

On Becoming an Educated Person: Salvadoran Adult Learners' Cultural Model of Educación/Education

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Background/Context: *In contrast to cultural constructs that equate education with cognitive development and formal schooling, the Latin American cultural model of educación encompasses academic knowledge and social competence. Prior scholarship has mainly investigated parental notions of educación vis-à-vis childrearing and schooling, primarily among Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. Analysis of educación should include other nationalities and elucidate how adults believe educación is acquired and linked both to schooling and nonformal adult education and literacy.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *The purpose of this article is to explicate how former adult literacy participants in rural El Salvador perceived the meanings of educación, how one becomes an educated person, and how educación relates to schooling and literacy.*

Setting: *The study took place in a Salvadoran village where, in 2001, a nongovernmental organization sponsored an adult literacy program. Like other poor, rural Salvadorans, participants had limited access to schooling and literacy.*

Research Design: *Employing ethnographic, participatory methods, the original study (2001-02) examined how adult literacy education fostered or hindered women and men's empowerment. The 2007 follow-up study utilized eight interviews and one focus group with 12 of 17 learners (8 women, 4 men) who had attended literacy classes in one of the villages.*

Findings/Results: *Participants identified four facets of educación. First, speech included knowing how to express oneself; converse in a friendly, respectful manner; and use socially appropriate language. Second, educated persons were perceived to display respeto (respect) in language and conduct, especially toward elders and parents. Third, manners and comportment encompassed such practices as attending to guests and demonstrating good behavior*

(e.g., child obedience). Finally, participants believed that educated persons treat and interact with others in a kind, pleasant, friendly manner.

Participants posited multiple pathways to becoming *educado* (educated, well-mannered), namely, parental instruction and modeling, teacher instruction and schooling, instruction by their former adult literacy teacher or researcher, social interaction, and individual effort. Paradoxically, participants viewed *educación* as simultaneously learned and innate.

Lastly, learners believed that *educación* did not depend on schooling and literacy, yet these could cultivate *educación* by increasing one's exposure to, and understanding of, written messages and teachers' oral instruction concerning respectful, appropriate conduct.

Conclusions/Recommendations: With its emphasis on communicative competence, respect, and proper relatedness, Salvadoran participants' cultural model of education closely resembles that of other Latino groups. By foregrounding the relational and moral dimensions of education and human development, this model shapes the perceived purposes and desired outcomes of schooling and adult education, the symbolic meanings attached to education, expectations of educators, and the insights learners derive from educational activities.

Educación, a concept that integrates academic knowledge and culturally valued forms of communication and social interaction, profoundly shapes the meanings Latinos attach to formal and nonformal education, both in their countries of origin and as immigrants. Its emphasis on proper relatedness and moral formation distinguishes this model of education from the prevailing framework in many industrialized nations, one that equates education with academic learning and formal schooling. With few exceptions (Bartlett, 2007a; Prins, 2003, 2005b; Santillán, 2006), scholarship on *educación* has focused on Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995; Valdés, 1996) and has investigated parents' notions of *educación* vis-à-vis childrearing, child development, and children's schooling (Cerletti, 2005; Delgado & Ford, 1998; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). However, we need to expand our understanding of *educación* to include other nationalities and to investigate how adults believe *educación* is acquired and how it is linked not only to schooling, but also to nonformal adult education and literacy.

Accordingly, this article uses data from a qualitative study to investigate how former adult literacy participants in a rural Salvadoran village understood the meanings of *educación* and its relation to schooling and literacy. The article answers the following questions: What do Salvadoran campesinos (peasants, rural people) perceive as the meanings of *educación*? How do they believe a person becomes *educado* (educated, well-mannered)? How do they believe *educación* is related to schooling and to literacy, if at all? This study can contribute to a deeper understanding of rural Salvadorans' expectations for their educational pursuits and those

of their children, their vision of an educated person, and their beliefs about how one becomes educated. That scholars have reported similar notions of the educated person among Latinos in the United States and other nations suggests that this study's insights may be relevant to other settings. For instance, the findings could assist U.S. educators in designing culturally appropriate programs for recent Salvadoran immigrants, while also illuminating potential discrepancies or convergence between educators and learners' views of education. Indeed, exposure to dissimilar views of education and the educated person can help us see our own cultural assumptions more clearly.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Notions of the "educated person" are culturally produced, and people play an active role in transmitting and altering these conceptions, especially in educational sites (Levinson & Holland, 1996). This study employs Reese and Gallimore's (2000) concept of "cultural models" to explore how former literacy participants in rural El Salvador constructed the educated person. Here, cultural models refer to

the mental schemata into which are coded environmental and event interpretations, what is valued and ideal, what activities should be enacted and avoided, who should participate, and the rules of interaction (LeVine 1977). Cultural models are so familiar and mundane that they are often invisible and unnoticed by those who hold them. (Reese & Gallimore, 2000, p. 106)

Importantly, cultural models allow for individual variation while maintaining a constellation of shared beliefs and practices (Reese & Gallimore, 2000). For instance, in their study of Latino parents' cultural models of literacy, Gallimore and Goldenberg (2001) argued that "cultural models are not straitjackets": "widely shared and endorsed cultural models ... do not necessarily produce invariant behavior even within seemingly homogenous groups" (p. 49). Rather, cultural models are flexibly deployed, continuously renegotiated (Villenas, 2002), and influenced by socioeconomic conditions, creating a balance between continuity and change. Individuals in different settings, then, can share a similar understanding of *educación*, yet place more or less emphasis on certain components or enact this concept in innovative ways. Such actions, if repeated widely and often enough, can contribute to social change. (See, for example, Ahearn, 2001, on Nepali villagers' shifting notions of agency in romantic relationships, a change that was facilitated

by women's increased access to literacy and the practice of letter writing.)

Of the published research studies on *educación* (Cerletti, 2005; Santillán, 2006), related models of the educated person (Rapimán, 2006), or more broadly, the role of respectful social interaction in "education for life" (Torroella, 2001), few are written by Latin American scholars outside the United States. Regardless of the author's nationality, ethnicity, or the research setting, the available research presents a cohesive view of *educación* as a cultural model that integrates "book knowledge" (academics) and social skills (comportment; Bartlett, 2007a, 2009; Prins, 2005b). The latter, social dimension of *educación* is often labeled "proper upbringing" or "moral education," especially where it concerns childrearing (Harwood et al., 1995; Reese et al., 1995; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002). Encapsulating cultural ideals about how to conduct oneself and relate to others, *educación* offers a model of human development to guide social interaction, childrearing, personal development, and the like. As Valenzuela (1999) contends,

Although *educación* has implications for pedagogy, it is first a foundational cultural construct that provides instructions on how one should live in the world. With its emphasis on respect, responsibility, and sociality, it provides a benchmark against which all humans are to be judged, formally educated or not. (p. 21)

Similar views of human development and the educated person have been documented among indigenous groups in Ecuador (Lyons, 2001) and Chile (Rapimán, 2006).

