AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF LITERACY PRACTICES AMONG A FLORIDA MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILY AND THEIR CHILDREN’S ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

By

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To the memory of my parents, Mariano Albino Ortega and Yolanda Gonzalez de Ortega, who inspired me to be the best that I could be; and to the memory of my maternal aunts: Diana, Consuelo, Olivia, and Celia Gonzalez, who never married but who were the best second mothers to my siblings and me.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Academic language: The type of conversation used to facilitate the acquisition of subject matter in formal schooling contexts.

Additive bilingualism: A process by which individuals develop proficiency in a second language subsequently to, or simultaneous with, the development of proficiency in the primary language.

Affective filter: A student’s response to what they perceive as a threatening environment that mitigates their receptivity to learning.

Bilingual/Bicultural: A person who speaks and understands two languages and performs effectively within two cultures.

Construction of knowledge: Creation of new meanings and understandings that are developed during social interactions.

Constructivism: A process of sense making that occurs through the social interactions at home, in the community, and during teaching and learning.

Critical literacy: Power relations between groups in the utilization of reading and writing that helps students understand their own history and culture, and how they fit into it, and how they can shape their own social structure.

Culture: A set of “basic assumptions”, beliefs, values, and ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting among a particular group that distinguishes itself from other groups (Schein, 2004 p. 17).

Cultural literacy: Knowledge of a situation and context that is required to perform successfully in a specific culture.

Deficit theory: A belief that socio-culturally diverse, lower socio-economic students are not prepared to learn what the middle class, mainstream teacher has to offer them.

Ecology: The interrelationship and reciprocity of an organism and its environment. In this study it relates specifically to the interrelationship of reading and writing between the home and school environments.

Educación: A Hispanic culture’s concept about developing integrity as a human being, developing intellectually and morally, demonstrating respect for elders, honoring the family, displaying self-pride, self-respect, politeness and social graces (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004).

Funds of knowledge: The specific practices of a community that have been acquired through their culture, work history, family relations, interactions and adaptation to their world (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 2004).

Integration of literacies: The manner in which a student incorporates the primary discourse of the home with the secondary discourse of the school.
Literacy: Knowing how to listen, speak, read, write, think, and communicate verbally and non-verbally in all varieties of language, that are, used for different purposes, and having sufficient background knowledge about culture, social and conversational mores.

Literacy event: An actual instance in which people use verbal and non-verbal communication in their daily lives.

Literacy practices: The way that members of a community exchange ideas, interact with each other and learn together in order to survive and have an acceptable life.

Native language: The first language learned and used by students.

Multiliteracies: The multiplicity and integration of many different modes of meaning-making where the textual, visual, audio, spatial, behavioral, are related (New London Group, 1996).

Oral expressive language: The student’s ability to produce a verbal output from the comprehensible input he has received through listening or reading.

Passive receptive language: The language that a student can comprehend from listening or reading, but cannot necessarily produce.

Philosophy: Beliefs that individuals have about the world, themselves, and others, as well as ways of obtaining knowledge, the ideals and objectives of their profession, and their life goals.

Reading comprehension: The process of extracting and constructing meaning through interaction with the written text (Snow, 2002).

Spanish Graeco-Latin origin words: Since Spanish derives from Latin and Greek and many English academic words come from Latin, there are many Spanish and English cognates in common.

Thought and language: An individual’s intellectual subjectivity that through their social interactions within a group over time becomes objectified as the language of the culture and the sum of a group’s cultural experiences that have become signified (Berger, 1966).

Word recognition: A reading method used to help children understand the correspondence between written language and the sounds of the spoken language, according to the alphabetic principle.
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE LITERACY PRACTICES AMONG A FLORIDA MEXICAN IMMIGRANT FAMILY AND THEIR CHILDREN’S ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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Chair: Linda S. Behar-Horenstein
Major: Educational Administration and Policy

This study explored the literacy practices of a Central Florida Mexican immigrant family, their three elementary school age children, their teachers, and how the children integrated the practices between the home and school environments, Participant observations were conducted at the family’s home and in the teachers’ classrooms and during, informal conversations. All of the participants were interviewed several times. This study illustrated the problems among English language learners who have acquired an English social language, and their struggle to acquire English academic language. The findings showed how the sociocultural historical context of the family and the teachers’ literacy practices could be integrated by orchestrating a parent-teacher-student conference forum in which parents, teacher, and student negotiated meaning to benefit the students’ academic progress. The findings showed that when given opportunities by teachers, that the participants introduced their home literacy practices and previous knowledge in the classrooms. These opportunities also offered students affordances to acquire the English academic language.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Educational researchers have suggested that studies concerning the literacy practices of the home and the community are needed if educators are to have a better understanding of the way students’ constructed knowledge, as well as insight to learner’s active participation in the development and integration of meaning at school (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Gee, 1990; Moll, Amanti, Neff & González, 1992, 2005). One goal of this study was to explore how Mexican parents passed on their home literacy practices to their children, how Mexican children and teachers negotiated literacies in the classroom, and how teachers and parents communicated with each other concerning the children’s literacy development (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). Literacy practices were the unit of analysis in this study. Another goal of the study was to portray an integrated understanding of the personal and interpersonal literacy practices as they developed among individuals and their learning processes within a sociocultural institution (Cole, 1995; Goodnow, Miller & Kessel, 1995). By utilizing multiple analytical perspectives (personal, interpersonal, and community levels), the researcher tried to provide a better understanding of how literacy practices could be used to foster more effective teaching and learning (Rogoff, Baker-Sennett, Lacasa & Goldsmith, 1995). Through a study of family and school literacy practices, it was hoped that notions about how students constructed literacy, might become more clear.

Practices are meaningful actions that took place routinely in everyday life. Shared by group members, they carried expectations about how things should be done. Practices were also a people’s recurrent, meaningful actions that identified them as a community (Moll et al., 1992, 2005). They were situated in a sociocultural historical context, which became evident to observations and interviews (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Based on Bourdieu’s (1977, 1989)
writings, practices became habitual and automatic. They were repeated continuously; yet, the original reasons for their inception became difficult to perceive. Practices are not neutral. However, they conveyed values and guidelines about what was natural, mature, morally right, and aesthetically agreeable (Goodnow et al., 1995).

**Research Problem**

Education scholars have expressed the need for context-specific ethnographic research studies to explore the literacy practices of minority families. Mexicans are the largest group of immigrants in the United States. They have had a long-standing history of being academically unsuccessful in the public school system (Shannon & Escamilla, 1999). Mexican immigrant children as a group are the most vulnerable of all Hispanic students. Many have had school-related problems because of being poor, disadvantaged, and migratory. Many have limited English language proficiency have experienced school interruptions due to their migrant life style (NAWS, 2000). This student group has often encountered negativity from the mainstream United States community members based upon the negative perceptions that they hold (Shannon & Escamilla, 1999; NAWS, 2000). Most schools understand very little about Mexican immigrant children’s literacies. This lack of understanding has lead to misconceptions and generalizations about Mexican immigrant students. Many practitioners and researchers assumed that had literacy deficiencies. Learning students’ home literacy practices has helped educators learn how to implement a more relevant curriculum by incorporating the children language and cultural insights (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). Learning more about the children has helped them debunk the literacy deficit myth.

The literacy practices among Mexican immigrant families have been explored extensively in studies conducted in California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. Delgado-Gaitán (2004), for example, discussed her ethnographic study of the home
literacy practices among 20 Mexican Californian immigrant families, and their school’s literacy practices. She documented the empowerment that took place while parents organized and talked with the teachers and school administrators in an effort to understand school literacies. In *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities and Classrooms*, González, Moll & Amanti (2005) reported findings from teacher/researcher studies of Mexican immigrant families in Arizona. Some of the families’ literacy practices they discovered were incorporated into their classroom curriculum. In another study, López (1999) explored the literacy practices of migrant Mexican and Puerto-Rican children in Pennsylvania. She described the conflict observed between home and school discourses experienced by three fifth grade boys. López recommended that researchers study family literacies in an effort to help students integrate the contradictory discourses of home and school. Guerra (1998) explored the variety of linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical abilities in an adult Mexican community in Chicago that made them capable of surviving and progressing in their daily lives. Kalmar (2001) also studied the literacy practices utilized by another Mexican immigrant community in the Chicago area. The findings from that study led to the development of an adult education program that was designed to help others learn English in a phonology study program that demonstrated, “the way it really sounds” (p. 1). Each of these studies demonstrated how developing an understanding of the participants’ literacies aided educational pursuits. Most recently, in “Solamente libros importantes”: Literacy, ideology, and engagement in Migrant family homes (Coady, in press) studied the literacy practices of five migrant families (three Mexican, one Salvadorian, and one Nicaraguan) in North Central Florida. She conducted participant observations, interviews with mothers and children, and document analysis. The findings indicated that the children in the five families lacked access to a wide variety of print, and some of the reasons that Spanish publications were
unavailable to them. Following her study, Coady organized university students to provide books and tutoring to the 51 migrant children in the area.

This study focused on the literacy practices of a single Mexican immigrant family (the family did not qualify as migrant according to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). The family lived in the town of Parsons in Central Florida, in a large Mexican community established to provide a labor force to support a yearlong ornamental floral fern harvesting industry. Researchers have agreed that literacy practices are constantly evolving (Moll et al., 2005). Studies of the Mexican communities in the California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Pennsylvania differ from the specific area in Florida where this study was conducted. Also, Mexican communities differ in their history, time of migration, proximity to the Mexican border, the types of occupations held by their populations, and the size and closeness of the community (Moreno, 2005). In this study, the ethnographic observations of the family’s’ interactions at home and the parental interviews were similar to those previously conducted by Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González (1992), Guerra (1998), Kalmar (2001) and López (1999). However, the focus was strictly on language interactions in which speaking, listening reading and writing were utilized. Classroom observations and teacher interviews in this study were conducted in a manner similar to López (1999), but from a different theoretical perspective. While López utilized a critical literacy approach, this study was conducted through the lenses of a sociocultural-historical approach (Rogoff et al., 1995). Literacy interactions that took place in the home and in the classroom and the development produced by the participation at the personal, interpersonal, and community levels were also explored. At the interpersonal and personal levels, this study focused on the family’s literacy practices at home and the teacher/students literacy practices at school, as they went about their daily routines. Also, the study focused on the practices that
affected the individuals and the group. At the community level, this study focused on and described the changes that school literacy produced in the family’s literacies and other changes produced as a result of school and family interactions (Rogoff et al., 1995).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to describe the literacy practices of a single Mexican migrant family with at least three children enrolled in an elementary school in a small town in Central Florida, the literacy practices of the children’s classroom teachers, and the construction of knowledge that took place in the classroom between each child and their teacher. This study was conducted in Parsons, a predominantly Mexican immigrant community that has been established within the last 30 years (Moreno, 2005).

**Research Questions**

1. What are the literacy practices of a Mexican immigrant family in Central Florida?
2. What are the Mexican migrant parents’ notions of Educación and literacy?
3. How did the family participate in the school life of its children?
4. What are the teachers’ educational philosophies, and their literacy beliefs and practices?
5. What specific methodologies and strategies did teachers use to teach literacy to immigrant students?
6. How did teachers and students interact in the teaching/learning process?
7. How did home and school literacy practices influence the students’ construction of knowledge?

**Significance**

This study contributed to the body of research concerning the literacy practices of a Mexican immigrant family, the literacy practices of teachers educating the Mexican immigrant students; and the construction of knowledge between the Mexican immigrant students and their teachers, the immigrant community and the school community. This study gave credence to the Mexican immigrant parents’ funds of knowledge, a perspective that sought to promote a positive rather than a deficit attitude toward their children. Previous studies have shown that the teachers’ deficit attitude toward children’s parents teachers suggesting that the teachers believed that
culturally diverse parents had nothing to contribute to their children’s education (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Illuminating a knowledge of these family’s literacy practices has helped schools integrate the student’s home literacies into the school curriculum, and build on their previous knowledge while promoting academic achievement (González et al., 2005). Hopefully, this study will encourage other researchers to develop similar studies to explore the literacies of other ethnic groups living in specific sociocultural historical contexts living in the United States.

**Limitations**

- A qualitative research study is specific to a sociocultural historical context and findings may not be generalizable.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the study was to describe the literacy practices of a single Mexican migrant family with at least three children enrolled in an elementary school in a small town in Central Florida. Also, explored were the literacy practices of the children’s classroom teachers, and the construction of knowledge that was taking place in the classroom between the children and their teachers from the point of view of the children. The review of literature is presented in three sections: (a) Literacy: concept of literacy, theories of literacy, and literacy development in the bilingual children; (b) the Mexican immigrant family’s literacy practices: concept of educación and parental involvement; (c) and the teachers’ literacy practices: teachers’ beliefs, teachers’ literacy pedagogy, and strategies for Mexican immigrant children.

Literacy

Concept of Literacy

The word “literacy” originated from the Latin “literatus” and the late medieval English term “literate” that first appeared in texts in the 1450s. The Latin adjective “litteratus” means knowing how to read, write, and to become “learned” and “critically skilled” also, the definition of the English term, “literate” is a close synonym of “educated” or “cultured” (Moulton, 2004 pp. xii-xiii). Literacy has both narrow and broad definitions. In the narrow sense, it means the ability to read and write text in the native language of a specific culture. More broadly it refers to the ability to communicate effectively, read and write, and when speaking to gesture in specific contexts codes of social communication (Moulton, 2004). The ancient definition of literacy is a broader one, dating back to the 1450s, when it meant to be a person familiarized with letters and with “cultural sophistication”, at a time when access was denied to persons who were not members of the aristocracy, while the narrow definition,
“able to read and write”, dates from the late nineteenth century, when for the first time literacy was seen as universally desirable (Moulton, 2004, pp.xii- xiii).

The concept of literacy broaden during the last decade when United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) expanded their notion of literacy beyond the view of reading, writing and calculating skills, to include human rights related to development and integrated life skills. Later UNESCO approached literacy as a new culture of learning which fostered the acquisition of knowledge, values, and attitudes for life, based on the four pillars of learning: to know, to do, to live together, and to be (Delors, 2008). Today’s new broad concept of literacy refers to a person’s culture, life philosophies, and adjustment to a sociocultural context, in which reading, writing, listening and speaking are used in comprehending, interpreting, analyzing, responding, and interacting with a variety of sources of information in order to communicate with a variety of audiences (Moje, 1996).

Theories of Literacy

The autonomous theory

This theory, also called the transmission model, originated from the cognitive psychological approach in which attention is paid to individual development. This is a hierarchical model in which students are introduced to skills, knowledge, processes, with the understanding that reading and writing would be introduced at specific ages (Larson & Marsh, 2005). From this viewpoint of literacy, the teacher has control of who learns what, since they hold the power to distribute knowledge. The goals of the autonomous are the acquisition of the official standard, monolingual, monocultural language (New London Group, 1996; Wink, 2001).
The ideological theory

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, literacy scholars challenged the autonomous model when they defined literacy as a set of social practices of literacy which were historically situated, dependent upon shared cultural understandings, and linked to a setting’s power relations (Gee, 1996; Irvine & Larson, 2001; Street, 1995). Thus, ideological literacy refers to understanding the role that language plays in all types of learning, reading, writing, oral communication, listening and viewing, in multimodal contexts that are continually expanded to accommodate social and technological changes (Kress, 2003). Under the ideological theory of literacy there are four models:

- The new literacy studies model states that literacy occurs in both formal and informal settings, in or out of school and in everyday interactions for the purpose of building and maintaining social relations, and that there is not a single literacy, but multiliteracies that accommodate multiple communication channels with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in today’s world of multiple discourses of power (Gee, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Larson & Marsh, 2005; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995).

- The critical literacy model is rooted in the tenets of critical theory promoted by the Frankfurt School, and Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy program in Brazil. The Frankfurt School was a Marxist oriented institute for social research developed for scholars who were exiled from Frankfurt, Germany to Columbia University in New York City from 1923-1950. This model is based on explanatory social research, normative critique of social reality, and philosophical reflection (Crotty, 2003; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Janks, 2000; Schwandt, 1997).

- The techno-literacy model refers to new information and communication technologies that have changed the nature and use of literacy, shifting away from the dominance of writing to the dominance of image, and away from the dominance of the book as a medium to the dominance of the screen (Kress, 2003; Larson & Marsh, 2005; Spiro & Jehng, 1990).

- Finally, the sociocultural-historical literacy model based on Vygotsky’s (1962) theory of constructivism postulates that literacy is socially constructed, as literacy is used in specific contexts for specific purposes (Scribner & Cole, 1999). Vygotsky (1962) studied the relationship between thought and speech where the primary function is communication in social interactions whereby word meanings are mutually constructed (Larson & Marsh, 2005). According to Vygotsky (1978) all thought begins on the interpsychological plane during social interaction, and then moves to the
intrapsychological plane as the child assimilates knowledge. The language of the primary discourse, or the language related to the family, and the secondary Discourse of the school (Gee, 1996) is a mediating tool in the construction of identities, in the home and the school. It serves in the co-construction of literacy practices (Bakhtin, 1981; Larson & Marsh, 2005; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000).

