural and experiential knowledge to understand the self and social constructions. Multiple cultural curricula of the home present in a classroom will promote intersubjectivity and give validation to all cultures and languages coexisting. This work challenges the (mis)representation of Latina immigrant mothers as uneducated, uninterested, and uninvolved to a rendering that is more complex and multifaceted as their lived experiences and identities reflect. In recognizing the role of mothers as educators composing *mestizaje* epistemologies and focusing on ways of theorizing about learning that takes place in the home, educators will explore more ways of integrating such learning into more academic and formal schooling spaces.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> In the United States, the terms Hispanic and Latino are frequently used interchangeably. However, there is a distinction between the two. Hispanic comes from the Latin word Spain, its culture and history since colonialism; hence, it is used to refer to all Spanish-speaking peoples that have the language as a common denominator (Oxford, 2013). The word Latino derives from the word Latin in Spanish, and refers the people who speak Romance languages. Latino, in the United States, refers to persons or communities of Latin American origin, but not necessarily speak Spanish (Mize & Peña, 2012). For instance, Brazilians are considered Latinos, but not Hispanics. In the United States, for some Spanish-speaking people, Latino is a term of ethnic pride, while Hispanic is a label that might carry stereotypes. The use of these terms are subject to personal identity and preference; therefore, I use both terms throughout the article.

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