According to Bartlett (2009), comportment incorporates sociability and manners, respectively, the "horizontal" and "vertical" dimensions of *educación*. Thus, sociability—friendliness and the ability to connect with others—pertains to relationships with social peers, whereas manners inform interactions with higher-status and unknown persons (Bartlett, 2009). For instance, Bartlett suggests sociability entails knowing how to talk to people amiably, while manners include proper etiquette such as in addressing supervisors. Both sociability and manners require intimate knowledge of tacit social norms in different situations. Being *educado*, then, means engaging in respectful social conduct and knowing how to express oneself verbally (Bartlett, 2007a, 2009; Prins, 2005b). This is particularly relevant for poor, low-literate adults who often feel ashamed of their nonstandard dialect and speech and who, through adult education classes, may develop the qualities they attribute to educated persons (Bartlett, 2007b; Prins, 2005b).

Respeto, meaning respect or “proper demeanor” (Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002), is a core component of *educación* (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Lyons, 2001; Reese et al., 1995; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Zayas & Solari, 1994) and related models of education, like that of the Mapuche indigenous people (Rapimán, 2006). The following explanation of *respeto*, drawn from research with Puerto Rican mothers, parallels research with other Latino groups:

Proper Demeanor implicitly assumes appropriate relatedness (both intimate and nonintimate)... [It] is intrinsically contextual; it involves, by definition, knowing the level of courtesy and decorum required in a given situation in relation to other people of a particular age, sex, and social status. The cardinal rule governing Proper Demeanor in Puerto Rico is *respeto*...which will manifest itself differently in different contexts. (Hardwood et al., 1995, as quoted in Harwood et al., 2002, p. 25)

In particular, *respeto* undergirds relationships with higher-status persons such as parents, teachers, and elders, and is chiefly demonstrated by obedience to authority figures (Harwood et al., 1995; Lyons, 2001; Rapimán, 2006; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002; Zayas & Solari, 1994). In this way, children “become skilled in the interpersonal and rhetorical competencies that will someday be expected of the well-socialized adult” (Harwood et al., 1995, p. 98). The emphasis on respect is closely related, for example, to Mexican and Southeast Asian immigrant parents’ higher expectations for child conformity relative to U.S.-born White and Mexican American parents (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). Within the United States, emphasis on respect and proper demeanor is more prevalent among lower-SES than higher-SES Latinos, a pattern that also characterizes White parents (Harwood et al., 1995). These findings suggest that cultural models of education are linked to social class and immigrant generational status as well as ethnicity.

Within the *educación* model, academic knowledge and cognitive development are intertwined with social competence and moral development. For instance, Mexican and Central American immigrants in Reese and colleagues’ (1995) study did not distinguish between moral teaching and children’s cognitive development. Likewise, when describing an intelligent first-grade child, Latino and Southeast Asian parents in Okagaki and Sternberg’s (1993) study rated noncognitive attributes, such as social competence, as high as or more highly than cognitive skills. Only White, U.S.-born parents assigned the highest rating to cognitive characteristics. Valenzuela (1999) encapsulates this viewpoint when she writes, “This

person-, as opposed to object-, orientation further suggests the futility of academic knowledge and skills when individuals do not know how to live in the world as caring, responsible, well-mannered, and respectful human beings” (p. 23).

In sum, by fusing academic learning and intelligence with character and social conduct, the cultural model of *educación* offers a vision of the educated person that differs from the predominant U.S. model, which tends to prioritize individual cognitive development and academic skills (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). The *educación* framework governs how people throughout the life course relate to others through verbal and body language, attitudes, emotions, and actions. This cultural orientation elucidates why, for example, various Latino groups in the United States (Reese et al., 1995; Valdés, 1996) and abroad (Cerletti, 2005; Rapimán, 2006; Santillán, 2006) desired respectful, obedient children and expected teachers to instill these values, and why adult learners in Brazil (Bartlett, 2007a, 2009) and El Salvador (Prins, 2005b) associated literacy education with learning new ways of speaking with, and relating to, others.

SETTING AND RESEARCH METHODS

This article presents data from a longitudinal study with 12 literacy participants in rural El Salvador. The initial eight-month study (2001-02) combined ethnographic (Tedlock, 2000) and participatory methods (Greenwood & Levin, 1998) to examine how participation in a literacy program in two villages fostered or limited women and men’s personal, interpersonal, and collective empowerment. The literacy program was funded by ProLiteracy and the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (a North American nongovernmental organization [NGO] that partners with agencies in developing countries) and implemented by Alfalit, a progressive, Christian, Salvadoran NGO that, at the time of the study, worked in 18 rural villages. The literacy program took place in Colima and Rosario de Mora, both located within 50 kilometers of the capital. Like other Salvadorans, villagers in both sites faced problems such as chronic unemployment and underemployment, escalating cost of living, limited access to health care and education, and the enduring socioeconomic disruption and psychological trauma resulting from the civil war (1980-92) between the U.S.-backed military dictatorship and guerrilla forces.

In August 2001, 10 volunteer literacy facilitators—all community residents—each formed a literacy circle by recruiting their neighbors and family members. Classes were open to all, regardless of age or religious

beliefs. The facilitators had no prior teaching experience and their educational levels varied from two years to high school graduates. In all, 56 campesinos/as (27 women and 26 men) regularly attended classes for four months, at which time only five classes remained. The learners were aged 13 to 66 and had completed zero to six years of schooling.

Educational statistics for El Salvador suggest that literacy participants' educational profiles were fairly typical of campesinos/as. The nation has an official illiteracy rate of 16.4% (SITEAL/IIPE/OEI, 2009), one of the highest in Central America (Comisión Centroamericana para la Reforma Educativa, 2007). It also has one of the lowest levels of educational attainment in Latin America, with adults over 24 having completed, on average, 6.1 years of schooling (UNESCO, 2006). These figures, however, mask the very geographic, gender, and age disparities that limited learners' access to schooling and literacy. For instance, the average educational attainment in urban areas is 7.8 years, compared to 3.1 in rural regions (UNESCO, 2006). Gini coefficients for educational attainment in rural areas and for women, respectively, are .606 and .515 (0 = absolute equality, 1 = absolute inequality), among the highest such inequality measures in Latin America (UNESCO, 2006).