Theories of Biliteracy

Many students are exposed to two languages at an early age and acquire the second language as well as the first language. However, most children like the participating students in this study were only exposed to a second language when they started school (Ovando & Collier, 1998). In order to understand students’ bilingual development, it is necessary to analyze the theories of language development and the relationship between first and second language acquisition. The three first and second language acquisition perspectives are the behaviorist perspective, the nativist perspective, and the interactionist perspective (Soltero, 2004).

Behaviorist perspective

This perspective of language acquisition is based on Skinner’s theory of conditioned learning. According to behaviorists, the acquisition of verbal and non-verbal language takes place through input reception from speakers and the associations made in during processing in the environment. Learners receive encouragement for their correct productions and corrections for their mistakes. However, this theory does not explain everything that takes place in language acquisition; for example, when children produce utterances which have not been modeled by adults (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Soltero, 2004).

Nativist perspective

This perspective of language acquisition, based on Chomsky’s (1957) theory of language acquisition, states that children have the capacity to acquire language from birth because human beings are genetically disposed to acquire and transmit language. In
Chomsky’s (1957) theory, his main postulate is that human beings have a language acquisition device (LAD) built in the brain with a mechanism to infer the universal rules of language, stimulated by spoken language. This process explains the development of language competence and knowledge of complex syntax (Brown, 2000; Hakuta, 1986; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Soltero, 2004). However, nativists do not take into consideration the contexts in which language develops beyond internalization and grammar rules (Soltero, 2004).

**Interactionist perspective**

Interactionist theorists combine both, behaviorists’ and nativists’ beliefs plus they add the constructivists’ belief that children construct knowledge during social interaction (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Soltero, 2004). This theoretical perspective states that language is produced by both genetics and the sociocultural environment. Advocates of this perspective believe that human beings are born with the capacity to acquire language by utilizing their genetic abilities and by interacting with other humans in sociocultural contexts (Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Soltero, 2004). This socio-psycholinguistic theory, based on Vygotsky’s (1978) constructivism asserts that children’s first language acquisition takes place through parental assistance. By the age of five years old, a child is expected to master the basic syntax of oral language and the acquisition of phonology, vocabulary, grammar, semantics, and pragmatics (Berko Gleason, 1993; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Soltero, 2004).

The behaviorist, innatist, and interactionist theories explain a different aspect of children’s language development. Behaviorist may explain the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical morphemes. Innatists explain the acquisition of complex grammar and Interactionists explain how children interact in conversations to relate form and meaning in language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).
Children’s Biliteracy Development

First Language Acquisition

Lightbown & Spada (1999) asserted that first language acquisition is similar among children all over the world. Children’s earliest sound productions help them demonstrate hunger or discomfort. Soon babies are able to express contented sounds when they are physically satisfied and enjoying their discoveries of the world. Then, they start to imitate sounds made by their caregivers. By the end of their first year, they begin to understand frequently repeated words. They also continue to learn more words and by the end of two years, babies can produce at least fifty words and two or three word sentences. Then, by the age of four years old, children have mastered the structures of the language and can ask questions and give commands. A dramatic development in metalinguistics occurs when the children begin to learn to read. Because, many children in the world are exposed to more than one language, evidence suggests that if they are continuously exposed to two languages, that they can become successful bilinguals. However, when children begin school and are submerged in the second language for long periods of time and are being practically cut off from the development of the family language, that they begin to lose their native language before they can develop an age-adequate mastery of the native language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Unfortunately, schools often do not encourage parents to promote their native language at home. Thus, children often begin to lose their native language because of the pressure to learn English, and the lack of opportunities they have to study their native language in school (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001). This is referred to as subtractive bilingualism (Cummins, 1981) and can have serious negative consequences for minority children.

“In some cases, children seemed to be caught between two languages: not having mastered the second language”, and having “not continued to develop the first” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 3).
The solution is to encourage the parents to continue teaching the native language to their children and to continue to express knowledge and ideas in a more elaborate ways. Cummins’s (1981, 1984) model of the common underlying proficiency (CUP) states that literacy-related aspects of a bilingual’s proficiency in the two languages are seen as common or interdependent across languages. Snow, Burns & Griffin (1998) suggested a need to study the relationship between the native language and second language literacies.

Research in bilingual education has indicated that English language learners who are also able to read and write in their native language perform better in standardized written tests in English (Ramírez, 1992; Collier & Thomas, 2004; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Willig, 1985; Greene, 1998).

**Second Language Acquisition**

**Thought and language**

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) argues that although thinking and speaking are separate, that they are also tightly interrelated in a dialectic unity in which socially constructed speech completes individual initiated thought (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky (1981) identified and differentiated two types of mental behavior, the “lower mental behavior”, such as elementary perception, memory, and attention shared with animals; and the “higher cultural mental behavior”, such as logical memory, decision making, selective attention, and comprehension of language which are a product of mediated activity (Dixon-Krauss, 1996). Thought is an individual’s intellectual subjectivity that through group social interaction over time becomes objectified in language of the culture and language that is the sum of the group’s cultural experiences that have become signified (Berger, 1966). Even though, thought cannot be explained without taking into consideration how it is manifested through linguistic form, and
linguistic expressions, it cannot be understood without being seen as a manifestation of thought. For example, the bilingual child may not be able to express all that he thinks (Bakhurst, 1986). Language is a system of vocal signs whose foundation is the human intrinsic capacity for vocal expressivity. However,

“When vocal expressions have become capable of detachment from the here and now of subjective states…The common objectifications of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification…..Language makes ‘more real’ my subjectivity not only to my conversation partner but also to myself….Language provides me with a ready made possibility for the ongoing objectification of my unfolding experience…Through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment” (Berger, 1966, P. 37-39).

Language forces us into its patterns. We cannot apply the rules of Spanish syntax, when we speak English. We must take into account prevailing standards of proper speech for various occasions (Berger, 1966). English language’s vocabulary, grammar, and syntax are organized into semantic fields of meaning that are constantly reviewed through the years and are transmitted from generation to generation. A foreigner will not recognize this community-shared knowledge of language (Berger, 1966).

Influence of personal characteristics

Given the same contexts and the same inputs, students acquire different levels of proficiency in the second language. For example, there are personal differences that influence second language acquisition, such as, the age at which students learn the second language, their motivation, aptitude for learning languages, cognitive style, multiple intelligences, attitude toward learning, degree of literacy in their native language, and previous knowledge. Also included in the individual differences are, learning strategies, personality variables such as anxiety, self-esteem, self-concept, competitiveness in the classroom, the level of metalinguistic awareness, knowledge about the world, and level of self-consciousness in committing mistakes (Baker, 2001; Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004; Ligthbown & Spada, 1999; Ovando & Collier, 1998).
The affective filter

In his discussion of the “affective filter”, Krashen (1981) emphasizes the importance of emotions in the second language acquisition process when students resist learning, when learning is painful or when they are in a coercive environment. Also, it is well known that students have an ability to learn more readily those things they like (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). Therefore, when the English language learner feels threatened, the affective filter prevents input from reaching the “language acquisition device” in the students (Chomsky, 1965). Several researchers have hypothesized that affective factors may be responsible for the student’s failure to acquire some aspects of language. For learning to occur, language acquirers need to be ‘open’ to the input, or have a low “Affective filter” (Dulay & Burt, 1980; Dulay, Burton & Krashen, 1982). Also, when language acquirers are anxious, or put on the defensive, although the input may be understood, it will may not reach those parts of the brain that are responsible for language acquisition. Therefore, a block by the affective filter keeps the input out (Krashen, 2004).

Comprehensible input and output

There is general consensus among applied linguists that sufficient comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981), the processing of meaning, in the target language necessary condition for second language acquisition (Cummins, 2001). While comprehensible input is necessary in language acquisition, there are other important factors like the skill-building hypothesizing which asserts that practicing consciously learned rules of the language makes them automatic (McLaughlin, 1989). The output plus correction hypothesis, assigns importance to the student’s production of language and the corrective feedback from the teacher. The comprehensible output hypothesis claims that learning occurs when the student has opportunities and struggles to make himself understood, by adjusting his output and internalizing rules that prove successful (McLaughlin, 1995). Swain (2000) has expanded the concept of student’s output to include its
utilization as a socially-constructed cognitive tool. Dialogue serves second language acquisition as a tool by mediating its own construction and the construction of knowledge about itself by its internalization and facilitation of knowledge through speech.

**Oral language development**

Mexican children’s practices of oral language are different at home than at school. At home, most queries between parents and children take place,

“In the context of conversations about objects, people or events that are tied to the participants’ immediate time frame” (Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez & Shannon, 1994, p. 62).

Many of these children have become great conversationalists at home. However, the same children can be much less involved in adult-child interactions at school. At school, children need to learn about themselves and the cultural world around them through a knowledge of the English language, as well as gain functional knowledge of the English writing system by analyzing the spoken English language structure (Celedon-Pattichis, 2004). Savignon (1997) reports that the development of learners’ communicative abilities does not depend on grammar lessons but on the opportunities students are given to express, interpret, and negotiate meaning.

In a mainstream classroom, the teacher is the role model for language emulation (Snow, 1990), because, both the language acquisition and the development of communicative competence by the English language learning (ELL) students depend on meaningful interaction with the teacher and the native English language speaking students (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). Therefore, acquiring language requires that the ELL be given the opportunity to use it in a meaningful context with speakers of the target language in a variety of situations. In and out of school, limited English proficient students should be able to practice English at the level they have acquired and practice to experience continuous growth in their language acquisition (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). As English language acquisition researchers have discovered, the fluency and grammar ability of
most mainstreamed English language learners does not develop automatically through subject matter instruction alone (Harley, 1986; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1986). Therefore, the instructor must deliberately and systematically plan meaningful interaction contexts between teacher and students to develop the structures of the language (Gibbons, 2002). Teachers can teach oral skills directly through repetition, modeling, backward buildup, and suing the strategy of the answer precedes the question practice. Also, another way to encourage the development of speaking competence is through the performance of skits, dramatics, songs, presentations and performances (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). Thus in order to promote highly proficient oral language skills, it is necessary to provide both structured and unstructured opportunities for oral production (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). The natural approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) outlines a useful sequence of teacher questions to move students from the listening mode to the speaking mode using the following strategies: (a) students respond with a name, (b) yes-no questions, (c) either or question, using nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs, (d) what, where, when, who questions, (e) students answer with the entire sentence or action (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004).

**Social and academic language development**

Second language acquisition requires the development of both social language and academic language. Cummins (1979) hypothesized that there are two very different types of second language proficiency: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS is everyday conversational language where meaning is negotiated through a wide range of contextual clues, such as non verbal communication (Cummins, 1979; Ovando & Collier, 1998). CALP is context-reduced, cognitive language used in classrooms, academic texts, and literary works. The development of BICS is relatively easy for most second language learners while the development of CALP is a more complex task,
because research has shown that when students receive instruction exclusively in English, it takes from 5 to 10 years to attain grade level academic performance (Thomas & Collier, 1997), and it takes even longer for English language learners who did not have a basic academic development in their native language before they began to learn English (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). McSwan & Rolstad (2003) suggested that instead of BICS and CALP a different construct called second language instructional competence (SLIC), which does not refer to native language proficiency. Instead, it refers to the stage of second language development at which a child is able to function at grade level in an English only classroom by learning all the registers of all subjects they study in school and understanding the language of instruction sufficiently. Therefore, children should not be considered linguistically deficient by simply lagging in academic achievement, due to an incomplete acquisition of English (McSwan & Rolstad, 2003). Cummins (2001) has developed a two-part framework for academic language learning. The first was the teaching-learning relationship between teachers and students that included the strategies and techniques that teachers utilize to provide comprehensible input, reading instruction, content knowledge and cognitive growth. The second part referred to the ways in which negotiate identities, who they are in their teachers’ eyes and what they are capable of becoming. Teachers could accomplish both through the establishment of a learning community where all students’ voices could be heard. For example, Chamot and O’Malley (1994) developed the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) for ELL students in upper elementary and secondary schools at intermediate or advanced levels of ESOL. Using this approach teachers are trained to develop their students’ thinking skills and learning strategies at the same time that their students are learning content language in science, mathematics, and social studies.
**Reading comprehension**

Reading comprehension is the process of

“Simultaneously extracting and constructing knowledge through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow, 2002, p. 11).

By increasing vocabulary, enhancing writing skills, and the pragmatics of the language, students will become proficient and articulate as readers and speakers (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). According to Halliday & Hasan (1976) in order for children to comprehend texts they must be familiar with two contexts, the context that varies from culture to culture and the context of the situation, depending on the field which refers to the topic of the text, the tenor or the relationship of the writer and reader, and the mode of language utilized (Gibbons, 2002). Snow (2002) suggested that teachers develop their students’ reading comprehension by, (a) increasing word recognition and fluency to help comprehension, (b) providing students with strategies needed to monitor and foster comprehension, (c) giving explicit comprehension strategies, (d) compensating for a history of differential instruction, (e) providing vocabulary instruction to foster complex comprehension, (f) contextualizing subject matter learning, (g) using a variety of texts, (h) increasing student motivation through choices, challenging tasks, and collaborative activities, (i) using strategies thoughtfully and dynamically, and (j) providing adequate time to reading comprehension instruction. Wong-Fillmore (1997) has suggested that teachers help students to develop academic language as well as their reading comprehension by utilizing the written text as comprehensible input. This can be done by guiding children to make sense of the texts they are reading by helping them focus on the way language is used, discussing the meaning, interpreting the sentences within the text, and discussing the grammatical clues that indicate cause and effect, antecedent and consequence, and comparison and contrast.
Writing in the second language

The ideology of the literacy practices in the Mexican context was different than that in the United States. In their study of the literacy practices in two schools in Central Mexico, Jimenez, Smith & Martinez-Leon (2003) concluded that students were given considerable freedom in their spoken language. However, reading constituted a middle ground that placed an emphasis on written language that implied that students were not encouraged to write very much. Students whose second language is English may experience writing difficulties in English because they experience a difference in sophistication between the oral and written language. For example, students whose native language is Spanish experience a different written language development than native English speakers because the English discourse expresses itself in a straight line while the Spanish discourse is divergent and global (Coady & Escamilla, 2005; Fu, 1995). Since different cultures expresses different conceptions of the world (Whorf, 1956), their discourses are expressed with a different syntax. For example, the English written language as in the case of English discourse also follows a straight line, while Spanish and Chinese communicate in a circular, global, or divergent manner (Coady & Escamilla, 2005; Escamilla & Coady, 2001; Fu, 1995).

Literacy Practices of a Mexican Immigrant Family

Literacy practices are actions related to the specific ways in which the modes of language, speaking, listening, reading, and writing are used in everyday life (Goodnow, Miller & Kessel, 1995) and “bodies of knowledge of strategic importance” for survival are maintained (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 2005, p. 49). Family literacy practices are defined by the way parents, children, friends, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Literacy practices also deal with language socialization, a tradition that rests on the assumption that language is the primary tool by which children are socialized into valued ways.
of acting, thinking, and feeling (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Sometimes, family literacy practices take place naturally during the routines of daily living when adults and children work together to accomplish related tasks get things done (Morrow, 1995), and provide their own explanations of what they do (González et al, 2005). Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez & Shannon’s (1994) research on the home-school literacy practices of Mexican immigrant children in California indicates that parents that provide extensive contingent queries and experiences are most helpful in enhancing their children’s language and literacy development. However, in some elementary schools, adult-child interactions are language exchanges that focus on a particular skill or direct instruction. This results in student gaining access to fewer adult contingency queries. Thus, children lack the opportunities to develop extensive language responses. The end result is that some students achieve less language and literacy development, at school than they do at home. Literacy activities might include making drawings, signs, or notes to share ideas, writing letters to family members, making grocery lists, reading or following directions, sharing stories and daily happenings through conversation, commenting about programs, or viewing pictures on the wall, or singing and dancing to music (Morrow, 1995). Family literacy activities that reflect the ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage may take place spontaneously, may be initiated deliberately, or take place on a continuous basis. As parents and children go about their daily lives, children may question the family’s approaches to certain tasks and may be given the opportunity to provide their input (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2005).

Family Members Teach Each Other

In Jimenez (2000), the literacy and the identity development of selected Mexican students provided multiple examples and descriptions of how they interacted with siblings on topics related to literacy. One student provided examples of how his father taught him how to read by saying “At first you learn to do the syllables and then you got to read in English as you did in
Spanish”; another father gave students money to buy books and took them to the library following their teachers’ instructions (Jimenez, 2000). Other students received “consejos” or advice from their parents about how they should read (Jimenez, 2000). The students commented on how they assumed the function of teachers to their young siblings,

“I model reading for her and she repeats it. My brother doesn’t know how to do his homework. I am teaching him how…” (Jiménez, 2000).