Table 1 and Table 2, show the Salvadoran government's estimate of literacy rates in 2001 and 2006, respectively; data for 2006 are the most recent available (SITEAL/IIPE/OEI, 2009). These data reveal that rural residents, women, and older adults are least likely to be considered literate; yet, as many studies (Street, 2001) suggest, official definitions fail to capture the myriad ways people use literacy. Additionally, literacy rates for nearly every subgroup improved between 2001 and 2006. The Ministry of Education (2009) data in Table 3 report the educational attainment and illiteracy rates for the municipality in which Colima is located. Additionally, 88.6% of children in the municipality attended primary school in 2007, compared to 46.5% for secondary school. In sum, participants formed their notions of *educación* in a setting where many villagers—especially women and older adults—had not completed primary school and where youth were increasingly studying longer and using print with more facility than their elders.

Table 1. Illiteracy Rates by Urban-Rural Location, Age, and Sex, 2001

Age Group	Urban					Rural					Total
	15-24	25-34	35-49	50 & over	Total	15-24	25-34	35-49	50 & over	Total	
Men	2.4	4.7	6.8	17.1	7.5	11.7	21.1	27.2	50.2	26.4	15.1
Women	3.3	5.8	11.7	32.7	13.8	11.0	24.9	39.0	63.4	33.5	21.0
Total	2.9	5.3	9.6	26.1	11.1	11.4	23.1	33.8	57.0	30.1	18.3

Table 2. Illiteracy Rates by Urban-Rural Location, Age, and Sex, 2006

Age Group	Urban					Rural					Total
	15-24	25-34	35-49	50 & over	Total	15-24	25-34	35-49	50 & over	Total	
Men	2.4	3.0	5.4	17.8	7.1	9.8	16.2	25.0	44.1	23.0	13.3
Women	3.1	5.0	10.6	32.4	13.2	6.7	18.7	38.9	59.6	29.3	19.0
Total	2.8	4.1	8.5	26.2	10.5	8.2	17.6	32.8	52	26.4	16.4

Table 3. Educational Attainment and Illiteracy Rates by Age and Sex for the Municipality of Suchitoto, 2007

Age Group	Educational Attainment (years)		Illiteracy Rate (%)	
	15-24	Total (15 & over)	15-24	Total (15 & over)
Men	6.9	4.9	8.8	22.8
Women	7.5	4.9	5.7	24.9
Total	7.2	4.9	7.3	23.9

The 2001 study focused primarily on one class of 11 learners in Colima, where I lived with the family of Tatiana (pseudonym), the class's volunteer literacy facilitator. Classes met two or three times per week and employed a Freirean-inspired curriculum featuring generative themes (e.g., education, land) along with discussion questions and literacy exercises (Freire, 1973; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Data from multiple sources revealed that although the program in many ways fell short of its Freirean ideals of redressing social inequalities and fostering sociopolitical critique and collective action to solve local problems (Prins, 2005a), learners reported deriving meaningful psychosocial benefits such as developing confidence, overcoming profound shame and timidity, establishing new friendships, and learning to be *educado* (Prins, 2005b, 2008). It was through these interviews and informal conversations with learners that I first became aware of *educación* and the ways in which this model differed from those focusing on schooling and cognitive skills. Learners claimed that regular social interaction with classmates and teachers, rather than curricular content per se, had helped them become *educado*. I was fascinated to learn that they connected literacy education, or learning to use *print*, with *oral communication* and *comportment* such as the ability to speak in a meeting or talk with someone in a respectful manner. In turn, these new forms of self-expression and sociability helped learners reconstruct humane relationships in the aftermath of civil war and begin

to see themselves as educated persons (Prins, 2005b).

In 2007 I returned to Colima to further investigate former literacy participants' views of *educación* and its relation to schooling and literacy, which, for the purpose of this paper, I define as the ability to use print in reading and writing. (Elsewhere [Prins, 2008], I examine learners' current uses of literacy and views regarding the benefits of literacy education.) Over a two-week period I lived with Tatiana's family and contacted former literacy participants. Data sources include eight interviews, conducted individually or in pairs, and one focus group with three women, two of whom had also participated in an interview. In all, 12 of the 17 learners who had regularly attended the two Colima literacy classes participated in the follow-up study. This included eight of the 11 learners who had attended Class A (all women)—the focal class in the 2001 study—and four of the six learners from Class B (all men). (Of the five learners who were not included, two were unavailable, two had migrated to the U.S., and one was deceased.) Aged 19 to early 70s, the learners had completed zero to eight years of schooling. The men worked in subsistence agriculture and the women were occupied with childrearing and unpaid domestic work. A few women earned income through informal economic activities such as helping neighbors with laundry and other chores.

Because I had interviewed all but one of these learners in 2001, I was able to establish trust and rapport more easily than an unknown researcher. Although some learners still felt shy when speaking to a highly educated, White North American, they nevertheless shared important insights concerning *educación*, literacy, and the meanings they assigned to both. As a gesture of my gratitude, each learner received a Salvadoran history book written in a popular education comic style. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, a language in which I am fluent, recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim by a Salvadoran. Interview questions pertaining to *educación* explored its meanings, including the attributes of an educated person; how *educación* is acquired; and the connection between *educación* and schooling or print literacy. Learners also referred to *educación* when responding to other interview questions, such as the benefits of having attended literacy classes. These responses were also coded for inclusion in this article.

I used three broad topics—"meanings of *educación*," "learning to become *educado*," and the "relationship between *educación*, literacy, and schooling"—as categories to code the Spanish transcripts. I then used open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to group similar responses within each category. For instance, I searched the transcripts for all comments describing how one becomes *educado*, regardless of the question that

elicited the remark. Through open coding, I identified five main explanations, adding new codes until all the explanations had been labeled: parental instruction; schooling and teachers' instruction; adult literacy teacher or researcher's instruction; social interaction; one's own realization, will, or effort; and innate capacity. Illustrative examples of each code within the three topic areas are presented in the findings.