**Education and the Family’s Concept of “Educación”**

The school’s concept of education comes from the Latin word “educere” which means to lead out. In Greece, Socrates argued that education was drawing out what students already knew (Ornstein & Levine, 2006). Broadly the concept of education means to transmit the classical and essential knowledge developed in the past and to equip our present students with the desire to acquire further knowledge; to teach students how to think and how to improve their minds, to build character and learning from experiences to enhance students’ achievement, to produce better and more productive citizens and to improve society (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). Based upon the broad concept of “education” is the Mexican immigrant family’s concept of “educación”. It means guiding, nurturing, teaching and indoctrinating children in courtesy and good manners to help them develop physical, intellectual and moral abilities in order to perfect and to polish their sensory perceptions. As used by Mexican parents, the concept of “educación” is more comprehensive than the generally accepted American usage of education.

Educación means the development of family taught values that form the child’s character, respect for oneself and others, good manners and discipline, family honor, and respect for self and the community (Valdes, 1996; Ward & Franquiz, 2004). Also, included is “respeto” which manifests itself as having a quiet, internal dignity, that includes a commitment for honesty (children do not lie), to cooperation (helping others is essential), to protect others from injustice,
a deep sense of respect for elders (even older brothers or sisters), youths (responsibility for younger siblings), and one’s family (to defend the honor of the family is very important) (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001). Another aspect of “respeto” is to wait for your turn to speak and to allow everyone in a group to speak first. Also desirable is the value of persistence; that is the importance of not giving up, not becoming discouraged; and trusting the teacher (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001). Included also is being “bien educado” which means a person who is going to support and respect others, and being deferential to authority. Because Mexican parents believe that the strength of the human being is in the mind, not in the body. Educación, a code of ethics followed by Latinos including Mexicans, is viewed as the road to provide a better life for the young (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). Ultimately, Mexican parents want their children to become English proficient, successful, and to continue learning and achieve a higher education (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001).

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been identified as an important factor in promoting students’ success in literacy (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003; Moreno & Lopez, 1999; Pomerantz, Grolnick & Price, 2005; White, 2005). A number of research studies on Hispanic parental involvement emphasize the importance of an on-going school-community involvement with a strong commitment to home-school communication in the native language and developing literacy partnerships (August & Hakuta, 1998). One strategy that was effective was helping parents connect with their children through literacy activities, particularly using parent narratives that affirm their knowledge, ideas, and experiences (Ada & Zubizarreta, 2001). Delgado-Gaitán (2004) believes in empowering immigrant parents by organizing them to work together effectively within the school system. Parental empowerment enables minority parents to understand the literacies of the school even though they have a different language, culture, and
are of a lower socioeconomic class (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). Schools can foster a relationship with parents by removing barriers that detour disadvantaged parents from getting involved with the school. For example, like providing transportation, child care services, and bilingual interpreters (Henderson, Marburger & Ooms, 1986). In a study with five migrant families in La Joya, Texas, Lopez (2004) it was discovered that home visits played a major role in making the school staff aware of the migrant parents’ needs. Also, the migrant families valued the school staff’s face-to-face encounters. The parents and the school staff both believed that these understandings on a personal level between them helped their students’ greatly. Many sociocultural-historical literacy researchers have suggested that educators implement a new approach to encourage lower socio-economic/minority parental involvement, by bringing parents’ home literacies to school (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Rogoff, 2003; González et al, 2005).

This recommendation was implemented with great results in Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez (2005) “Funds of knowledge” included studies of low-income immigrant families and which focused on naturally occurring home literacy practices that schools were able to use to increase student academic achievement. The “funds of knowledge” study also showed that minority people are competent and have acquired knowledge through their life experiences, such as producing traditional arts and crafts and baked goods. Further, they found that when teachers became aware of their students’ parents’ literacy practices, they realized that these practices could be utilized as an asset by the school by selling student produced crafts to support student-school functions (González et al., 2005). Ideally the teacher should bring the family’s literacies to school so that both the school and home can become equal partners who work toward increasing student academic achievement (González et al., 2005; Jiménez, 2000). The best model of parental involvement is a “two-way street of communication between school and home”
(Delgado-Gaitán, 1990, p. 168). Calderón & Carreón (2000) have worked with family support teams to help parents feel respected and welcome in the school, in order to make it easier for them to become active in their children’s education. August & Hakuta (1997) report that in effective schools, teachers have a strong commitment to home-school communication and parental involvement in formal support activities. According to Calderón & Carreón (2000) community out-reach helps parents feel respected and welcome in the school to support their children’s education and parents have learned strategies to use with their children at home such as reading with their children in their native language.

**Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices**

Professional educators’ teaching practices are based on both their educational philosophies and knowledge learned during their training or the ways in which they were taught (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). Also, teachers develop teaching styles through their experience. These styles may be implicit or explicit and may be difficult to change (Ornstein & Levine, 2006). Behar-Horenstein & Seabert (2002) believe that qualitative classroom research can give us a better understanding of teaching practices leading to increased student achievement. In her study of instructor practices in a K-12 developmental research school, she identified five teaching behaviors that varied in the degree of student involvement including, (a) encouraging students to think critically; (b) instructing students in the completion of tasks; (c) providing didactic instruction through teacher talk; 4) providing passive instruction, and (d) unfocused, unclear, irrelevant, or disorganized teaching. These teacher-effectiveness studies were focused on a diverse spectrum of behaviors ranging from classroom management strategies to homework and seatwork practices (Eggen & Kauchack, 1999). Their findings consistently indicate that the teacher is the single most important factor outside the home that affects student learning and development (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004). When teachers have confidence in their students
abilities, the students are more likely to believe in themselves (Celedon-Pattichis, 2004). Teachers, who have clear beliefs and goals, actively strive for learning, and use effective methods are more likely to produce good results (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). Also, teachers’ practices are based on educational philosophy, knowledge of the learners, knowledge of the subject, the psychology of learning, and current life studies (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998).

**Teachers’ Pedagogy**

Transmission models of pedagogy, predominant in the mainstream American classroom as reported by large-scale studies (Goodlad, 1984; Sirotnik, 1999), affect Hispanic low-income students in a disproportionate manner (Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey & Pasta, 1991). One of the major concerns in Ramirez et al. (1991) is that in over half of the interactions between teachers and Hispanic English language learners, students were only listening or responding with non verbal gestures or actions, by utilizing these limited models of teaching, students decreased their opportunities to develop complex language and critical thinking skills. The implication of this passive pedagogy on a Hispanic low socio-economic community is disastrous. Hispanic students simply withdraw because they feel “marginal”, a condition experienced when a learner has difficulty relating to a learning environment and profiting from it. If their feelings of marginalization are acute the student may give up on education completely (Joyce, Weil & Calhoun, 2004). Teachers and administrators who have the power to control learning must respect each child’s interactive discourses in order to make the classroom a positive experience for the student (Lopez, 1999). Also, problems arise when education proponents of a more powerful dominant discourse assume that everyone should perceive the world in the same way (Lopez, 1999). Cummins (2001) suggests that teachers proactively affirm children’s linguistic identity by validating their students’ native language and culture in the classroom, encourage parents to maintain their native language at home, and establish an environment of linguistic and
cultural collaboration among the school, parents, and the community (Scribner & Cole, 1999). Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez (1992) have reported how teachers worked successfully with Hispanic migrant parents to discover the “funds of knowledge” that exist in the community and strove to integrate their students’ culture into the curriculum (Moll et al, 1992). The teacher’s knowledge of the child’s home literacy is especially important when their students are negotiating literacy learning. The teacher’s understanding of the students’ prior knowledge, their interests, achievement levels, and previous skills are helpful tools which the teacher utilizes to expand the students’ literacy knowledge (Ornstein & Sinatra, 2005). The findings of the study suggest teachers’ need to create “zones of possibilities” for Mexican immigrant students by making meaningful connections between their home literacies and the classroom curriculum by designing relevant learning activities (Moll & Greenberg, 1990, pp. 319, 345). Also the findings support the need of teachers to adjust their learning environments to the optimal comfort and comprehension level of their students in order to avoid their feelings of marginalization and instead promoting the construction of knowledge through their interactions with their teacher and with their classmates (Joyce et al., 2004). The generative and transformative models of learning or critical pedagogy are the models of choice for English language learners because meaning is generated as new ideas are integrated with previous knowledge and the learning environments are extended from the classroom to the community (Ada, 1988; Cummins, 2001; Freeman & Freeman, 2006). Classroom components necessary for English language learners are, (a) a motivated student, (b) native English speakers who can model for learners, (c) comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982), and, (d) a learning environment that provides sufficient time for English speaking students and English language learners to work together (Wong-Fillmore, 1991). According to García (1997) and Darder (1997), some examples of effective teacher practices for
language minority students are: (a) using skillful communication with students, parents, fellow teachers, and administrators; (b) implementing student-centered, collaborative, and process oriented methods; (c) understanding and valuing the minority language and culture; (d) recognizing and respecting the learning that takes place at home; (e) caring and advocating for a democratic education for their students; and (f) incorporating their students’ home literacy practices into the classroom community.

Teachers’ Literacy Methodology

**Autonomous theory literacy approach**

The literacy methodology of the autonomous theory is the word recognition approach. In a review of experimental research on phonics, the National Research Panel (2000) concluded that the explicit and systematic teaching of phonics is superior to nonsystematic or to no phonics at all instruction (Gambrell, Morrow & Pressley, 2007; Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000). Stahl, Duffy-Hester & Stahl (1998) also concluded that there are several good phonics instruction approaches, an example is the general approach to phonics which begins with phonemic awareness, learning the letters of the alphabet and the sounds made for each letter. Then, students learn phonics rules which are to combine letter sounds to produce a word and also to memorize sight words that do not follow phonics rules (Freeman & Freeman, 2006). In the word recognition approach, the teacher directly instructs students on how to pronounce the letters, how to combine letter sounds to pronounce words, how to write individual words and gradually how to combine words to form whole sentences (Freeman & Freeman, 2006).

**Ideological theory reading approach**

The ideological approach to literacy is the socio-psycholinguistic or whole language approach. There are six guiding principles of whole language: (a) Oral and written language development occurs from whole-to part; (b) Language and literacy are socially constructed; (c)
Literate behavior is learned through real and functional language use; (d) Demonstrations are critical to learning; (e) All learning involves risk taking and approximation; (f) Learners must take responsibility for their own learning (Crafton, 1991). According to a holistic viewpoint, oral and written language should be taught within the context of complete discourse, or a whole unit of language should be utilized for a specific purpose (Ornstein & Sinatra, 2005). Whole language readers try to make sense of the text by using psychological strategies, phonemic and structural cues, background knowledge and graphophonetic cues to predict the text (Freeman & Freeman, 2006). However, in the whole language approach to writing, students choose topics related to their backgrounds and interests and write for real audiences. Also, students are provided with the necessary resources to move from invention to convention (Freeman & Freeman, 2006).

**An ecological balanced approach to reading**

A balanced approach promotes authentic texts and tasks, with a heavy emphasis on writing, literature, response, and explicit instruction for phonics, word identification, comprehension, and conventional writing (Pearson, 2004). The goal of reading then, is that instruction according to the balanced approach is “for learners to achieve automatic word recognition so that comprehension can be enhanced and rich images can be produced without halts in the reading text” (Ornstein & Sinatra, 2005, p. 105). Therefore, the utilization of both the word recognition and the whole language approaches are essential to a comprehensive approach to early literacy because it utilizes explicit phonological guidance and provides a range of opportunities to use print for authentic communication (Goldenberg, 1998). In whole language learning classrooms,

“Students are learning phonics all the time as they go about the business of constructing meaning and reading and writing” (Crafton, 1994, p. 157).
Pedagogical research indicates that an early, focused systematic emphasis is necessary for utilizing highly embedded approaches, such as invented spelling (Chall, 1967; Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000; Windsor & Pearson, 1992). Also, an ecological balanced approach respects the existing reading research without excluding major research paradigms and also respects the wisdom of practice which exhibits a balanced repertoire of instructional strategies, and pedagogical practices. Thus, an ecological balanced approach represents a transformative pedagogy of reading as


Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review provides the framework for this study. The concepts, the theories of literacy, and theories of biliteracy provide the background and the tools for this study. For example, the children’s biliteracy development offers standards to compare the participant children’s development. Also, the section on family literacy practices presents some of the discoveries that other studies have contributed to the topic. Finally, the literacy practices of the participant teachers, such as their beliefs, pedagogy, and literacy methodology which they bring to their classroom.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Theoretical Perspective

The epistemology of constructionism provided the philosophical grounding for the methods (Crotty, 2003; Hamlyn, 1995; Maynard, 1994). Constructionism focuses on how human beings individually and collectively construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social and historical contexts (Crotty, 2003). Ethnography was the methodological strategy for the research design that shaped the choice of methods and linked them to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 2003; Schwandt, 1997). Ethnography was used to document a detailed day-to-day picture of events in the life of the participant Mexican immigrant family across a period of six months. When the researcher had access to the culture-sharing group, a detailed record of their behaviors and beliefs developed over time was kept (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993).

Methods

The ethnographic methods utilized in this study include participant observation, classroom visitation, interviews, and field notes.

Participant Observation

Participant observation allowed the researcher to observe the everyday life activities of the Mexican immigrant family. Ten formal 30-minute observations were conducted at the family’s home; in addition, the family invited the researcher to join them to other events which added richness to the research data.

Classroom Observations

Five classroom observations for each of the participant teachers were conducted for a total of 15 observations. The observations varied from 30 minutes to two hours depending on whether the teacher asked for the researcher’s participation or not. A classroom observation
protocol was utilized to record, the teacher’s name, date, topic, number of students, demographics, teacher’s and students’ activities, teacher’s and students’ talk, instructional methodology used, use of ESOL scaffolding if used, inclusion of students’ language and students’ literacy practices, and the researcher’s comments.

The participant observation continuum was used flexibly based on the needs of the participants and the researcher’s constructionist theoretical perspective (Agar, 1996, DeWalt & Dewalt, 2002, Grills, 1998; Spradley, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988). For example, the researcher participated with the family and served as a reading tutor for Salma, the third grade participant student, for one hour per day for five days. She also served as a translator for the Fernandez when they visited the parent center at Parsons Elementary, and as a driver and back up translator for Mr. Fernandez at his courthouse meeting. The researcher was also asked by participating teachers, Ms. Cross and Ms. Rich, and the Fernandez parents, to serve as a translator during their three parent-teacher conferences with the Fernandez’. The Parsons Elementary principal requested the researcher to act as a translator at the SAC meeting for the Fernandez’ and other Mexican parents who attended the meeting. The researcher was asked by Ms. Cross to participate in a cultural lesson where students were asked to compare and contrast two adults of different origins (Ms. Cross and the researcher). Their similarities were that both were teachers whose hobbies were reading and cooking. However, like many of the students themselves, there were also differences, Ms. Cross was born in the United States and spoke English as her native language, while, the researcher was born in Mexico and spoke Spanish as her native language. Finally in Ms. Drury’s kindergarten class the researcher assisted Selena and her classmates in a writing center lesson and in the pre-reading activity “finding words with letters ‘v’ and ‘x’ in books from the classroom library.
Field Notes

The researcher utilized a combination of note taking to record the participant observations, such as jotted notes, expanded notes, logs, and methodological notes and reflections concerning the research (DeWald & DeWald, 2002).

Interviews

In this study, open-ended semi-structured and recorded interviews that were designed to give freedom of expression to the participants' voices were used (Kvale, 1996). Occasionally there were informal unscheduled interviews, during the observation, that were documented in the field notes (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The participant family, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez (the parents) and each of their three children were interviewed two times each. The parents chose to be interviewed together and in Spanish. They were asked questions concerning their education, community, parental involvement with the school, and educational aspirations for their children. The three participant children also chose to be interviewed in Spanish, but were interviewed individually. They were asked questions concerning their literacy experiences at home and at school, their favorite class and the reasons for it, as well as their plans for the future. The children’s three classroom teachers were interviewed in English two times each. They were asked questions concerning their philosophy of education, literacy practices, and how they worked with the participant Mexican immigrant students. Afterwards, the teachers and parents were given the opportunity to member check their answers. Instead of having a third interview with teachers, parents, and children, as was originally planned, two parent-teacher conferences were recorded.
The Setting

Obtaining Permission

On November 1, 2007, I applied for the University of Florida’s IRB permission and obtained it on November 19, 2007. On November 9, 2007 I obtained the County School District’s permission to approach the target school’s principal. On November 15, 2007, I met with the Parsons Elementary principal to request approval to conduct my research in her school. The principal expressed that she and the district leaders were very interested in my research because they were concerned that they were not relating to the Mexican parents as well as they would like to and that the results of my study could possibly help them understand the Mexican parents’ needs better.

On November 21, the principal assisted me by making an appointment with Mrs. Bethel, the migrant recruiter, so that I could ask her to help me select a participant family. Mrs. Bethel took out her migrant recruitment lists and pointed out two non-migrant immigrant families who qualified for my study. Although both families had three children in the elementary school, I chose the Fernandez family because they had a child in the fourth grade, another in the third grade, and another in kindergarten, indicating a broader range of school experiences than the second family, the Davila family, who had twins in kindergarten and another child in the first grade.

On November 22, Mrs. Bethel contacted the Fernandez family on my behalf and set an appointment for us to meet. The Fernandez mother came to talk to me at the migrant portable and I explained the program to her. She told me that she needed to discuss the family’s participation with her husband and promised to return the next day at the same place with her response.

On November 23, after school, Mrs. Fernandez returned with Mr. Fernandez and their three elementary school children (the Fernandez have a fourth child in day care that they had not
picked up yet). The parents and the three children sat at the conference table listening to my presentation. Mr. Fernandez had a few concerns about his children who he felt did not display exemplary behavior. I told him that I expected the children to be themselves, and that I was not going to be judgmental, and that at any time, the family could choose to no longer participate in the program if they so desired. After that, the parents accepted to participate. Then, Mrs. Bethel assisted me in identifying the children’s classroom teachers and provided me with the information that the oldest child, the boy, was in the fourth grade-gifted class and was participating in an after school gifted reading class on Mondays and Thursdays. The two girls in the third grade and in kindergarten were participating in a pull-out ESOL supplementary services program during school hours for 30 minutes twice a week, with their classroom teachers being in charge of their language arts instruction.

**Data Collection**

The research was conducted from December 2007 to May 2008. On December 6, 7, and 8, I visited the Fernandez family at their home where we talked causally and where I observed them informally, in order to become better acquainted. During this time, I observed the family’s daily routines and was able to plan my scheduled formal participant observations. These three days helped us to bond almost immediately and the children began to feel at ease with me, starting to perceive me as a family member, referring to me as aunt.

Also, I approached the parents asking them to sign the Inform Consent and conducted the first parental interview. They indicated that they would like to be interviewed together in Spanish, with each providing their own answers. Finally during the last day, I read the Assent to the children in Spanish, as they requested, and then they signed the Informed Consent.
Research Site

Parsons (a pseudonym) is an unincorporated town in Central Florida. The Mexican community living in Parson comprises 69% of the population, including some families whose parents and grandparents moved from Mexico to Parsons 30 years ago. These families have been followed by relatives and friends, including those who have arrived just recently. Most of the older families became legal residents during the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) immigration amnesty. However, many of the newcomers are undocumented. The Mexican workers have been attracted to Parsons’ the “Fern capital of the world” to work growing floral green fern fronds that are harvested and shipped throughout the world to add to the aesthetics of floral bouquets. Although Parsons has few amenities, the Mexican fern workers have chosen to settle here with their families because the fern industry offers year around employment, so that workers do not need to change residences in order to seek employment. Also, their children benefit by being U. S. citizens and acquiring a stable education attending kindergarten through high school in the same town. The fern workers are supported by a local branch of the Florida Farm Workers’ Association, which is supported by the Catholic Church. The association is made up of local workers who are dedicated to improving working conditions for those employed in the fern business. Recently, the association persuaded state legislators to pass laws to protect farm workers from unknown insecticides and to help with immigration information. Although, in recent years, descendants of older families in the Parsons’ Mexican community have attended college and have acquired employment not associated with the fern industry, many still choose to settle with their families in Parsons. For example, one particular Mexican immigrant and a former student of Parsons Elementary has become the assistant principal of the secondary school in Parsons.
Parsons Elementary School, the only elementary school in the town, is an 80-year old school with approximately 498 students. The student demographics are 73% are Hispanic, 10% black, 13% non-Hispanic white, 3% Asian, and 1% other. Within the school, 86% are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, considerably higher than the state and district averages. Of the students, 44% receive ESOL services and 54% are classified as migrant. Parsons Elementary School’s mission is “to work cooperatively with all students, parents, and community members in the development of “well educated” and contributing members of our democratic society (Parsons Elementary Webpage).

Parsons Elementary is a monolingual school in an English-only state which provides English for Speakers of Other Languages and Migrant Education support for Mexican immigrant children. The majority of the school’s 50 teachers are American born English speakers and the teacher transfer rate is very low. Most of the teachers commute from their homes near the seashore 25 miles away, or from a college city 15 miles south, where there are more facilities available to their families. One road to the school is a two-lane highway and the other road is shrouded with fog almost every morning. Most teachers live near excellent public schools in the same county school system as Parsons Elementary; however, they continue their long, time-consuming and expensive commute to Parsons year after year. One teacher has taught in Parsons for 36 years, and many have taught for only a few years less. After officially retiring from the district, a former Parsons Elementary principal returned to Parsons Elementary as a third grade teacher. The current Parsons Elementary principal, who had been a student and a beginning teacher at the school, came back to Parsons Elementary as its principal, after serving as teacher and assistant-principal at other schools in the district. Another teacher who earned a doctorate
degree ten years prior to this study also chose to continue to teach classes at Parsons Elementary School.

Participants

The Family

The Fernandez family (a pseudonym) is composed of the father, Josué, who is 34 years old; the mother Soledad, who is 33 years old; the oldest child, a son Eduardo, who is 10 years old and is in 4th grade; a daughter, Salma, who is eight years old and is in 3rd grade; a daughter, Selena, who is six years old and is in Kindergarten; and a daughter, Baby Delia, who is two years old and goes to the Head Start day care school.

Mr. Josué Fernandez (a pseudonym), the father was born in Hidalgo, Mexico in 1973. He was the oldest son in a family of eight children. He attended public school up to the sixth grade in Mexico before he came to the United States 12 years ago with several of his siblings who presently live nearby. He has expressed the hardship of not seeing his parents in a long time, saying to me in Spanish, “No he visto a mis padres en doce años. Los extraño mucho” (I have not seen my parents in twelve years. I really miss them). He makes his living cutting floral fern in the fernery farms of Parsons, Florida for ten hours most days. When there is no work in the ferneries, he fixes cars and refrigerators, and raises chickens, turkeys, and a pig for his family to supplement their food supply.

Mrs. Soledad Fernandez (a pseudonym), the mother, was born in Zacatecas, Mexico in 1974. She was the oldest in a migrant family of eight children, attending school for only two years in Mexico. She immigrated to the United States with her entire family in 1992, which presently live nearby. She said to me in Spanish, “The thing that Josué and I have in common is that we grew up feeling responsible to help our parents care for our brothers and sisters. I think that’s why we are very hardworking and sensitive to the needs of others”. Soledad also works
mostly 10-hour days cutting fern. When there is no fern to cut, she works both selling her crafts and at home from six o’clock in the morning to late at night, attending the needs of her family, cooking, cleaning, and doing the laundry.

Eduardo (a pseudonym), the oldest child is a ten-year old boy, born in the Parsons area where he had attended school since kindergarten without interruption. Eduardo is in Ms. Rich’s fourth grade gifted class. He is an avid reader and very attentive to his family and friends. Eduardo is intelligent. He was observed to always monitor his sisters’ language and behavior, particularly his kindergarten sister. He helps his parents tend to their livestock, and do the household chores. He is very close to Salma, his eight-year old sister, and Selena, his six year old sister, and helps both them with their academics. He is also very caring and protective of his two year old sister Delia.

Salma (a pseudonym), the third grade daughter in Ms. Cross’ class is friendly, and energetic. She too was born in the Parsons area and has attended Parsons elementary since Kindergarten without interruptions. She is quiet and shy, and (as expressed by her teachers), enjoys daydreaming). While, she is very close to Eduardo, she doesn't get along very well with her younger sister, Selena. Yet, she enjoys taking care of her baby sister, Delia and is very enthusiastic when the family plays together. She presently is being taught by Ms. Cross, the same teacher her brother, Eduardo had last year. Salma says she likes her teacher.

Selena (a pseudonym), the kindergarten daughter in Ms. Drury’s class is rather introverted, and has not made many friends at school. She doesn't seem to get along with either her brother Eduardo or her sister Salma. She is a very curious child. She asks many questions and her father corrects her often. She is very attached to her mother and hugs her often. She enjoys trying to teach her baby sister, Delia new words.
Delia (a pseudonym) is the baby of the family and not a participant in this study. She is two years old and attends the Head Start School that she seems to love. Everyone in the family pays a lot of attention to her and she smiles all the time. Her father plays with her more than with any of his other children. Although her mother attends Delia’s needs well, she is not as demonstrative of her affection for her daughter as her father is.

The Children’s Teachers

Ms. Drury (a pseudonym), Selena’s kindergarten teacher, is an Anglo in her thirties. She has taught young children for several years in Parsons Elementary and in another state. At home, she is a foster parent. She takes care of several children and on occasion had to cancel meetings with the researcher because she was needed by her children at home. At school she has been observed to be attentive and to keep the children engaged in instructional tasks. At times she ignored Selena during instruction when it was clear that Selena needed guidance.

Ms. Cross (a pseudonym), an Anglo teacher in her forties, is Salma’s third grade teacher. She is the oldest and apparent leader of the group of three teachers. She has taught for 10 years at Parsons Elementary, first as a special education teacher for eight years and after having her reading endorsement, as a classroom teacher for the last two years. Salma’s brother Eduardo was her third grade student and represented her class as a “Young author,” which helped him with his writing skills. Unfortunately, Ms. Cross has been observed comparing Salma’s academic accomplishments with her brother’s more impressive accomplishments.

Ms. Rich (a pseudonym), Eduardo’s teacher of gifted fourth grade students, is a first year teacher. Before we met, the principal expressed concern that Ms. Rich might be apprehensive about participating in my study because it was her first year teaching. However she quickly agreed. She is African-American-Korean in her late twenties and a single parent of a kindergarten daughter attending Parsons Elementary School. She said, “I am not Hispanic,
people think that I am, but my mother is Korean.” She was observed speaking harshly to Eduardo on several occasions.

**Data Collection**

The data collected consists of ten 30 minute formal participant observations at the Fernandez’ home and five 30 minute observations in each of the three children’s classrooms. Two interviews were conducted with the parents together, two interviews were conducted with each of the children and, two interviews were conducted with each of the children’s teachers. The researcher developed a question guide for the parents’ interviews in Spanish, which were based on: (a) family history and labor history; (b) regular household activities (in an attempt to capture their household “home literacies”); and, (c) the processes of sense-making and how they saw their function as parents (González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The three children chose to be interviewed in Spanish. Their questions focused on their literacy identity development: (a) favorite activities at home and in school, (b) favorite books, (c) what they wanted to be when they grow up, and (d) family and friends. The teachers’ interviews in English were based on questions such as: (a) educational career, (b) philosophy of education, (c) literacy pedagogy, (d) role as teachers of diverse classrooms and, (e) how they believed they worked with the particular Mexican migrant student being studied? All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. The researcher was responsible for audio-recording and transcribing the interviews. In addition, extensive field notes were taken during the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The names of the school, teachers, parents, and students were changed to protect the anonymity of the study participants in all the data.

**Data Analysis**

The coding and analysis process began as interviews of home and classroom visitation protocols were generated. To be consistent with exploratory-inductive approaches to qualitative
inquiry, no “a priori” definitions or strategies were used to direct the data collection. Data was gathered and analyzed to produce descriptive categories, themes, and conceptual theoretical understandings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data from the study respondents was coded according to the principles for inductive research and comparative analysis (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This form of analysis is based on a comparison of each new unit of data including those coded previously for emergent categories and subcategories. After the first week of interviews, the researcher analyzed initial findings to develop a working list of domains. The working typology was based on the nature of the questions and responses up to that point. This process enabled the researcher to look at emerging patterns and to facilitate seeing unexpected patterns or categories. Later, the interviews were analyzed further taking into consideration new data received from parent-teacher conferences.

**Researcher’s Subjectivity Statement**

The researcher is a naturalized American citizen born in Mexico. Her teaching career began in Mexico where she taught low socio-economic students in public schools for seven years. In the United States, the researcher taught college level Spanish and French for six years in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Later, the researcher taught at the K-12 level for a total of 20 years in a Central Florida public school system, where she taught, Spanish, French, and English for Speakers of Other Languages. She was also an advocate for Mexican migrant students for 13 of these years, and the district’s English/Spanish and Spanish/English interpreter and translator doing both oral and written translations. During her experience, she observed that whenever principals and teachers understood the cultural background, and the academic and linguistic needs of their Mexican immigrant students and their parents; and when the parents understood the school’s point of view, a better understanding between each was fostered.
The researcher’s experiences in qualitative research includes her five-year tenure as program administrator at the Florida Department of Education in Tallahassee in the areas of English for speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Foreign Languages, and migrant education. In this position, she conducted multiple school district ESOL evaluations and investigations based on parental complaints in which she performed extensive interviewing, classroom observations, and document analysis. Then while a doctoral student at the University of Florida, the researcher conducted several studies, utilizing participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis while studying the instructional practices of a bilingual school in Central Florida, and examining the tenure-track process undergone by assistant professors.

Validity and Reliability

Validity was established by prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review and debriefing, negative case analysis, rich thick description, member checking, audit trail, and external audit (Creswell, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Schwandt, 1997; Silverman, 2005). A college of education graduate student acted as a peer de-briefer. The student reviewed the researcher’s data collection process, coding and analysis and report of conclusions. Reliability was pursued under "dependability” through careful documentation of the procedures for generating and interpreting the data (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), and through the utilization of inter-rater checks on coding and categorization (Silverman, 2005).
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings related to each research question.

Research Question 1: What are the Literacy Practices of a Mexican Immigrant Family in Central Florida?

The Fernández’ Family Home

The Family’s Living Room

In order to describe the literacy practices of the Mexican immigrant family (Fernández family), it is important to provide a description of their home environment. The Fernández family lived in an old 20 by 50 feet mobile home that had been reconditioned by the father. The family also owned a large plot of land on which their home stood and where they kept chickens, turkeys and a small pig. Recently, they had added a wooden porch to the front of the home where a table, chairs and a hammock were kept (Participant observations, p. 6, lines 124-128).

The living room designed with an angular wall, made the room appear larger than it was. The room, recently painted, was partially carpeted. It had two large matching sofas facing a twenty-five inch television set and a three foot long stereo. The room had two windows with printed flower curtains that matched several artificial flower arrangements (Participant observations, p. 6, lines 129-132).

Religious Icons in the Home

In the middle wall there were religious icons of the Catholic faith including two one by two feet large oval picture images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. These were located on each side of a two by three feet image of Jesus Christ being taken down from the cross. There were also some plastic flowers arranged around the icons. On the right side of the wall were four eight by ten inch school pictures of the children: Salma, the third grader, Eduardo the fourth grader, Selena, the kindergarten daughter, and their baby girl, Delia. On the left side of
the wall, were pictures of the parents’ wedding, the children’s baptism and their Holy
Communion. On the other side of the room, there was a three feet by four feet photographic
portrait of Mrs. Fernández’ mother. While referring to the photograph, Mrs. Fernández said,

“Esa es mi mamá cuando estaba joven y delgada” (That’s my mother when she
was young and thin).

On the same wall, left of the mother’s portrait, was an eight by ten inch picture of Salma
and her kindergarten certificate. Under the picture and certificate were the stereo and two of
Salma’s eighteen inch tall dolls. Salma pointed out,

“La muñeca con el vestido blanco es mi favorite” (The doll in the white dress is my
favorite).

Mrs. Fernández added,

“Esa fue la primera muñeca que le compramos a Salma” (It was the first doll we bought
for Salma).

On top of the stereo, was a two by three feet, orange and white crocheted cloth that Mrs.
Fernández described,

“Yo misma lo teji” (I crocheted that cloth myself).

Other decorations in the living room were twenty three knickknacks inside the four by six feet
china cabinet. On top of the china cabinet, to the right of the mother’s portrait was a collection of
ten dolls ranging from one to two feet tall, five of porcelain and ten plastic. On another four feet
by six feet china cabinet on the opposite wall there were 25 six-inch souvenirs, specimens for
those Mrs. Fernandez was commissioned to make for various family events like weddings,
baptisms, confirmations, and quinceañeras. Mrs. Fernández said,

“Yo hice la mayoría de los recuerditos” (I made most of those souvenirs myself).

Near the stereo, on the other side of the living room, and placed on top of the television were
Eduardo’s two reading medals and six twelve inch trophies that the children had received at
school (twenty, similarly designed twelve-inch tall children's trophies were also displayed throughout the room). Adjacent to the living room was a 10 by 20 feet kitchen that included a dining area, a three by five feet brown wooden table, and six matching chairs. The kitchen also included green painted wooden cabinets on top and below, also a refrigerator, a sink, and a stove. On the back wall there were a window and a windowed door leading to the back of the home with white curtains decorated with large red flowers. The walls were painted light green. The floor was covered with green colored marble designed linoleum. White linoleum with green squares and small black diamond shapes covered half of the living room floor (Participant observations, p. 6-7, lines 132-151).