All of the translation in this article is my own. In the few instances where I was uncertain about the meaning of a term or stretch of text, I asked for assistance from a Salvadoran linguist, Nelson López, who verified or enhanced the accuracy of my translation (e.g., *cebolleta*, a term explained in the findings). Following prior research on *educación* (Valdés, 1996), the original Spanish is used when there is no suitable English translation, especially for words that convey a range of subtle meanings that is not easily captured (e.g., *malcriado*, *educado*, *amable*, *respeto*). The points of convergence between this study and others (Bartlett, 2007a; Reese et al., 1995) suggest that the data analysis identified salient dimensions of *educación* and that, in many ways, these cut across Latino ethnicities and geographic locations.

THE MEANINGS OF *EDUCACIÓN*

The interviews shed light on the meanings learners assigned to *educación* and the attributes, capacities, and conduct of an educated (*educado/a*) person. Collectively, participants identified the following components of *educación*, in order of frequency (total number of mentions): speech (32), *respeto* (24), manners and comportment (15), and treatment of others (12).

SPEECH

According to participants, speech, or the ability to express oneself appropriately, is a hallmark of *educación*. Educated persons know how to express themselves, converse in a friendly, respectful manner, and use language appropriate to the situation, which includes finding the right words—for example, using suitable phrases to express gratitude—and using the “right” pronunciation. The following comments by Karla María and Jaime (all names are pseudonyms), respectively, illustrate how learners linked speech and *educación*:

The truth is that sometimes we campesinos don't have the appropriate [suitable] words to address people. [Karla María then gave the following example of learning “appropriate words” through literacy

classes.] For example, if ... a person gave you something, you would have to respond, "Thank you. That's very kind of you"—like that. Sometimes we just [say], "Okay, thanks," and that's it. And you shouldn't be like that; you should be more *amable* [kind, nice, pleasant, polite] with people and a little bit more *educado*.

For me, an educated person [is one who] doesn't go around talking back [speaking angrily] to other people.

Harwood and colleagues' analysis of *amable* behavior among Puerto Ricans elucidates why Karla María linked this quality to *educación*: Being *amable* in attitude and conduct is one way to demonstrate *respeto*: "It is a quality of positive relatedness, but one that is shown to all people, not just friends and other intimates" (p. 101).

Both in 2001 and 2007, learners often related feelings of inadequacy about their speech and ability to express themselves, especially in public, sentiments that help explain why some felt shy about talking to me or other highly schooled persons. Bartlett (2007b) labeled this phenomenon "speech shame," which in this case resulted from learners' limited schooling, coupled with Salvadoran society's denigration of campesinos' nonstandard pronunciation, dialect, and grammar. As Karla María's remarks above suggest, learners had internalized the view that campesino speech is inferior. When I asked learners in a focus group whether they also felt *pena* (shame, embarrassment, timidity) when interacting with other villagers, Karla María responded, "Sometimes you think that you're going to speak poorly and people will laugh at you." Karina added, "As you well know, there are those of us who pronounce words well and others who don't, right?... There's also an *educación*, that they teach you to speak." These comments underscore learners' belief that speech marks someone as a more or less educated person.

A number of participants emphasized that *educación* meant avoiding bad language, mean jokes (*bromas pesadas*), or name calling such as calling people dumb or stupid. For instance, Esmeralda stated, "This is how I see it: An educated person doesn't say bad words." Like other learners, Esmeralda believed *educación* involved teaching children to eschew bad language. When her children's friends used bad language in their presence, she told her children, "'You don't say those words, because look, I don't say them anymore.' So I don't want my son to learn [bad language]." Miguel commented that he does not curse "because I'm careful not to disrespect anyone." In this way, learners associated speech with respect, a topic discussed further below.

Interestingly, five participants identified salutations—for example,

saying “good morning/afternoon/evening” to elders and people in daily encounters—as a sign of *educación*. In Colima and other Salvadoran vilages, social norms dictate that people greet known persons and strangers who cross their path, for instance, when walking along the road, doing errands, passing someone’s home, or entering a store or dining area where others are present. Those who do not follow this custom are considered rude, disrespectful, or conceited. (For instance, during the 2001 study several women learners told me that residents of a nearby neighborhood were arrogant because they rarely greeted people from our neighborhood.) This custom is rare in urban areas. Thus, when asked what it means to be *educado*, Esperanza replied:

I’d say greeting people, because there are times when you pass people and you don’t say “goodbye” or “good morning.” That’s bad *educación*, right, because if you don’t greet [people], others say, “See! They haven’t been taught to greet people.” So coming here [to literacy classes] helped us a lot because when we came here, we said “hi,” and “goodbye” when we went to our houses [after class]. And before, maybe we didn’t even say *salud* [*literally* “health,” *a common way to say goodbye*], even when we said goodbye. Perhaps we used other words.

These comments and those of other learners reveal their belief that salutations convey politeness and respect. For instance, Mayra commented that one demonstrates respect for elders such as aunts and uncles by greeting them. Similarly, when describing how her son has learned *educación* in school, Esmeralda proudly reported that upon arriving home he says, “Good afternoon, *mamá*.” By contrast, “an adult who has not gone to school [doesn’t] even [say,] ‘How are you, *mamá*?’ Nor do they know this because they haven’t been taught.” Her son also greeted elders “because they are taught [in school] from a young age how to treat/address people.”

Learners implicitly viewed language as a form of social action (Duranti, 2001), noting how speech and emotional tone could shape relationships and convey *educación*—or lack thereof—by expressing rudeness or respect, contempt or affection. For instance, Esmeralda offered the following example to describe the traits of an educated person:

A person arrives perhaps to ask you something or where someone lives. “Look, excuse me,” they say, “Do you know where *Fulano* [so-and-so] lives?” And with great love you say, “See, they live over there. Go this way—they live over there.” And if not—

so that they don't have to go around asking or guessing—you ... call a child [and say,] "Look, son, go show them where *Fulano* lives." And then from over there you [hear] them say, "They sent their child with me. What lovely demeanor she has." They'll speak highly of you everywhere. I think that's how it should be.

Esmeralda added that someone who is not *educado* would say brusquely, "What are you doing here?!" Similarly, several learners described gossip and bad language as signs of disrespect. Harwood and colleagues (1995) contend that *respeto* is inherently public, for it "defines who you are as a person and how others will respond to you. The positive evaluation of others is prerequisite to good standing in the community and necessary to survival" (p. 99). Likewise, Esmeralda signaled the public aspect of *educación* when she linked *speech and demeanor* with *reputation*, illustrating the belief that kindness will ensure that others speak well of you. These ideas are closely tied to respect.

RESPETO

The demonstration of *respeto* in language and conduct figured prominently in learners' cultural model. For example, when discussing the meanings of *educación*, Esperanza, Esmeralda's 20-year-old daughter, described how attending literacy classes fostered respect among the learners:

I think that the class helped us a lot to respect each other more, to have a certain distance, right? Because before, if we saw each other we hit each other [*referring to another then-teenaged classmate*] but when we came here [to class] it was like we didn't do that anymore. Instead of hitting each other, maybe we hugged each other or shook hands and [*said*] goodbye and all of that.

Esperanza added that, as a teenager, she had learned to show respect toward the adult women in the class: "Being here we realized that we had to respect them, because they were older than us." As previously mentioned, learners commented that disrespect conveys *mal educación* (bad manners or upbringing), as when people talk about others or disobey and curse their parents.

Like Esperanza, other learners emphasized the need to show *respeto* toward elders and parents, who deserve respect due to their age and social position. For instance, according to Wilfredo, one learns to be *educado* by "respecting those who are older" so that they will respect you

in return. Karla María related, “There are people who have a lot of schooling, who have even graduated from universities, and they’re not *educados* because they don’t even respect their own parents.” Interestingly, two learners also mentioned respect toward children. Karina observed, “Just as an elderly person deserves respect, children do as well, because children deserve respect more than anything, because they also have rights.” Her remarks reflect the emerging discourse and legal framework of children’s rights in El Salvador (Read, 2002). By contrast, the complaints I heard in 2001 about the criminalization of child abuse revealed an underlying concern that the inability to use corporal punishment would undermine respect for parental authority.¹ Such perspectives raise intriguing questions about varied interpretations of *respeto* and the use of this construct to endorse what other Salvadorans considered harmful practices.

MANNERS AND COMPORTMENT

Manners and comportment constituted another dimension of *educación*. Examples of manners included attending to guests and eating with utensils. Esmeralda noted that being *educado* means being “attentive” to guests, for instance, by offering them a seat. When describing the attributes of an educated person, Esperanza related how manners differ between urban and rural areas:

I say that over there in San Salvador [the capital] you have to be *educado* even when you eat, since they use forks, knives, and all that. And here in the countryside you may just eat with the tortilla in your hand. [*Campesinos often use a tortilla as a utensil.*]

These comments highlight learners’ awareness that *educación* encompasses actions and words and that it is always contextualized. Unlike in Bartlett’s (2007a) study, these examples of manners pertained not only to interactions with higher-status persons, but to all social relationships.

Examples of comportment referred almost exclusively to children’s conduct, such as obeying teachers (see Villenas, 2002, for a discussion of Mexican immigrants’ views of “good conduct”). Learners affirmed that schools teach—or should teach—children how to behave appropriately (*comportarse*), particularly with parents, elders, and teachers. Parents also play a role in ensuring proper comportment. For example, Esmeralda said she instructs her son, “Don’t go around fighting. Behave yourself with the teacher so that she won’t say bad things about you.” She emphasized that proper behavior would establish the child’s reputation

and elicit teachers' approval and affection (Harwood et al., 1995). To a lesser degree, comportment pertained to youth or adult avoidance of vices and behaviors signaling loose morals such as "hanging out in the street," going to dances, drinking, and smoking. Interestingly, these characterizations of bad comportment closely resemble the way Latino immigrant parents in one study depicted the "bad path of life" for their adolescent children (Azmitia & Brown, 2002).

TREATMENT OF OTHERS

Treatment of others entailed interacting with people in a kind, pleasant, friendly manner—that is, sociability (Bartlett, 2007a)—which in turn facilitated harmonious social relations. For instance, learners believed *educación* meant being "responsible with oneself and with others," being "considerate," attending to visitors and guests, showing love for others, "getting along with people," being *amable* (kind, nice, pleasant), and "treating people well." When asked what it means to treat others well, Karla María responded, "Not to say bad words [to them], to be *amable* with them. When you say you'll do them a favor, to do it with kindness, happily.... That's it, I imagine—to be more *amigable* [amicable] with them." In sum, this facet of *educación* encapsulates the ways that people extend consideration for others, emphasizing the value placed on a helpful, friendly demeanor and attentiveness to others' needs (Harwood et al., 1995).

Given the cultural and gendered expectations of politeness and niceness—"women are expected to be polite under more circumstances, and to more kinds of people, than men [and] women's politeness is apt to be more deferential and more indirect" (Lakoff, 2005, p. 178)—these comments raise questions about gender, niceness, and agency: Under what conditions do the expectations of niceness and friendliness in this model enable women to "be both 'nice' and agentic [i.e., able to exercise agency]...both caring and assertive, both empathetic and independent" (Rogers & Garrett, 2002, p. 23), and when might these expectations encourage compliance with dominant notions of femininity?

PATHWAYS TO EDUCACIÓN

Participants identified multiple pathways to becoming *educado*, including, in descending order of frequency, parental instruction, schooling and teachers' instruction, their former adult literacy teacher or researcher's instruction, social interaction, and individual effort. Paradoxically, participants held that *educación* is simultaneously learned and innate.

PARENTAL INSTRUCTION AND MODELING

Most participants ascribed *educación* primarily to parents and, in some cases, older relatives', explicit, usually verbal, instruction in appropriate conduct. Karla María, for example, highlighted parents' instrumental role:

Because imagine, if your parents don't teach you to educate yourself [*educarse*]...or to treat the people around you well, you can't be an educated person. [*Esther: So parents teach you, then.*] Yes, to respect the person—and not just people but also things that aren't yours.

In other words, children's social and moral development depends on parental instruction, as illustrated by Esmeralda's aforementioned description of telling her children not to use bad language. Concluding her reflections on childrearing and *educación*, Esmeralda stated, "So you teach your children—to behave themselves wherever they go, not to talk back. Because there are people who come to love children and wherever they go they speak highly of them. But a *malcriado* child—ahh [no way]!" *Malcriado* literally means "poorly brought up." Colloquially, it describes someone, often a child or young person, who is rude, bratty, badly behaved, ill-mannered, or spoiled. Esmeralda's remarks reflect the belief that parents are ultimately responsible for imparting moral lessons concerning *educación* (Delgado & Ford, 1998, p. 479), resulting in well-behaved, respectful, considerate children who, in turn, are well-loved by others (see Harwood et al., 1995, pp. 99, 102, on community esteem). Children's behavior, then, ultimately reflects the quality of childrearing. Similarly, Karina commented that if a parent teaches "a good *educación*" the child will become *educado*, but if not, even attending school will not help them attain *educación*. In sum, *educación* "begins with the parents."