The Other Rooms in the Mobile Home

I asked the children to guide me to the other rooms of their home. They agreed and they gave me a tour of the mobile home’s three bedrooms, one bathroom, and a laundry room. The first bedroom was the girls’ room. There were two beds where everyone slept during the cold nights next to a small electric heater because the family did not have a central heating system. The next room was Eduardo’s where he had a collection of 25 six to twelve inch cast iron trucks and cars. Eduardo showed me his ten reading medals and his ten, twelve inch trophies which he won at Parsons Elementary for having read a hundred books at various times. He also showed me his five nine by twelve inch drawings and paintings that were posted on the walls. Finally, he showed me a ten by twelve inch rubber mask that he used during Halloween, and asked me to take a picture of him wearing it. Next, Salma and Selena guided me to their parents’ bedroom. Lying on the five by seven feet bed was a 36-inch statue of Baby Jesus dressed in a green silk gown that was lying on a nine by twelve feet orange and white crocheted bedspread made by their mother. Mrs. Fernández who was in the kitchen came into the room to explain that her mother had given her the statue of Baby Jesus. Every year on Christmas Day, a lady friend was
invited to be the godmother and together they made a new gown for Baby Jesus. The girls then showed me their six twelve inch tall teddy bears and their 30 dolls which ranged in size from six to eighteen inches tall. The dolls covered the chest of drawers. Finally, the children showed me the laundry room with only a washing machine and the only bathroom in the home. Although the bathroom looked very clean, it did not have a toilet seat. All the rooms in the home were newly painted and appeared to be in good repair. The bedrooms, the hall, and half of the living room were carpeted with a tan carpet, while the bathroom, kitchen and half of the living room were covered with linoleum (Participant observations, pp. 8-9, lines 172-199).

The Books that Eduardo Had Written

When I inquired about the books they had in the house, Mr. Fernández said that the only books they had in the house, aside from the children’s school books were two books that Eduardo had written in the 3rd grade, when he was selected to participate in the Young Author’s school program. Mr. Fernández brought the two six by eight inch ten-page books to me. The two books were printed in English and illustrated by Eduardo were bound with hard covers. The first story told about his fear of a train after the family’s dog had been killed by a train near their previous home. Mr. Fernández explained that this event had prompted the family to move from that area of Parsons to their present home site. The second book was about Eduardo’s desire to travel to Mexico and visit his grandfather's farm. Later, Eduardo read the two books aloud to me in English with great intonation. When I asked him if he had written more books in the fourth grade he said,

“Todavía no” (No, not yet).

Although Eduardo read his books aloud in English, all our conversations were exclusively in Spanish (Participant Observations, pp. 7-8, lines 158-170).
The Importance of Family

The Parents’ Life in Mexico, as Children

As children, Mr. and Mrs. Fernández grew up in Hidalgo and Zacatecas, Mexico. They described the love and respect they held for their parents and how they appreciated what their parents had given them. While remarking about her childhood, Mrs. Fernández said,

“Lo que nuestros papas nos pudieran dar a mis hermanos y a mi, nos hacía felices” (Whatever our parents were able to give my brothers and sisters and me, made us happy).

Both Mr. and Mrs. Fernández agreed,

“Lo que recibimos fue principalmente el cariño de nuestros hermanos” (We received mainly their love and our brothers’ and sisters’ love),

Mr. Fernández continued,

“Llegamos a ser personas buenas y felices” (We grew up to become good and happy people).

Mr. Fernández said that being a good son helped him become a responsible man. He explained that his childhood experiences prepared him for life,

“Yo estaba a cargo de hacer los mandados y de ayudarles a mis padres en los quehaceres de la casa” (I was in charge of the errands and I helped my parents with chores).

Mr. Fernández believed that this was the reason that he learned to be responsible as a husband and as a father helping his wife and children,

“Yo creo que por esta razón aprendí a ser muy responsable ahora como esposo y como padre de mis hijos” (I believe that this is why I learned to be responsible now for my wife and as a father of my children.)

(Mr. & Mrs. Fernández Interviews, p. 2, lines 26-38).
The Family’s Life in the United States

In the United States, the Fernández enjoyed living close to most of their family members, who had immigrated to areas close to Parsons. Mr. Fernández said,

“Somos muy afortunados de poder vivir cerca de nuestra familia en Parsons, con la excepción de mis padres que viven en Hidalgo, Mexico” (We are very fortunate to live close to most of our family here in Parsons, with the exception of my parents who remain in Hidalgo, Mexico).

Working as fern cutters in Parsons, the Fernández work with their relatives, which enables them to eat together at lunch every day and to celebrate their birthdays and holidays during work breaks. Mrs. Fernández said,

“Nos mantenemos muy cerca de nuestra familia” (We are very close to each other).

Also, they hold a family reunion every Christmas at their home. Mrs. Fernández remembered,

“No había visto a mi hermanita, la mas chiquita por once anos, hasta que la vi cuando vino de Texas a visitarnos para navidad” (I had not seen my youngest sister in eleven years, until she came to visit us from Texas last Christmas).

(Participant Observations, p. 24, lines 529-542).

Ms. Fernandez’ Mother’s Illness

During the study, Mrs. Fernández’ mother had a stroke. Mrs. Fernández left immediately to be at her mother’s bedside at the nearby hospital, sacrificing her earning power for several days. She said being at her mother’s side was her most important obligation. She told her husband when she called from the hospital,

“Aquí estoy con mama en el hospital. Esta mejorcita” (I am at the hospital with mama, She is doing much better).

Mr. Fernández helped by going to work and taking care of their children before and after school and told his wife,

“No te preocupes, quedate con tu mamá todo el tiempo que sea necesario”
(Don’t worry, stay with your mother as long as necessary).
The Blessing of Being Parents

Mr. and Mrs. Fernández agreed that being parents was the most beautiful thing in life, and that they felt very proud of being their four children’s parents. Mrs. Fernández said, “Ser madre es una bendición de Dios. Es la más grande bendición que hay” (Being a mother, is a blessing from God. It’s the greatest blessing that there is).

As parents, Mrs. Fernández believes that it is their obligation, “Animar y apoyar a nuestros hijos en las buenas y en las malas” (To encourage and support our children in good times and in bad times).

As parents, they rejoiced when their children accomplished good deeds and explained that they were there to help them correct their mistakes, “A los padres, nos da gusto cuando nuestros hijos hacen cosas buenas y los ayudamos cuando ellos cometen un error” (Parents rejoice when their children do the right things and help them get up when they make a mistake).

The Fernández parents thought that the best things they could give their children was “Mucho amor” (lots of love), teach them “valores” (values), and help them develop “confianza en ellos mismos” (self confidence).

Mr. Fernandez explained that he hoped to help his children develop self-confidence and trust in their parents, “Los padres deben darle confianza a sus hijos para que ellos puedan venir con preguntas sobre la vida y poder tener la oportunidad de guiarlos hacia el bien y prevenirlos sobre lo que puede ser peligroso para ellos” (Parents need to develop their children’s trust in them, so that the children can come to them with questions about life and the parents can take the opportunity to guide them towards what is good and warn them about what could be dangerous for them).

One of Mr. Fernandez most difficult experiences as a father was when he had to leave his daughter Salma in kindergarten for the first time and she cried, “Papi, no me dejes! Te prometo hacerte caso” (Daddy, don’t leave me! I promise to obey you).
He described his best experience as a father,

“La satisfacción de ver crecer a mis hijos y verlos aprender en la escuela” (the satisfaction to see my children growing and learning in school).

Mrs. Fernández responded,

“Mi experiencia más difícil fue tener a mis hijos” (My most difficult experiences have been giving birth to my children).

Because she has had difficult deliveries, but the birth of her children has also been,

“La experiencia más hermosa” (The most beautiful experience).

(Parents’ Interviews, pp. 6-7, lines 123-158; pp. 9-10, lines 189-221).

**Children’s Cared for Each Other**

Their parents’ influence teaching to care for each other showed. Eduardo, the eldest, felt responsible for his three little sisters,

“Yo tengo que cuidar a mis hermanitas” (I have to take care of my sisters).

For example he went to get his sister, Selena from her classroom on her first day of school to be sure that she knew where to go at the end of the school day. He told Ms. Drury,

“No quiero que se pierda mi hermanita” (I don’t want my little sister to get lost).

He also guided Delia, his youngest sister through the slides and swings at the park,

“No quiero que se caiga” (I don’t want her to fall).

Eduardo taught new words to Selena, his kindergarten sister. Then when his oldest sister, Salma, was taken to the hospital because she was having trouble breathing, Eduardo told his teacher,

“I am worried about my sister Salma”.

Salma also took care of Baby Delia, the youngest sister and guided her like her mother. Also, just before Eduardo’s teacher-parent conference, Selena gave him a good luck kiss on the cheek. And Baby Delia only two years old was observed to hug her parents and siblings frequently

(Conversation with Ms. Drury, p. 1, lines 10-11; Eduardo’s Interviews, p. 4, lines 65-68; Ms.
The Fernández’ Work Ethics

The Parents’ Childhood

The Fernández parents have worked hard to earn a living. When they were younger in Mexico, Mr. Fernández, one of twelve children, worked on his parents small farm growing most of what they ate. However, because he was needed to work, he wasn’t able to attend school past the sixth grade. Mr. Fernández said,

“Me hubiera gustado ir a la secundaria, pero no se pudo” (I would have liked to have attended high school, but it was not possible).

Mrs. Fernández, one of eight children, followed her parents to various farm areas in Mexico, where as migrant laborers they worked far from her school. Because of their travels, she wasn’t able to receive an education past the second grade. Mrs. Fernández said,

“Tuvimos que ir a trabajar a los estados mexicanos de Durango, Coahuila y Sinaloa. Y por eso, aunque había empezado el tercer grado, no lo pude terminar” (We had to go to work in the Mexican states of Durango, Coahuila, and Sinaloa. And even though I had started third grade, I couldn’t finish it).

(Figures 3.3: Conversations with the Fernandez, p.1, lines 13-15).

Fern Cutting in Central Florida

In Parsons, the Fernández parents worked as fern cutters in local fern farms as often as they were needed. Every weekday morning at 7:00 AM, after they dropped off their four children at school, the parents went to work. After they picked up their children from school in the afternoon, they returned to work for a few more hours. When there was no work in any of the ferneries, the parents utilized their time to improve their home or searched for new ways to provide for their family. One morning Mr. Fernández said,
“Hoy no hay trabajo en el lugar donde trabajamos la mayor parte del tiempo. Sin embargo, hay tantas cosas que necesitamos arreglar en la casa, que está bien tener un poco de tiempo para hacer eso” (Today there is no work in the fernery where we work most of the time. However, there are so many things that need to be fixed in our house, that it’s O.K. to have a little time to do that)

(Conversations with the Fernandez, p. 2 lines 24-25; Parents’ Interviews; Participant Observations).

Additional Work

Mr. Fernández fixed cars and electrical appliances for extra income. Mr. Fernández said, “He aprendido experimentando” (I have learned by trial and error).

With their children’s help, the family raised some livestock to supplement their food needs. Mr. Fernández said,

“Salma les da de comer a las gallinas. Eduardo pone a los pollitos en una caja para protegerlos del frío” (Salma feeds the chickens. Eduardo places the chicks in a box to protect them from the cold weather).

Mrs. Fernández also worked fulltime cutting fern. However, to earn extra income, Mrs. Fernández made little craft souvenirs out of Styrofoam, ribbons, and plastic figures for “bautizos” (baptisms), “quinceañeras” (debutantes), ”primera comunion” ( first communions), “cumpleaños” (special birthdays), and “bodas” (weddings). Members of the community purchased her souvenirs and gave them to people who attended their celebrations. The children learned how to make them by observing their mother and they all helped her meet her deadlines. Mrs. Fernández said,

“Eduardo es el que más me ayuda” (Eduardo is the one who helps me the most).

Also he seemed to be the most artistic since the walls of the home were decorated largely with his artwork.

The Mother’s Additional Chores

Mrs. Fernandez did the laundry and remarked that,
“Me gusta que los niños vayan a la escuela limpios y bien arregladitos” (I like to have the children go to school clean and well dressed).

She cooked her children’s favorite dinners when the ingredients were available. She said,

“A Eduardo le gustan las quesadillas, a Salma le encanta el pastel y a Selena le gusta el pollo” (Eduardo likes quesadillas, Salma loves cake, and Selena likes chicken. I try to prepare those things whenever I can).

On her husband’s birthday, she got up at 2:00 a.m. to prepare a turkey, which they had raised. She had it slaughtered and baked it. Then, they took it to the fernery, so that they could celebrate with their extended family who worked with them. Mrs. Fernández said,

“Mi esposo y mi familia estaban muy contentos, así que el trabajo extra valió la pena” (My husband and my family were very happy, so the extra work was worth it).

Ms. Fernández also made birthday cakes for every family birthday and sent cookies occasionally to her children’s classes (Conversations with the Fernandez, pp.1-2, lines 13-18, 26-31; Mr. & Mrs. Fernandez Interviews, p. 4 , lines 64-75; Participant Observations, p. 24, lines 535-541).

**Eduardo’s Work Ethic**

Eduardo, the Fernandez’ oldest son, held his parents’ work ethic. He said,

“Mi papá y mi mamá son muy fuertes. También se cansan porque trabajan mucho. Yo les ayudo en los quehaceres y también les ayudo a recoger las cosas para que no este tan tirado y también limpio el patio para que no se vea feo. Después hago mi tarea, después vuelvo a ayudar más en los quehaceres” (My father and mother are very strong. They also get tired because they work a lot. I help them do house chores. I also help my parents by picking things up, so the house is not dirty. I also clean the front yard so it doesn’t look ugly. Later, I do my homework. And finally, I do more house chores).

The children worked hard at home and at school mirrored their parents’ examples (Eduardo’s Interviews, p. 1, lines 10-12).
The Fernandez Family’s Catholic Religious Practices

Devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe and Baby Jesus

The Fernández were Catholics following their parents and their grandparents’ religious traditions. In their mobile home, the Fernández’ had dedicated one section of the living room's wall to religious icons of the Catholic faith. Recently, Mr. Fernández showed me a new glass picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe illuminated by a fluorescent light that he intended to give to his wife for her birthday. He said,

“No la ponemos todavía, hasta que la bendiga el Padre” (We cannot hang it yet, until the Priest blesses it).

Mrs. Fernández told me about the celebration that they had in their church for the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12th. Mrs. Fernández said,

“Fuimos a misa y todo el día pusimos los discos de las canciones de la Virgen de Guadalupe” (We attended mass and we played the Virgin of Guadalupe’s music all day long).

Mrs. Fernández and her family were very devout to Baby Jesus. The three participating children often took turns hugging the Baby Jesus statue on Mrs. Fernandez’ bed. Mrs. Fernández explained,

“Su madrina y yo le estamos haciendo su vestidito al Nino Dios para navidad” (His godmother and I are sewing Baby Jesus’ little dress for Christmas).

During a recent visit, Mrs. Fernández showed me a video of the Christmas Day celebration when her whole family came to dress the statue of Baby Jesus with a new costume in the temporary nativity tent built in the front yard of their home. While they were watching the video, Mrs. Fernández pointed out all of her relatives who had attended (Conversations with the Fernandez, p. 2, lines 24-27; Participant Observations, p. 6, lines 132-136, pp. 8-9, lines 182-188).
Attending Mass on Sunday

On Sunday morning March 1st, the Fernández family attended mass at the local Parsons Catholic Church (St. Joseph’s Mission). Salma and Selena wore their long white dresses that had been made for them for their “Holy Communion” day, not long before. Eduardo wore a short sleeved light blue shirt and light blue pants. Baby Delia also wore a long white dress. Also, Mrs. Fernández was dressed in a black and pink pant suit and a pair of white high heel shoes. Mr. Fernández was wearing black pants and a short sleeve black shirt. The mass was delivered entirely in Spanish to a large congregation of Mexican immigrant families. The priest spoke loudly and the parishioners seemed to be very attentive. Sitting close to the altar, the Fernández family’s children quietly participated in the mass. Eduardo, Salma, and Selena listened attentively to the priest’s sermon as he compared humans to violins and stated that Jesus was the only one that could make music from us humans. Mr. Fernández took the church’s newsletter, written in Spanish, and spent a short time reading it to his family. After the mass, the children discussed the sermon with their parents. Photographs were taken of the family in front of the church, while Baby Delia played in the grass (Participant Observations, pp. 25-26, lines 563-579).

The Fernandez Parents’ Church Wedding Video

One evening the Fernández family showed me their church wedding video on their television. Mrs. Fernández explained that before they got married they had lived together for seven years. Mrs. Fernández explained,

“Cuando decidimos formar una familia no nos casamos por la iglesia porque no teníamos dinero” (When we decided to live together, we did not have any money to have a church wedding).

The Fernández’ did not have a place to live and had to live with her parents, Mr. Fernández said,
“Cuando les decimos a los niños que cuando decidimos vivir juntos no teníamos casa, ellos se ríen, porque gracias a Dios, ellos siempre han tenido un lugar propio donde vivir” (When we tell our children that when their mother and I decided to live together, we did not have a house, they laugh because thanks to God they have always lived in a home that belongs to us).

The reason why the Fernández’ got married was because Father Alfredo, the catholic priest for the Parsons area, convinced them to do so. Mrs. Fernández said with a smile,

“Nos casamos por la iglesia el 22 de diciembre de 2001” (We had a church wedding on December 22, 2001).

Their three children who were already born were in the wedding video. Eduardo carried the rings and Salma carried the kneeling cushions. While we watched the wedding video together, Salma and Selena asked playful rhetorical questions. Salma asked,

“Esa soy yo?” (Is that me?).