Participants believed children also learn good or bad behavior and speech through modeling, that is, by observing and imitating their parents. For example, Karina related that "if you start saying bad words, they [children] learn that, too," leading them to lose *respeto*, while Rachel asserted that *malcriado* parents raise children with the same qualities. According to Esmeralda, parents should show consistent, not erratic, good behavior so that children learn the difference between good and bad, right and wrong (Reese et al., 1995, p. 65).

SCHOOLING AND TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION

According to participants, schools play a vital role in *educación* not because they teach cognitive skills, but because they expose children to explicit messages regarding appropriate conduct. For instance, Esperanza, who completed fifth grade, recalled "There were times in school that they would tell us that we should respect our parents." Likewise, Jaime observed:

Sometimes the teacher says, when you ... leave the house you have to say "see you later" to your parents. Or when you arrive you have to greet them; don't come home like you're mute.... Or when you make a mistake or something, apologize.

Such comments reveal that participants expected teachers to impart much more than academic knowledge. Like earlier studies investigating Latino immigrants' expectations of teachers (Valdés, 1996), learners considered moral instruction in *educación* to be part of teachers' responsibility. As Miguel put it, "The school is the second parent." One parent, in fact, told me she changed her children's school because she perceived the teachers did not sufficiently emphasize *educación*. As discussed below, learners posited that schooling cultivates *educación* not through the acquisition of academic knowledge, but rather through teachers' moral instruction and children's exposure to subject matter and oral or written lessons concerning topics such as *respeto* and appropriate speech and conduct.

ADULT LITERACY TEACHER OR RESEARCHER'S INSTRUCTION AND MODELING

Several participants described how they developed communicative and social skills in the 2001 literacy classes, either through their literacy teacher or through the interactive research activities I led (Prins, 2003, 2005b). Karla María claimed, for instance, that her teacher explained "appropriate words" for social situations. Esmeralda described how, despite her lack of formal education, she learned to be *educado* through the participatory research activities I planned, most of which were popular education and participatory rural appraisal activities involving small-group interaction. Esmeralda recalled, "We learned a lot. You taught us to be more *educados* with other people.... We learned that through your

classes [research activities]—how to express ourselves with people, how we had to talk with people, how to treat them.” Remarking that I did not recall teaching these topics, I asked how she had extracted these lessons on *educación* from the research activities. She remembered a role play in which I had asked learners to imitate couples with good or bad communication, however defined. These examples illustrate how in educational settings, learning about *educación* occurs in implicit and informal ways—for example, through modeling—as well as through explicit, intentional instruction.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Fourth, learners explained that one can become *educado* through social interaction, namely, by participating in speech and interactional routines with adult literacy classmates, *conviviendo* (sharing, getting along, spending time) with people, observing others’ speech and conduct, and taking on the good or bad *educación* of one’s friends. Esperanza, for instance, recalled how meeting together in literacy classes enabled learners to express themselves more freely. Later, she added that one can realize many things by *conviviendo* with others. Miguel noted that he watched other people as models of good or bad *educación* and sought to emulate the former. Just as we develop muscles through use or learn to write by writing, participants believed that, through practice and imitation, we acquire new ways of speaking and interacting.

OWN REALIZATION, WILL, AND EFFORT

Several learners underscored the role of individual will and effort. According to Esperanza and Rachel, respectively, one becomes *educado* by “realizing/noticing things” and “making an effort.” Similarly, Wilfredo commented that whether or not a highly schooled person is *educado* is “up to him, because if he doesn’t do his part he won’t have *educación*, even if he has studied [in school].” Jaime also ascribed *educación* to personal will and desire:

Sometimes there are people who have a more schooling than you do, and sometimes they’re more rude/ill-mannered [*mal educados*]. It’s not because they don’t know, but rather because they don’t want to.... Like I say, it’s about doing your part, because if people tell you things and you don’t put them into practice, it doesn’t do any good.

In sum, one must want to be *educado* and make an effort to apply what one has been taught. Without these personal qualities, learners asserted, schooling and parental instruction will not produce an educated person. Moreover, *educación* depends on one's innate characteristics.

EDUCACIÓN AS LEARNED OR INNATE

Participants recounted many ways people can learn to be *educado*, yet five learners also asserted that *educación* is innate, using the phrase, “*ya lo trae uno*”—literally, one already brings (has) it. My conversation with Michelle illustrates this paradoxical position. She initially stated that one learns to be *educado* through the teaching of parents and relatives. But when asked “what determines whether one becomes *educado* or not” she replied:

Sometimes it's in them to be *educados*; sometimes they learn and there are some who don't.

Esther: So it's like you already come with that inside or—

Michelle: Yes, they already have it inside; they have the way they're going to be.

Esther: So if I understood you correctly, you already have it inside but you can also learn through the teachings of parents and relatives.

Michelle agreed. When asked whether *educación* is learned or inborn, Rachel responded in a similar fashion:

You have to learn, I'd say. Or you already have it inside. Yes, because there are women ... whom you can tell when they're born that they're humble people, that they don't like going around talking [i.e., gossiping]. [*Esther: So can it be learned, or not so much?*] Sure, if you make an effort.

Here we see the simultaneous appeal to both nature and nurture in the development of *educación*.

Lupe, an elderly widow and devout Pentecostal, was the strongest proponent of the innate perspective. She observed, “The one who will do wrong is already an animal, and the one who will be *educado*, he already has it inside, too, *Ña Esther*.”² To support her point she recounted the case of her son, who twice threatened to kill her, and a local man who was imprisoned for threatening to murder someone: “And his dad is a great person, the man is very *educado*. You don't hear him use bad language.... The wife wasn't *malcriada* either.” She concluded, “That's why I say,

Esther, that ... the one who will be *educado* and the one who will be wicked already have it inside them.”

Lupe’s adult daughter, Esmeralda, who also took part in the interview, emphasized the importance of parents and teachers’ instruction in *educación*, yet also insisted:

You have good ones [children] and you have bad ones, see. Because get this: My son who left for the United States, you could say that he grew up in *malcriadeza* [bad manners, rudeness] because he grew up with the dirty mouth I had ... and the dirty mouth that my husband still has. And look, this son of mine—truly, believe me—he is a saintly man. Hmm! I think maybe one day I’ll die and I’ll never have another son like him—and he grew up in my great *malcriadeza* and my husband’s, too. And you’ll never hear him say anything [ill-mannered]. That’s why I say that one already has it [*educación*]. [*Esther: He’s born that way.*] Yes, they’re born that way when they’re little.

These examples suggest that regardless of their schooling, home setting, or family, children have an intrinsic capacity to be more or less *educado* and will inevitably express their true nature.

How are we to make sense of this paradoxical position? Specifically, if *educación* is innate, why should parents or educators teach *respeto* and proper conduct? Karla María’s remarks help elucidate how participants reconciled these viewpoints: “I imagine that sometimes you already have it [*educación*] inside you, and more than anything parents teach you.” Participants, then, affirmed an inherent proclivity toward good or bad *educación*, yet also held that parents are nevertheless responsible for moral instruction and that individuals must also “do their part” by making an effort to learn and practice respectful speech and conduct.

EDUCACIÓN, SCHOOLING, AND LITERACY

Other studies (Bartlett, 2007a) have suggested that Latino adults tend to associate *educación* with higher levels of schooling. My earlier research in El Salvador revealed that some learners viewed literacy classes and literacy development as means of acquiring *educación*. Thus, I wanted to learn more about how they viewed the relationship between *educación*, formal education, and the ability to read and write. In brief, learners posited that schooling was related to *educación* in some ways, but not in others.

Citing examples of unschooled persons who were *educado* and highly schooled persons who were not, participants claimed that educational

attainment did not guarantee *educación*. Esperanza summarized this perspective: “You don’t have to have a [formal] education to be *educado*, right? Because there are people who don’t have an education and they are *educados*, but studying also helps.” She also observed that sometimes formally educated people “don’t greet you,” signifying a lack of *educación*. For instance, Lupe used her grandson—a “highly schooled” person who could read yet was extremely disrespectful toward his parents—to support her assertion that *educación* is inborn. Miguel shared a similar view: “Here in our community there are a ton of high school graduates and they’re something else—they’re *malcriados*. Perhaps there’s not a need to be able to read and write a lot to be *educado*.” Rachel ascribed the decline in *educación* among youth in part to the proliferation of gangs, a grave problem in El Salvador, stating, “Perhaps nowadays the one who doesn’t study is more *educado* than the one who’s studying.... There are a lot of people who are highly schooled, but sometimes studying doesn’t have anything to do with *educación*, even though they’re great students.” Comments cited earlier in the article suggest that from the participants’ standpoint, formal education makes no discernible difference if parents do not instill *educación*, if one does not make an effort, or if one does not have an inherent propensity for *educación*.

However, recall that when describing how one becomes *educado*, participants asserted that schooling can be helpful insofar as teachers instruct students in good behavior such as greeting people and respecting parents. In their view, it is these moral lessons—and children’s receptivity to them—rather than educational attainment per se that nurture *educación*, which then carries into adulthood. This helps explain why learners did not automatically equate schooling with *educación*, yet also viewed schools as an important site for developing social competence.

Similarly, participants did not believe *educación* depended on literacy, since they knew people who could read and write but were not *educado* and vice versa. However, they thought literacy could help children to better understand teacher’s instruction—for instance, in how to be respectful—and to follow written lessons concerning *educación*. Karla María, for example, related that literacy can foster *educación* because teachers or school books explain

how to treat ... people ... how you should conduct yourself with parents, with elders, with children, with everyone. Now they explain it to you. He who wants to learn, learns, and he who doesn’t, doesn’t. Because they always teach you how to behave/conduct yourself [*comportarse*]. [*Esther: So if you can read and write, you can read those sorts of things in the books.*] Yes.

Thus, literacy is useful if it aids understanding of oral or written messages regarding *educación*.

As previously noted, some participants described how literacy acquisition and social routines in the 2001 literacy classes helped them adopt what they considered the qualities of an educated person such as expressing themselves, using language tailored to specific social situations, greeting people, and being friendly. An experience Miguel related during our interview illustrates literacy's symbolic and emotional importance in signaling *educación*. He described the shame he used to feel when using his fingerprint to sign documents. One day while doing business at a bank, he and three fellow agricultural cooperative members, none of whom could sign their names, were singled out by a bank employee and told to "put their *cebolleta* here"—an insulting way of telling them to use their fingerprints. (This term, a Salvadoran friend later explained to me, would not be used with a higher-status, literate person.) After this humiliating experience, Miguel was determined to learn to sign his name. Now, he said, "I don't feel that fear that the lawyer [official] will tell me, 'Put your *cebolleta* here.' Now I feel different in that regard." This incident highlights how literacy—in this case, the ability to sign one's name—can both lessen feelings of shame and signify *educación*, thereby enabling learners to command respect, to be treated with dignity, and to see themselves as educated persons.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study provides new insights into rural Salvadoran literacy participants' cultural model of education, one that encompasses far more than academic knowledge, cognitive development, and formal schooling. The article extends our understanding of the *educación* framework to another geographic region. Given the small and geographically restricted sample, the findings cannot be generalized to all Salvadorans, rural or urban, yet in many ways the study echoes research with other Latino ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples, from Mexico (Reese et al., 1995), Puerto Rico (Harwood et al., 2002), and South America (Bartlett, 2009; Cerletti, 2005; Lyons, 2001; Rapimán, 2006; Santillán, 2006). Given the variation in research participants' characteristics and their geographic and socio-cultural settings, the similarities between previous studies and the present one are striking. Below, I elaborate on several similarities and distinctions, comparisons that I hope will help others assess how the findings may apply to other locales, ethnicities, and educational sites.

First, learners' viewpoints illustrate Harwood and colleagues' (2002) observation that *respeto*, or proper demeanor, "assumes appropriate

relatedness” and is expressed differently depending on the situation and social relationship. The findings add more evidence to scholarship showing that, for various Latin American ethnic groups, *respeto* is foundational to conceptions of education, childrearing, human development, and moral formation (Lyons, 2001; Rapimán, 2006; Reese et al., 1995; Valdés, 1996; Villenas, 2002). By understanding how *respeto* structures interpersonal relations—for instance, by encouraging verbal and behavioral deference to authority figures such as teachers—educators will be better equipped to work with children, youth, adults, and families who subscribe to the *educación* model.

Second, like Brazilian adult learners in Bartlett’s (2007a, 2009) study, Salvadoran participants underscored the interactional and linguistic facets of *educación* such as manners, social skills, and the ability to express themselves, converse, and use language suitably, including salutations and forms of address (Keenan, 1994, provides examples of behaviors and phrases that demonstrate *buen educación*). This study, however, is distinctive in identifying greetings in daily encounters as an indicator of *educación* (Lyons, 2001, pp. 19, 40, mentions greetings only briefly). Comparative research could clarify whether this norm is specifically Salvadoran or rural or whether it applies to *educación* more broadly. In sum, these Salvadoran campesinos/as articulated key features of the *educación* cultural model, including the emphasis on *respeto* and communicative competence, that have been found among other Latino groups.