Her mother answered,

“Si, esa eres tu!” (Yes, that’s you!).

Selena continued,

“Es Eduardo ese?” (Is that Eduardo?).

Her mother responded,

“Si, ese es tu hermano” (Yes that’s your brother).

Selena asked,

“Quien es esa bebita?” (Who was that baby girl?).

Mrs. Fernández responded,

“Esa eres tu!” (That was you).

Selena continued,

“De quien es ese pastel?” (Whose cake is that?).

Mrs. Fernández continued responding,
“Es tu pastel porque cuando nosotros nos casamos a ti te bautizamos” (It’s yours because you were baptized on the same day we got married).

Then Mrs. Fernández pointed out,

“Ese es mi papá” (That’s my daddy).

She continued describing the attendees,

“Esa es mi mamá y esa es mi hermana” (That’s my mother and that’s my sister).

Then, she pointed to her brother in-law,

“Ese es mi cunado, con un parche en el ojo, porque unas substancias le cayeron en el ojo durante el trabajo” (That’s my brother-law wearing an eye patch because some chemicals got into his eye during work).

Also, Mr. Fernández asked,

“Ve a esa muchacha tomando fotografias? Porque después quedo paralítica cuando el techo de su trailer le cayo encima de la espalda durante el huracán Charlie” (Do you see that girl who is taking pictures? She became paraplegic when her trailer’s roof fell on her back during Hurricane Charlie).

Mr. Fernández continued pointing to the video and asked questions,

“Ve a ese senor sentado en la fila de enfrente? El murió de diabetes poco después de nuestra boda” (Do you see that man sitting on the front row? He died from diabetes a short while after our wedding).

Mr. Fernández remembered,

“Yo estaba tan cansado porque no dormí en toda la noche antes de la boda, porque como es costumbre en nuestro pueblo, tenemos que preparar barbacoa” (I was so tired the day of our wedding because I did not sleep during the night before. It is customary in our hometown that my friends and I are obligated to cook the wedding barbecue).

Mr. Fernández kept on remembering,

“Mis amigos y yo tuvimos que quitarle la piel a la vaca, sacarle los dentro, cortarla en pedazos y colocarla bajo la tierra para que se cociera lentamente…La carne estaba deliciosa….Es bueno tener amigos….” (First, we had to skin the cow, take all the innards out, cut it into pieces, and place it onto hot rocks under the ground where it could cook slowly….The meat was delicious…because we had many friends to help us).
Finally, Mrs. Fernández explained the groom’s and bride’s first wedding dance that was being shown in the video. Mrs. Fernández said giggling,

“El ya no me abraza como me abrazaba entonces” (He doesn’t embrace me anymore, the way he used to do then).

(Participant Observations, pp. 20-22, lines 447-483).

**Mrs. Fernandez’ Home Remedies**

Mrs. Fernández explained that she often treated her family with home made remedies that her grandmother had taught her when she was a child in Zacatecas, México. Mrs. Fernández said that during the previous week she had given Selena cinnamon tea with additives that cured her sore throat,

“El té de canela con limón y miel es bueno para el dolor de garganta” (Cinnamon tea with lime and honey is a good cure for a sore throat).

Then a while later, Ms. Fernández said she had given Salma onion tea because she had a strong cough,

“El té de cebolla con ajo y orégano es bueno para la tos” (Onion tea with garlic and oregano is good for a cough).

Also, at the end of the spring break Eduardo was complaining that he had a tummy ache. Mrs. Fernández had something to give him,

“Una cucharada de aceite de oliva” (a tablespoon of olive oil),

And she rubbed his tummy with

“Aceite calientito” (Warm oil).

By the next morning, Eduardo felt better. Another remedy that Mrs. Fernández utilized was peppermint tea for a person who was frightened or nervous,

“Es necesario darle té de hierbabuena” (It’s necessary to give them peppermint tea).
Finally, Mrs. Fernández said that when one of her children got ill, she gave them her home remedies for a day or two but if the child didn’t get better, she took them to the doctor. Fortunately, in many cases her children got well utilizing her remedies. Recently, Mrs. Fernández became interested in taking a nurse assistant training course at a nearby health center, because she had always wanted to become a nurse. However, the person in charge of the program told her,

“Si usted no tiene su numero del seguro social, no puede participar en el programa” (If you don’t have your social security card, you cannot participate).

Because Mrs. Fernandez is undocumented she could not register for the training program (Conversations with the Fernandez, pp. 2-3, lines 43-51; Participant Observations, pp. 19-20, lines 437-443).

**Family Entertainment**

Although, the Fernández parents worked hard to support their family, they also found time to make life enjoyable for their children. For example, they gave their children the toys that they (the parents) never had. Mr. Fernández said,

“Yo siempre quise una bicicleta, pero nunca la pude tener” (I always wanted to have a bicycle, but I could never have one).

For that reason, now each one of the children had a bike. Also, the family visited the Parsons public park often where every child took turns riding the swings, slides, and jungle Jims. Recently the family visited Disney World where they visited Cinderella’s castle, among others. Also, during the weekends, the children were taken to a nearby town to visit and play with their cousins and sometimes they and the extended family went out to dinner where they ate mostly hamburgers and Chinese food. During the weekdays, the family spent time together at home and played “A la pichada” (A combination of baseball and dodge ball, that Mrs. Fernández invented).
The family played together most afternoons in their front yard, and the children liked their times together. Eduardo, their oldest son said,

“Siento muy bonito cuando jugamos juntos ‘a la pichada’ porque después de trabajar tanto, mis padres hacen el tiempo para jugar con nosotros” (I feel great when we play ‘a la pichada’ together because even after all their hard work, my parents take the time to play with us).

(Conversations with the Fernandez, p. 4, lines 70-74; Participant Observations, pp. 13-14, lines 286-302).

**The Fernandez’ Relations with the Mexican and American Communities at Parsons**

**Relationships with the Mexican Community**

The Fernández parents had a close relationship with the Mexican community at Parsons. Besides meeting at church and at family parties, the Mexican community often met at the local office of the Farm Workers Association, where they shared their knowledge about work, immigration, small investments, school problems, and made informal loans to one another. The office was also an excellent place where members of the community met, laughed together, and talked about immigration and economic situations. Also on behalf of the community, the leading representative of the Farm Workers Association participated in the school district’s Latino Committee which met with the district’s school board and voiced the Mexican community’s complaints that often resulted in positive actions.

Also, the Fernández parents consulted with members of the community whenever they had any problems. For example, a few community members advised Mr. Fernandez what actions he should take when he had to appear in court because of a citation he had received for driving without a license (Since Mr. Fernandez is undocumented he cannot own a drivers’ license). Also, Mr. Fernández fixed some community members’ cars, and lent and borrowed money from them. Mrs. Fernández made holiday arts and crafts souvenirs for members of the community and contributed money to members of the community when they became ill and needed to go to the
hospital or when a collection was made to take the body of a person who had died to be buried in Mexico. Also the Fernandez contributed with food or money when the community celebrated, with a party, and whenever one of its members received permanent residence or U. S. citizenship (Extended Field Notes, p. 9, lines 195-203).

The Fernandez children enjoyed their participation in the Mexican culture and being American citizens. Selena said,

“Que bueno que hoy vamos a ir a una quinceañer”a (It’s great that today we are going to attend a quinceañera party).

Eduardo likes both, to be Mexican and American,

“Me gusta ser mexicano por mi familia que quiere vivir bien sin problemas y ser Americano porque puedo vivir en paz aquí y también sin problemas” (I like to be Mexican because of my family who wants to live well without problems and to be an American, because I can live here peacefully and also without problems).

Salma said about Mexico,

“Me gusta ser mexicana, pero no quiero ir a Mexico, solo hasta Texas” (I like being Mexican, but I don't want to go to Mexico, only up to Texas).

(Conversations with the Fernandez, p. 5, lines93-97; Eduardo’s Interviews, p. 5, lines 74-76; Salma’s Interviews, pp. 5-6, lines 75-89).

The Fernandez’ Relationships with the American Community

The Fernández family’s primary relationship with the American public were with those who lived within the Parsons area such as the people that they met at work, while shopping, or in association with their children at school. Mrs. Fernández spoke just a few English phrases such as Hello and How are you?, but mostly relied upon her children to translate for her and her husband whenever they spoke with members of the American community. Mr. Fernández had learned a few more English phrases and used more body language to communicate with Americans than his wife. Mr. Fernández said,
“Yo trato de hablar un poco de ingles, pero entiendo mucho” (I try to speak a little English, but I understand a lot).

(Conversations with the parents, 6, lines 13-15).

A close American friend

Also Mr. Fernández had been able to develop relationships with his employers because of his hard work and his dependability. For example, several years before, the Fernández parents worked, doing a variety of chores for Mr. Brice, an older American man with whom they eventually established a symbiotic relationship. After the Fernández’ cleared some land that Mr. Brice was preparing for sale, Mr. Brice in return, offered the Fernández’ a large mobile home in disrepair which he allowed them to live in rent free. Mrs. Fernández said,

“El Senor Brice es un senor muy bueno que apreciamos mucho” (Mr. Brice is a very nice man and whom we are very fond of).

When the Fernández’ couldn’t find work in other ferneries, Mr. Brice always gave them some work to do for him. As the Fernández’ and Mr. Brice’s families became closer friends, Mr. Brice gave them free of charge the mobile home that they had been living in and advised the Fernández’ to buy, at a good price, the large piece of land on which the mobile home was located. Mr. Fernández said,

“Gracias al senor Brice, hemos hecho buenas inversiones” (Thanks to Mr. Brice we have made good investments).

In addition to the Brices, the Fernández’ also knew many of the Parsons area’s American fernery owners and their wives whom they met at the Parsons Elementary School’s meetings (Participant Observations, pp. 18-19, lines 410-421).

American acquaintances at school

One evening when the Fernández family attended a school SAC meeting, an American lady of their acquaintance came to say hello to them and then commented,
“I congratulate you for your children’s good behavior during the meeting.”

During the following evening when the Fernández’ discussed both the SAC meeting and the American English speaking community, Mrs. Fernández said,

“Me gustaría que tuviéramos un convivio para sacar fondos para la escuela con los padres americanos y que cada familia trajera un platillo de su cultura” (I would like the school to organize a get together in which all parents, both Mexican and American bring a covered dish of food from their culture, with the purpose of raising funds for the school).

(Parents’ Interviews, pp. 13-20, lines 281-385).

Later, on a Saturday afternoon, some other favorable cultural relationships occurred between the Fernandez and several Americans they met, when the Fernández family visited a playground fifteen miles away from Parsons. While at the playground, Selena and Salma interacted with several American girls. They shared the rides, spoke to each other in English, and took turns riding the swings. Salma told the American girls,

“Now, it’s your turn.”

(Participant observations, p. 22, lines, 492-495).

**American acquaintance at the park**

Also at the same time, on another side of the playground, Mr. Fernández had a conversation with a middle aged American man who did not speak Spanish. Although Mr. Fernández spoke very little English, he drew a map of Mexico in the sand with a twig and showed the American man where his state of origin was located by saying in English,

“I am from here.”

Although they spoke very little in each other’s language, they managed to become friends. In summary, the literacy events observed were, viewing the symbolic decorations in the family’s home, the transportation of the children to and from school, the family during a home meal, the family playing games together, the family spending a Saturday together visiting friends, the
extended family, and eating out, the family attending several PTO, Sac, and Head Start school meeting, the parents going to the courthouse, watching the parents’ wedding video at home, the family at the city playground, watching the family’s Christmas video, the family at the school’s fund raising spaghetti dinner, and attending the church mass with the family. Also, I had the opportunity to watch the family dance at home. And I also observed the Young Authors’ party and an award ceremony at school (Extended Field Notes, p. 7-9, lines 143-188; Participant Observations, pp. 22-23, lines 484-515).

Research Question 2: What are the Mexican Immigrant Parents’ Notions of Educación and Literacy?

The Fernández Family’s Notion of “Educación”

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez’ Respect for their Parents

In Mexico the notion of education is known as “educación” which has a broader interpretation than the English term education. Educación, includes parental guidance designed to instill positive personality traits in their children. Mr. and Mrs. Fernández traced their notion of educación back to their youth. Mr. Fernández described their upbringing and how they grew up to become good and happy people because of their parents’ guidance. He said,

“Recibimos principalmente el cariño de nuestros padres y hermanos. Teníamos que ayudar a nuestros padres a trabajar todo el tiempo. También, yo estaba a cargo de mis hermanos y esa obligación me ayudó a aprender a ser responsable con mi esposa y mis hijos” (We received the love from our parents, brothers and sisters. We had to help our parents work all the time. Also, I was in charge of my brothers and sisters, and that responsibility helped me to learn to be responsible with my own wife and children).

Mrs. Fernández agreed with her husband that the best thing they could give their children was love and guidance to help them develop confidence in themselves, she said,

“Además de ayudarlos a desarrollar su auto-estima queremos enseñarles buenos valores” (Besides helping develop their self-esteem, we want to teach them good values).

The Fernández parents also have encouraged their children to continue to study in order to
achieve a better life for themselves (Parents’ Interviews, p. 2, lines 26-38; p. 7, lines 142-143).

**Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez Remembered their Formal Education**

Mr. Fernández remembered having limited elementary school education experiences in Mexico and expressed his feelings,

“Ir a la escuela es una de las experiencias más bonitas que uno puede tener en la vida; Como estudiante, yo sentí que tenia la libertad de expresar mis pensamientos y mis sentimientos. Allí fue donde yo aprendí a darle valor a las cosas que tenia, y lo que mis padres me habían dado. Fue la mejor época de mi vida, porque me di cuenta que la vida era mas que jugar y comer” (Attending school is one of the most beautiful experience that we can have in life. As a student… I felt I had the freedom to express my thoughts and my feelings. It is where I learned to value the things I had, and what my parents had given me. It was the best time in my life, because it was when I realized that life was more than playing and eating).

Mrs. Fernández’ opinion of school was,

“La escuela fue el lugar donde yo aprendí a leer y a escribir y fue bueno para mi, a pesar de que mis padres no me pudieron dar mucha education” (School was the place where I learned to read and write and it was good for me, even though my parents could not afford to give me a lot of education).

Mrs. Fernández continued saying,

“Yo solamente pude ir dos anos, pero disfrute mucho del tiempo que estuve en la escuela y sentí el cariño de mis maestros” (I just attended school for two years, but I loved the time that I went to school and I felt the love from my teachers)

(Parents’ interviews, p. 3, lines 52-68).

**The Fernandez Taught Good Manners to Their Children**

Also Mrs. Fernández told her children,

“Traten de ayudar a la gente que los necesite todo lo que puedan, porque tal vez más adelante ustedes puedas necesitar la ayuda de otras personas” (Helping other people is necessary because you may need other people to help you in the future).

The Fernández parents have also instilled good manners in their children which I observed during my visits to their home. Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez gave their children instructions,
“Saluda a la senora, Tráele una silla a la senora, Ofrecele jugo a la senora, Siéntate bien, Suénate la nariz, Siéntate bien” (Say hello to the Lady, Bring a chair for the Lady, Offer juice to the Lady, and also, Blow your nose, and Sit up straight).

Eduardo said that his parents told him to

“Siempre trata de aprender todo lo que puedas en la escuela porque el estudio te ayudará a obtener un mejor trabajo en el futuro” (Always try to learn as much as possible in school because studying will help you get a better job in the future)

(Parents’ interviews, p. 8, lines 159-161).

The Parents Taught Good Values to Their Children

Salma said that her parents always told her

“Que me porte bien, que estudie mucho y que haga todo lo que pueda para que me vaya bien en la escuela” (To behave and study hard, and to do her best in school in order to be successful).

Also, Mr. Fernández said,

“Nosotros les decimos a nuestros niños que sean buenos, que sean honestos, que ayuden al necesitado, al pobre, al enfermo y que sean leales a los amigos y que honren a la familia” (We tell our children to be good, honest, to help the needy, the poor, to be loyal to friends, and to honor the family).

The Fernández parents also taught their children by listening to philosophical reflections tapes about appreciation for parents and the value of virtues that they had previously listened to while working in the fields. (Parents’ Interviews, p. 3, lines 52-68; p. 7, lines, 142-146; Eduardo’s Interviews, p. 2, lines 17-18; Salma’s Interviews, pp. 2-3, lines 31-36).

The Parents Taught their Children to Respect Their Teachers

The Fernández parents had a great respect for teachers and were very appreciative of their children’s teachers’ efforts. Mr. Fernández said,

“Me gustaria que los maestros siguieran siendo tan buenos como han sido hasta ahora” (I would like to tell the teachers to continue being as good as they have been so far).

Also, Mr. Fernandez said,
“Los premios que reciben los niños en la escuela sirven para motivarlos y animarlos a que sigan aprendiendo” (The awards that the children receive at school help to motivate them and to encourage them to keep on learning).

Mr. Fernández also urged teachers,

“Que sigan dando lo major de ellos mismos para animar a los estudiantes a que continúen progresando” (To continue giving the best of themselves to encourage their students to continue to progress).