Whereas previous research has discussed the roles of parenting, schooling, and adult literacy education in nurturing *educación*, this study elaborates a more multifaceted understanding of how both children and adults become *educado*. In brief, parents and other older relatives, teachers, peers, and the self were each believed to play a part in determining whether *educación* takes hold. Participants’ emphasis on explicit parental instruction and informal modeling reinforces other studies (Reese et al., 1995), as does their view that teachers and schools should instill *educación* (Cerletti, 2005; Valdés, 1996). Miguel’s assertion that “the school is the second parent” presents a cultural twist on the popular family literacy motto, “the parent is the child’s first and most important teacher.” Instead of shifting responsibility for *cognitive instruction* from the school to the home, as the U.S. discourse of parent involvement has done (Nakagawa, 2000), Salvadoran learners expanded responsibility for *moral instruction* to schools and teachers.

Compared to the expectations of educators held by many European American U.S. residents, the *educación* model places greater emphasis on the social and moral dimensions of education. Interestingly, such expectations resemble the “moral imperative” for literacy and schooling in the

19th- and early 20th-century United States, an orientation that was replaced by the current focus on education for economic productivity (Brandt, 2004). Thus, in addition to imparting academic knowledge, these Salvadoran learners, like Latino parents in other studies, believed teachers should help children become well-mannered, respectful persons who engage in appropriate social conduct, thus reinforcing parents' moral instruction at home. This perspective explains, for example, Esmeralda's decision to remove her child from a school that she perceived did not instill *educación*, Argentine parents' choice of schools with strict discipline, which they hoped would reinforce their vision of the educated person (Cerletti, 2005), and U.S. Latino immigrants' tendency to discuss with teachers their children's behavior and social skills more than their cognitive skills (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Valdés, 1996). (The differences between the educational models of immigrant and nonimmigrant Latinos/as deserve further exploration, but are beyond the scope of this study.) Additionally, by shaping notions of respectful interaction, the *educación* framework informs teacher-student relations (see, for example, Valenzuela, 1999).

Participants' comments also provide novel insights into *educación* as a learned or innate process, suggesting that people may have an inborn propensity for being more or less *educado*, but parents and relatives, teachers and adult educators, peers, and the self must nevertheless make an effort to cultivate *educación*. Future research could elucidate how other ethnicities reconcile the acquired and intrinsic dimensions of *educación* or other models of the educated person. For instance, under what circumstances do a child's inborn qualities supersede parents' moral instruction or vice versa? If *educación* is largely innate, to what extent should parents be held responsible for children's behavior and life trajectory? And how can adults best develop the traits of an educated person if they did not have such opportunities as children?

The study suggests that adults do take advantage of opportunities to develop *educación*. For instance, although I designed the 2001 research activities to foster self-expression and interpersonal communication, I never framed these in terms of *educación*. Yet, learners brought to the literacy class and research activities a desire to learn a repertoire of communicative and social competencies that would enhance their relationships and help them present an educated persona. Although it was not what I intended, this is precisely what some learned informally through the research activities, for they were guided by a framework whose hallmark is being rightly related to others. This case, then, illustrates how people reframe educational activities through their own cultural lens, often in

ways that educators and researchers do not anticipate.

Finally, contrary to some previous studies (Bartlett, 2007a), learners did not equate *educación* with schooling or educational attainment per se. The melding of morality and intelligence in this cultural model may help explain their view that many schooled persons are not *educado* whereas many unschooled persons are, a belief also expressed, for example, by indigenous Ecuadorians (Lyons, 2001). Thus, truly intelligent, *educado* persons—regardless of their educational credentials—maintain social ties and treat others respectfully (Villenas, 2001). Nevertheless, participants still found both formal and nonformal education useful for nurturing *educación*—if these included moral instruction or otherwise helped one become a more respectful, expressive, well-mannered person. For instance, literacy classes provided a space where, through interaction with teachers and classmates, people could informally observe, learn, and rehearse culturally valued forms of sociability. Future research could identify other ways in which Latinos believe schooling and adult education enhance (Cerletti, 2005) or undermine the cultivation of *educación* in children and adults, for example, by providing youth with access to knowledge that “threatens [their] respect for the wisdom of their elders” (Lyons, 2001, p. 36).

In conclusion, the Salvadoran participants in this study attributed a far more expansive constellation of meanings to *educación*—as it pertains both to children and adults’ academic pursuits and moral formation—than its English cognate would suggest. This inherently social model of education offers a distinctive vision for human relatedness, one’s social and moral obligations and responsibilities, and appropriate ways to foster respectful relationships through speech and conduct. As such, this model shapes how adults, children, and community members perceive the purpose of schooling and adult education, the symbolic meanings they attach to education, their expectations of educators and other parents, and what they take away from educational activities—a view consistent with sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Papen, 2005; Street, 2003). Scholars and educators might profitably consider variations within Latinos’ conceptions of the educated person, how these converge with or differ from other cultural models, and how these models are structured by socioeconomic status, gender, geographic setting, immigrant generational status, urban migration, and the like. By attending to cultural models of education, educators can create greater congruence between learners’ viewpoints and their own instructional goals, teaching practices, and ways of interacting respectfully with children, youth, and adults.

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Notes

1. In 2001 I heard several villagers and adult learners state that “children’s rights” and laws that protected children from parental abuse were impediments to proper childrearing. They believed parents were more hesitant to use physical discipline due to fear of prosecution, causing parents to lose control of their children (Reese et al., 1995, pp. 70-71, reported similar views among Latino immigrants). Similarly, I met an elderly villager in 2007 who told me children should be well-behaved, and then stated, “Human rights have ruined this country.” Lamenting that youth no longer respect adults and parents, he explained that parents must be able to physically discipline their children. That some Salvadoran grassroots organizations are active in promoting children’s rights suggests that Salvadorans hold divergent ideas about how best to transmit *educación* and ensure respect.

2. *Ña*, an abbreviated form of *Ñina* [girl], is used by rural Salvadorans as a term of endearment. It is “a respectful and affectionate way to address a woman” (Servicio Jesuita para el Desarrollo “Pedro Arrupe,” 1994, p. 185). Lupe, Esmeralda, and my host mother have always addressed me as *Ña Esther*, and I typically use *Ña* in rural settings when addressing elderly women and my host mother (both in person and over the phone).

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