In addition, Mrs. Fernández said that they would like the school to know,

“Que ellos se dan cuenta de todo lo que hacen por sus hijos y por darnos importancia a los padres” (That they [the Fernández parents] appreciate everything the school is doing for their children and for respecting them as parents).

At the conclusion of the parent-teacher conferences, the Fernández parents urged their children to thank their teachers for their dedication to their education, as Mr. Fernández told Salma at the end of her parent/teacher conference,

“Que le vas a decir a tu maestra?” (What are you going to tell your teacher?).

And Salma said to Ms. Cross,

“Gracias por su ayuda en la practicas de la lectura” (Thank you for your help in reading and practice)

(Parents’ Interviews, pp. 3-4, lines 52-75; Ms. Cross Parent-teacher-student Conference, p. 11, line 238).

**Literacy at the Fernandez Home**

The Fernández parents’ notion of literacy was,

“Alfabetismo es saber leer y escribir” (Literacy is to know how to read and write).

The modes of literacy observed at the Fernández home were as follows:

**The Family’s Listening and Speaking Practices**

During their interviews and observations Mr. and Mrs. Fernández were articulate and had an extensive vocabulary in Spanish. An example of this is what Mr. Fernández said about the teachers and school,
“Yo estoy agradecido con los maestros que les han tocado a mis hijos. Los han ayudado bastante. Y a la escuela, pues más que nada, darles las gracias por todo lo que están haciendo por nosotros y tomarnos en cuenta. Y que desgraciadamente uno no hace nada por apoyar a la escuela….Que en realidad es lo que hace falta, de cooperar más con la escuela, para que la escuela salga adelante” (I am grateful for my children’s teachers because they have helped them a lot, but mostly I am grateful to the school, for all that they are doing for us and for considering our requests. However we don’t do enough to cooperate and support the school).

When the family was observed, it was evident that the children’s language discourse was limited because they answered to their parents with one word or short sentences. While, the Fernández family spoke only Spanish at home, only the Fernández parents utilized longer discourses and the children just listened to them. Although the children seemed to comprehend all that their parents said, most of the time they answered with only one or two Spanish words,

“Sí, No, No se, Después, Ahorita, Mañana, No puedo, No quiero” (Yes. No, I don’t know, later, now, tomorrow, I can’t, I don’t want).

Also during the interviews and phone conversations with the researcher, the children answered only briefly with no extended dialogue, without explaining their answer, and without giving many details. For example, over the spring vacation, I asked Salma, what had she done during the vacations, and she responded,

“Jugué” (I played).

When I asked her what else she had done, she answered,

“Vi una película” (I saw a movie).

Then, when I asked her, what movie she had seen, Salma thought for a minute and could not respond (Perhaps because she couldn’t translate what she had seen into Spanish). When I asked Eduardo the same question, he answered,

“Hice un proyecto” (I did a project).

When I asked him what kind of a project he had done, he responded in Spanish,
“Animales… nativos… como la pantera” (native… animals… like the panther),

But he could not explain any more, perhaps because this topic had not been discussed by his parents before and he was not familiar with related vocabulary. Later, when Eduardo’s teacher asked him how well he spoke Spanish, he answered,

“When I was in first and second grades, I knew more Spanish, when I was in third grade I forgot a little and now that I am in fourth grade I have forgotten more.”

However, when I asked Selena, the kindergartener, the same question, she answered,

“Fuimos al Walmart a comprar una lavadora. And then she continued by saying, y también tuvimos el cumpleaños de mi papa” (We went to Walmart to buy a washing machine and also we had my father’s birthday).

Selena spoke with more extensive discourses than her older siblings. The difference in schooling between Selena and Eduardo and Salma was that Selena had attended the bilingual Head Start School for several years and learned some English before attending kindergarten, while Eduardo and Salma had not attended the bilingual Head Start, they went straight to kindergarten without knowing how to speak any English. (Participant Observations, pp. 26-28, lines 582-592).

**The Family’s Reading Practices**

The Fernández family had only two books of their own at the beginning of the study. These were the two books that Eduardo wrote while he was in the third grade. However each of the children brought home an average of three books a day from their classroom library.

Although Mr. Fernández said he did not read to his children,

“Para que le voy a decir mentiras, no les leo a mis hijos” (I am not going to lie to you, I don’t read to my children).

However, he encouraged his children to read to him and to Mrs. Fernández, from the books they brought home from school for their homework (Participant observations, pp. 7-8, lines, 159-170).
Also every Sunday after church, Mr. & Mrs. Fernández read the Spanish language Catholic Church newsletters to their children. Also, Mrs. Fernández often attempted to read from the English language books her children brought home from school. She read to her children in Spanish and explained the pictures she saw to her children in Spanish. She explained,

“Yo les señalo los dibujos y les explico lo que esta pasando en el cuento, especialmente a la chiquita. También les explico a todos en español lo que yo creo que va a suceder en el cuento, porque yo no se leer en ingles” (I point to the illustrations and I explain what is happening in the pictures, especially with my little one. Also, I explain to all of them in Spanish what I think the story is about because I can’t read English).

Usually, the children did their homework which included reading at home. Selena had a kindergarten page to complete using the target letter she had studied at school. Salma did her 30 minutes of reading homework every day. And Eduardo read for pleasure for two to three hours a day in his room after he had completed his homework. Because they believed Eduardo enjoyed and understood what he read, Mr. and Mrs. Fernández encouraged him to read and didn’t allow his sisters to disturb him. Also they never asked Eduardo to comment about the books he had read. They felt that the reading awards he had received at school were sufficient evidence that he knew what he was reading. (Participant Observations, pp. 29-30, lines 593-600).

The Family’s Writing Practices

On Friday afternoons after they received their pay, Mr. and Mrs. Fernández went shopping. They wrote a grocery list of the items they needed to buy for the next week in Spanish,

“Papas, tomates, leche, jugo de naranja, arros [arroz], frijoles, mansanas [manzanas]…” (potatoes, tomatoes, milk, orange juice, rice, beans, apples…).

It was observed that they tried to pay attention to the correct spelling of the items they needed, but occasionally they made a few mistakes like “arros y mansanas” instead of [arroz y manzanas](rice and apples). Also, they wrote messages to the children’s teachers in Spanish, again being careful of their spelling. On one occasion, Ms. Rich, Eduardo’s teacher, asked me to
translate a message that Mrs. Fernández had written in the comment section of Eduardo’s report card,

“Le agradesco [agradezco] mucho todo lo que ase [hace] por mi hijo y por su dedicación [dedicación] a la educacion [educación]) de mi hijo” (I am very appreciative for what you do for my son).

In contrast, Eduardo, Salma, and Selena prefer to write in English. Eduardo said,

“Yo prefiero escribir en ingles porque no se muy bien escribir en español” (I prefer to write in English because I don’t know how to write in Spanish very well).

Salma said in Spanish without hesitation,

“En ingles” (In English).

Selena (just beginning to learn to write in English) nodded her head in agreement with Salma.

(Participant Observations, pp. 30-31, lines 601-602).

**The Children Maintained their Native Language While Learning English**

The family’s oral interactions were in Spanish and they wanted their children to speak Spanish in complete sentences. However, because some of the teachers told them that children should speak “English only”, it caused the parents to be confused about the importance of having their children maintain their native language. When their children, Eduardo, Salma, and Selena were younger, Mrs. Fernández taught them to speak Spanish their primary language, the same way that she had taught her Baby Delia. First, the mother modeled the sentence and the child repeated it,

“Este es un árbol, Este es un pájaro, Esta es una flor” (This is a tree. This is a bird. This is a flower).

And continued to compliment and correct the children at the appropriate time. Eduardo and Salma did not go to the bilingual Head Start School because their grandmother took care of them. Therefore they did not speak any English when they began kindergarten in Parsons Elementary. However, because Selena attended the bilingual Head Start School for several years
before she entered kindergarten, she practiced Spanish while she learned English during that time before she entered Parsons Elementary. But since the time Eduardo, Salma, and Selena had attended Parson Elementary School an English only school, they had grown accustomed to not answering in complete detailed Spanish sentences at home. Eduardo explained to his teacher during the teacher-parent’s conference,

“I used to speak better Spanish when I was in first and second grades, but in third and fourth grade, I am forgetting it and I speak it less well.”

The Fernández parents did not make a conscious effort to encourage their children to answer in complete sentences in Spanish, perhaps because they were very tired at the end of the day and did not have the energy to constantly model for their children. The children had a limited but functional vocabulary in Spanish. They understood everything the parents and the researcher said, but most of the time they answered with a brief response and more body language.

(Participant Observations, p13, lines 292-293).

**Eduardo Translated for his Parents**

Since he has become more English proficient, Eduardo has translated for his parents during many parent-teacher conferences and also has translated all the English messages the school had sent to their home. Mrs. Fernández said,

“A mi me gusta llevar a Eduardo para que me interprete, porque no siento que la secretaria me traduce todo lo que dice las maestros” (I like to take Eduardo to interpret for me because I don’t feel that the secretary tells me all that the teachers say).

Another example of Eduardo’s skill as an interpreter occurred when the Fernández family attended the school’s SAC meeting. When the family arrived home, Eduardo said,

“La escuela no paso porque los estudiantes no aprendieron” (The school did not pass the Annual Yearly Progress evaluation because the students did not learn)

(Conversations with Mrs. Fernández; Extended Field Notes, pp. 23-27, lines 495-598; Participant Observations, pp. 9-15, lines 200-515).
Research Question 3: How does the Family Participate in the School Life of its Children?

The Parents Assisted Children with their Homework

The Fernández parents encouraged their children to do their homework everyday and assisted them with it in any way they could. They explained math problems, urged them to check things over, or encouraged them emotionally (Mr. and Mrs. Fernández’ interviews). Mr. Fernández corrected his daughter’s math problems,

“A veces tengo que decirle, estos problemas no estan correctos y entonces le ayudo a corregirlos” (Sometimes, I have to tell her, these problems are not correct and then I help her to correct them).

Also, Mr. Fernández, advised his children,

“Concentrate cuando haces la tarea” (Concentrate while you are doing your homework).

Then, Mr. Fernández told a story about Eduardo when he had to do a homework assignment which he could not understand. Because he was almost in tears, his mother told him,

“Por que vas a llorar? Sigue buscando tus notas y trata de pensar sobre lo que tienes que hacer” (Why are you going to cry? Keep on looking through your notes and try to think about what you have to do).

Also, Mrs. Fernández said,

“Yo no le pude decir nada porque no se nada sobre ese tema. Yo solamente trate de animarlo” (I couldn’t tell him anything because I don’t know anything about that topic. I could only try to encourage him).

Eduardo kept telling his mother,

“Tengo que entregar el trabajo mañana” (I have to hand the project in tomorrow).

His mother then encouraged her son by telling him,

“Vamos a hacerlo, Hijo” (Let’s do it, son).

Finally, Eduardo was able to do his project because of his parents’ encouragement. (Parents’ Interviews, pp. 11-22, lines 228-473).
The Parents Received Their Children’s School Communications

Mr. and Mrs. Fernández reminded their children to hand deliver all the school’s notices that they received, to them. as soon as the school day ended . Mr. Fernández said,

“Un día Eduardo puso unos papeles en la silla y yo le pregunté de que son esos papeles? Eduardo me dijo, son mis pruebas que yo no pensé que te interesaba verlas. Yo le dije, si estoy interesado en verlas. Y desde ese día siempre me enseña todos los papeles” (One day Eduardo put some papers on the chair. So I asked him, “What are those papers about? Eduardo said, “They are my tests. I didn’t think you wanted to see them.” I answered, Yes, I am interested in seeing them. And ever since that day, he has shown me all of his papers).

Mrs. Fernández added,

“También cuando yo les pregunto, como les fue en la escuela? Ellos me dan todos los papeles para que yo los vea” (Also when I ask, “How was school today? They all give me all their school papers for me to look over).


The Parents Attended Their Children’s School Meetings

The Fernández parents have attended several general school meeting like the Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) and the School Advisory Council (SAC) meetings where they participated by giving their opinions. Also, they have attended every parent-teacher conference that they were called to, even if it meant that they had to shorten their working hours on that day. As a result of the conferences, they always tried to follow their children’s teacher’s recommendations on how their children could be helped to improve academically. Also, they always offered to contribute a food dish or volunteer to help clean the school as part of school fund raising activities or for any classroom activities. Mr. Fernández said,

“Hace falta, de cooperar mas con la escuela, para que la escuela salga adelante” (It’s necessary to contribute more to the school, so the school can be better).

(Mr. & Mrs. Fernández’ Interviews, p.18, lines 395-399).
Also, the Fernández parents liked to talk with members of the Mexican community and make suggestions to the school’s principal regarding how the community could improve Parsons Elementary School. Mr. Fernández was also very critical of himself and members of the Mexican community when they did not attend a school meeting and were unwilling to be involved in any school activities. He thought that the members of the community should encourage each other to attend meetings by telling them,

“Saben, no se les olvide que mañana es la junta. Es importante. Tenemos que motivar a la gente para que se junte y hablar” (You know, don’t forget that the meeting is tomorrow and it’s important to motivate the people to come and talk).

(Mrs. Fernández, Interviews, p. 15, lines 327-330).

Mrs. Fernández Prepared Food for Ms. Drury’s Culture Lessons

Ms. Drury, Selena’s kindergarten teacher, often asked the children’s parents to send a covered dish, cookies, candies, or paper decorations which they prepared and which reflected their culture. One evening, Selena told her mother,

“Mama, necesito llevar un plato de comida a mi clase manana” (Mamma, I need to take a covered dish to my class tomorrow).

Mrs. Fernández responded,

“Hija, hoy no tengo nada de comida para preparar, pero dile a tu maestra que la semana que viene si le mando” (Daughter, today I don’t have any food to prepare, but tell your teacher that next week, I will send her something).

The teacher utilized these contributions to initiate a dialog about Mexican food and crafts. One day Mexican candy sprinkled with chili powder (a delicacy in Mexico) was sent but was rejected by the American children. Ms. Drury explained to her class of Mexican and American children that many children from the Mexican culture enjoy adding chili flavor to many foods including candy. However, the American culture usually does not add chili flavor to candy (Parents’ Interviews, p. 16, lines 348-355; Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p. 7, lines 144-149).
Research Question 4: What are the Teachers’ Educational Philosophies, Their Literacy Beliefs, and Practices?

Teachers’ Educational Philosophies

Teachers’ Philosophy of Education

The teachers’ philosophies of education were basically similar. All the teachers agreed that,

“All children can learn.”

However, because each teacher was primarily concerned with her own grade level and each had varied backgrounds and teaching experiences, their philosophies differed somewhat. Ms. Drury, Selena’s kindergarten teacher was a caregiver of several foster children in her home and had taught for a total of 14 years. The first ten years, as a pre-kindergarten teacher in Rhode Island and the last four years as a kindergarten teacher at Parsons Elementary. Her philosophy of education was,

“I believe that as long as teachers have high expectations for children, they can meet them. Children are limited by what adults think of them. I try to challenge children and give them my encouragement to always go beyond what they think they can do.”

Also, Ms. Drury thinks that children are sponges, the more you give them, the more they can take and grow with. Concerned primarily with her kindergarten grade level, Ms. Drury said,

“I think that the more fun you make learning, the earlier you can teach them that learning is fun, and the more likely they are to carry that into the upper grades when learning is not as much fun, when it’s more standardized and testing oriented.”

That’s why, she said she had chosen to teach the younger grades when she went into teaching.

(Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p. 1, lines 13-21).

Ms. Cross an older, married third grade teacher of Salma, had taught primary special education at Parsons Elementary for eight years and two years as a third grade teacher. Her philosophy of education was that,
“All children can succeed if given the opportunity, but they will not always accomplish their goals at the same time. But if they are given the opportunity and the tools, they will accomplish, maybe not at the timeline we think they should learn things by, but eventually they will learn” (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, p.1, lines 6-16).

Ms. Rich, a first year teacher of Eduardo’s fourth grade gifted class, was a single parent of a younger daughter attending Parsons Elementary School. Ms. Rich’s philosophy of education was that,

“All children can learn and if you are teaching them and they are not comprehending, and they are not applying what they have learned, then you are not teaching. “

Mrs. Rich continued and said,

“We need to find a way to teach children that what they are learning is applicable and can be used in other ways; we need to find the way to make it connect for them.”

She also would like,

“To get back to basics, to the core curriculum, to what they really need to learn, and to what they are mentally prepared for.”

Ms. Rich also believed that both teachers and students have responsibility in the teaching and learning process,

“Definitely students have to put forth the effort and I’ll put forth the effort too.”

(Ms. Rich’s Interviews, p. 2, lines 28-33).

Teachers’ Literacy Beliefs

Ms. Drury, a kindergarten teacher said,

“Literacy is the most important thing. Children have to be exposed to it in many different ways and print has to be meaningful to children.”

Also, Ms. Drury believed that it was necessary,

“To make literacy a hands-on concept in order to make it meaningful and help students have a better understanding of it.”

Ms. Drury, however, took
“A phonetically teaching approach, when it comes to literacy. Also she believed that reading aloud is one of the most important concepts in literacy.”

(Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p.1, lines 25-28).

Ms. Cross, the third grade teacher was concerned with improving the Mexican students’ oral and reading skills. She said that,

“Without talking to other English language speaking children, they will not develop oral language skills and without developing reading skills, the students will not be able to understand the concepts of math and science.”

Ms. Cross thought that

“Reading is the building block, then comes oral language and writing, and if they master these they can learn anything.”

(Ms. Cross’ Interviews, pp.1-2, lines 20-30).

Ms. Rich, the fourth grade teacher believed that literacy was,

“Achieving a high level of reading comprehension, being able to answer high level thinking questions and expressing clearly ideas in writing with main ideas and supporting details.”

Also, Ms. Rich believed that

“Every learning experience is important because it gets compiled and is going to represent the students’ educational self.”

She thought that it was important that students understand what the teacher was teaching

(Extended Field Notes, p. 24, lines 514-517).

**Teachers’ Literacy Practices**

**Reasons for Becoming Teachers**

Ms. Drury’s reasons for becoming a teacher was that she thought,

“Teaching would be fun, particularly in kindergarten because at this level, learning is not testing oriented.”
Ms. Cross decided to initially become a special learning disabilities teacher and later thought that she could use her expertise in teaching special students to help Mexican immigrant students who were English language learners,

“I specialized in learning disabilities because I had a handicapped niece that I wanted to help. Later, I thought that special learning disabilities experience and my reading endorsement would be useful with Mexican immigrant children” (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, p.1, lines 6-9).

Ms. Rich decided to become a teacher because,

“I have a daughter in school, and being a single parent, I wanted to have the same schedule as my daughter and besides, I like children” (Extended Field notes, p. 24, lines 511-513).

**Importance of Their Curriculum and Standards**

Ms. Cross and Ms. Rich worked diligently to follow their curriculum that was designed to help their students to reach the Sunshine State Standards, a level of academic accomplishment set by the Florida Department of Education. However, they were especially concerned with preparing their students to score well on the FCAT tests. During Ms. Cross’ and Ms. Rich’s classroom observations, I observed the teachers providing a review of the language arts reading and writing benchmarks for Grades 3-5. However, because they covered many topics in a fast succession, it seemed difficult for the students to follow. During Ms. Cross’ classroom observations she taught the concepts comparing and contrasting, main idea, details, plot, fiction and non-fiction literature, and Greek suffixes. During Ms. Rich’s classroom observations she asked students two-part critical questions, predicting, extending sentences by adding adjectives, adverbs, students utilized prescribed FCAT worksheets for to fill out individually at their seats.

Then, Ms. Rich guided FCAT worksheets revision, and also the students practiced individually their FCAT writing worksheets to a prompt. Finally, the students took turns practicing for the
FCAT test on the computer (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations, p.2, 45-47; Ms. Rich’s Classroom Observations, p. 6, lines 152-155).

**Reasons for Teaching Mexican Immigrant Students**

Ms. Drury expressed that Mexican children’s experiences were interesting to her. She added,

“I also think it is wonderful that these children have an exposure to two different cultures and that these kids can speak two different languages at such an early age.”

Ms. Cross stated,

“Mexican parents trust us enormously. They leave it to us to do the job and they do their job at home. The children obey because they have so much respect for their parents and their family is so strong. That is one of the best things about my students. I know that strength in the homes carries into the classroom.”

Ms. Rich confided that she was excited about teaching Mexican students because,

“Some teachers told her that teaching Mexican immigrant students could be easy. I thought I could help these children because of my experience with my mother from Korea who had a very different linguistic and cultural background than the other English-speaking parents.”

And Ms. Rich continued,

“I heard that these Mexican students were essentially hard-working and respectful and more appreciative of their teachers, and even if they are poor, they are worth working for.”

(Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p. 9, lines 200-209; Ms. Cross’ interview, p. 13, lines 276-282; Ms. Rich’s Interviews, p.1, lines 8-10).

**Challenges Teaching Mexican Immigrant Students**

Ms. Drury thought it was discouraging that many parents did not sign the students’ folders with their children’s class work that she had sent home. She explained,

“That’s discouraging, because even if it’s to see what I sent home or to put it on the refrigerator. Parents to give importance to what the children are doing. I would like to see more parental involvement” (Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p. 9, lines 196-198).
Ms. Cross described her biggest problems teaching Mexican students,

“The thing that I struggle with most is how to make the children aware of what to watch for while reading. I recently asked a child what is a carpenter?, and she said, someone who lays carpets. You have to be constantly on guard to make sure that they understand. But at the same time, we have a curriculum to follow and we are required to teach so quickly, that I know that not every child understands what is going on. That is one of the biggest problems that I see facing us” (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, p. 2, lines 40-45).

Ms. Rich said that after she had accepted the job to teach her fourth grade gifted students, other fellow teachers told her that Mexican students did not do well on the State tests. The possibility of poor testing made Ms. Rich have second thoughts about teaching Mexican students. She feared that she would not be rehired if her students did poorly on the FCAT test. Then she added,

“Even though, the non-English speaking students are given more time on the FCAT test, my Mexican students, all speak English and do not qualify for the testing accommodations. My Mexican students were placed in my gifted class because they were overachievers, not because they had passed the intelligence test and other requirements asked of my American students. However, my class is expected to perform as a gifted class earning the highest FCAT scores, even though my class is comprised of both American and Mexican students” (Rich’s Interviews, pp. 4-5, lines 82-93).

What Teachers Think About Parental Involvement

Ms. Drury said that she doesn’t meet with parents when the students are doing well because their parents were on a tight schedule at the fernery, even using the kids to help cut fern on weekends. She said,

“It’s a shame that (parents) have to choose between taking time to be with their children or working extra time to earn money to pay for their children’s basic needs.”

Also, Ms. Drury referred to Mexican parents when she said that she believed that in the Parsons area,

“Once they get established, they have to work even harder to keep what they have. Mexican families are very hard workers and they instill that in their children. Whether it’s a behavioral issue or an academic issue, parents are usually supportive because they want their children to do well.”
Ms. Drury said that she tried to invite parents to come to her class, but she didn’t get much of a response. However, when the Fernandez parents attempted to make an appointment for a parent-teacher-student conference with her, Ms. Drury was not available. Ms. Drury’s opinion of Ms. Fernandez was that,

“Selena’s mom does a wonderful job signing her daughter’s 100 book challenge form and giving her child what she needs” (Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p. 9, lines 200-206).

Ms. Cross said that it was difficult to communicate with parents,

“Communicating with Mexican parents is one of my biggest problems which I don’t know how to solve. When parents requested a conference, I have to call an interpreter to schedule their conference. I have to show the interpreter my schedule and then we have to work it out with the parents and even though the school has an office secretary, several ESOL teachers and the migrant advocate who translate, parent-teacher conferences, it is still difficult to schedule conferences.”

When Ms. Cross called parents to ask for their support,

“They are more than willing to discipline their child, or encourage their child to read, or to help them with their math.”

Usually, she could see immediate results in the positive direction. However, a problem that Ms. Cross saw was that,

“A lot of parents have achieved a very low level education either here or in Mexico and they don’t feel confident about working with their child.”

Ms. Cross believed that parents feel insecure because they don’t speak English. Although she tried to provide a bridge,

“It is very complicated because of the communication problem, and utilizing our resources is difficult.”

Ms. Cross believed that education is important for Mexican parents. She realized that,

“It cannot take the place of an important home survival task, such as when some children have to stay home to take care of their younger siblings” (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, pp.7-8, lines 156-173).
Finally, Ms. Rich said that she is not very much into parental involvement in class because she doesn’t have time to do that. But she thinks that,

“Eduardo’s parents are doing a great job, because they always respond when I request their presence when I have a problem” (Rich’s Interviews, p. 6, line 135).

Research Question 5: What Specific Methodologies and Strategies do Teachers use to Teach Literacy to Immigrant Students?

Teachers’ Literacy Methodologies

Utilizing an Ecological Eclectic Literacy Model

Ms. Drury said,

“I teach literacy to my predominantly Mexican immigrant kindergarten class, by teaching them phonics, beginning by letter sounds and sound games.”

Also, she read aloud to the children so that they can hear the change in the tone of her voice. In this manner, Ms. Drury models the English language to the English language learners. By changing her tone when she reads she identifies the importance of each word in the story and by dramatizing the story the students become more interested. Also, she explained the importance of conducting whole group instruction, repeating the sounds, so students can remember them.

And she also tried,

“To improve my Mexican students’ oral language by having them communicate with English speaking children and matching the kids that could read sentences with the non-readers.” (Ms. Drury’s Interviews, pp. 2-5, lines 46-116).

Ms. Cross believed that in a third grade class,

“Literacy should be developed by teaching phonics in a whole language way and [that] the more students read, the better readers they will be.”

Also, Ms. Cross believed that if children mastered oral language, reading and writing, they could continue learning everything. Also, she worked with small reading student groups,

“To detect difficulties with pronouncing words, I utilize whole language to immerse students into a variety of reading materials to increase their vocabulary, particularly in science, social studies, non-fiction books, and magazines.”
In each book she had available for students to read she inserted,

“A chart of questions that the students could find answers to in the books and where they found an answer, they place a sticky note there so they can read the answers later, this way they don’t have to do a lot of writing.”

While I did not observe any writing activities in Ms. Cross’ classroom observations, at a later time, she sent me a copy of Salma’s story at the Young Authors Program. (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, pp. 4-6, lines 80-132).

Utilizing a Direct Instruction Model

Ms. Rich said that she taught literacy to her gifted fourth grade class in the following manner,

“I start my lessons by letting my students know exactly what I want them to learn, so that they can plan how to connect the skill. When students are reading, they get into small groups, and discuss things that they don’t understand.”

Then Ms. Rich gave them strategies, to break down words and to look at the sentence around the word that they didn’t understand. Also, she emphasized thinking things through. Afterwards, “they review it and try to make it into a little lesson. If Ms. Rich was converting a unit of measurement from a bigger to a smaller measurement, students had to write, down and fill in the sentence so that it sticks in their heads. Finally, she tried to make it fun and easier for them to digest (Ms. Rich’s Interviews, pp. 2-4, lines 40-66).

Teachers’ Strategies with Mexican Immigrant Students

Inclusion of Mexican Culture into the Curriculum

Ms. Drury tried to incorporate Mexican culture into the curriculum as much as possible in her kindergarten class,

“By using stories concerning Hispanic cultures, although not Mexican specifically. Also we compared how different cultures celebrate the holidays and invited parents to share their experiences, photographs or other Mexican family projects.”
Ms. Drury also sent home, Christmas tree decorations and turkey shapes for the family to decorate. Selena brought back her Christmas and turkey shapes which were decorated by the family with bright colors similar to those found on Mexican objects. (Ms. Drury’s Interviews, pp. 6-7, lines 131-151).

Ms. Cross tried to make things interesting for Mexican immigrant students by using,

“A gimmick or a hook technique that makes them remember a grammar concept.”

Then, she reinforced the concepts,

“With lots of practice and paper work going on in her work centers” (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, pp. 2-4, lines 36-38, and 92).

Utilization of Spanish Vocabulary

Ms. Rich compared the Spanish vocabulary with the English vocabulary. An example was the English word “carnivorous” or a meat eating animal, and the Spanish word “carne” which means meat also. Ms. Rich said that she utilized the comparison of Spanish verbs in the present participle that ends in “ando” like “cantando” which means singing, with the English progressive tenses ending in “ing,” like singing. Other strategies that Ms. Rich utilized were trying to incorporate vocabulary and to explain it by using visuals, and to utilize the buddy method, where two students cooperated on a project. Finally, in addition to reading stories written in English, Ms. Rich’s class had read some Spanish literature stories this year (Ms. Rich’s Parent-teacher-student Conference, p. 3, lines 50-57).
Research Question 6: How do Teachers and Students Interact in the Teaching/Learning Process?

Teachers’ and Students’ Interactions in the Teaching/Learning Process

Ms. Drury’s Relations with Selena

At the beginning of the study during the orientation meeting with the teachers, Ms. Drury, the kindergarten teacher’s initial remark concerning Selena was about Selena’s clothes rather than with her academic performance. She commented that,

“Selena’s clothes did not match.”

In addition, during Ms. Drury’s first classroom observation she did not seem to notice that Selena for most of the class time sat quietly in a corner without interacting with the other students. However, later when Ms. Drury approached and complimented her because she was the first one to be seated in her place, she said,

“Selena knows where her place is.”

Selena responded and immediately became more involved in class. During the second classroom observation when the class was studying the letter “V,” Selena raised her hand to give a word with the letter “V,” she said,

“Ms. Drury, I know! Oval has the “v” sound!”

Ms. Drury responded,

“Good job, Selena! I am glad that you recognized that oval had the “v” sound in the middle of the word.”

From then on, Selena began to show her seat work to her teacher often, and Ms. Drury responded with a compliment that made Selena smile. (Ms. Drury’s Classroom Observations # 2, p. 4, lines 95-97).

During another class observation, when the kindergarten students attempted to write a story about the ‘tooth fairy,’ Selena showed her work to Ms. Drury, but Ms. Drury did not seem
to understand it. Then Selena came over to me (the researcher) and showed me her story. She had written about ‘el ratón’ (the mouse). (At that moment, I realized that in Mexico, children who have lost a tooth expect ‘the mouse’ instead of the ‘tooth fairy’ to place money under their pillow in exchanged for their tooth). I encouraged Selena to explain the cultural difference to the teacher. But Selena answered shyly,

“No, yo no puedo. Dígale usted” (No, I can’t do it. You tell her).

When I explained Selena’s story to the teacher, the teacher asked the class,

“Who has received money from ‘el ratón’ in return for their lost tooth?”

All the Mexican children raised their hands and laughed. From then on Ms. Drury seemed to understand Selena better and encouraged her to continue writing her stories.

Also, Ms. Drury sent Selena to show off her work to the other kindergarten teacher next door who congratulated her. Because of her teacher’s recent attention and support, Selena appeared to be gaining self-confidence every day. In addition, Selena began sounding the words and writing more utilizing at first invented spelling which was encouraged by the teacher. Later however, Selena told her teacher,

“I want to write it the way it is supposed to be, inferring that she was ready to write with correctly spelled words” (Ms. Drury Classroom Observations # 3, p. 6, lines 139-148).

Also, the next day when Ms. Drury asked questions about the story that she had read to the class the day before, Selena was the only student that was able to explain the story accurately to her class. Ms. Drury said,

“Selena did a good job remembering the story.”

In response, Selena’s self-esteem seemed to increase because of her teacher’s encouraging words. Selena became more involved in her class and her academic progress increased. Selena
also continued to learn the letters of the alphabet and became more confident of her writing skills. Soon after, Ms. Drury said,

“I have selected Selena as one of the two students who will represent my class at the school’s Young Authors program this year.”

Two children are selected from each class as program participants. They received special training and were guided to write and illustrate an original story that later was bound professionally into a ten-page book (Ms. Drury’s Classroom Observations # 4, p. 8, lines 215-216).

Ms. Cross’ Relations with Salma

During her first classroom observation, Ms Cross, the third grade teacher, reprimanded Salma several times, saying,

“Salma, pay attention! Focus! Sit up straight!”

However at this time, the researcher observed that Salma and several other students were seated in their assigned seats with their backs to the teacher and to the blackboard, causing the teacher to be in a position where she could not see Salma adequately. However, soon after Salma was observed matching three word definitions correctly,

“Delightful means very happy. Tender means easy to chew. And reread means to read again.”

Also, Salma answered a question about the plot of Little Red Riding Hood story,

“The wolf had tried to eat the Little Red Riding Hood” (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations # 1, p. 2, lines 37-41).

Later, when the teacher assigned homework which required students to transfer words from cursive handwriting to print, some of the students said they did not know how to do it. However, Salma was the only student to notice that on the next page of the same text there were illustrations that taught how to transfer cursive handwritten words to printed words. Ms. Cross
thanked Salma for informing the class that they could follow the transcriptions samples on that page (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations #3, p. 6, lines 156-159).

The following day at the end of the Classroom observation # 4, Ms. Cross told me that she was thinking of retaining Salma and asked me to set an appointment for a parent-teacher conference the next day at the end of school with Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez to discuss Salma’s being retained (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations # 4, p. 8, lines 212-235).

Then, the next day in the morning, I had the opportunity to listen to Salma reading “Lon Popo,” the Chinese version written in English of “Little Red Riding Hood.” Salma was reading with her partner, Ashley. Salma read well and dramatized the story with good intonation. Salma also invented a reading and answering game with Ashley. Salma said,

“If you or I get the answer right according to the back of the book, we keep on answering the questions until we get one answer wrong.”

Ashley agreed to the game and they play successfully for ten minutes (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observation # 5, p. 9, lines 251-255).

However, although Salma was observed to be progressing well academically (and not as Ms. Cross had perceived her), during their parent-teacher conference Mrs. Cross told Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez (while Salma was present),

Salma is not as intelligent as her brother Eduardo, or as self-motivated, or as independent. Ms. Cross had taught Eduardo the year before and had chosen him to be the “Young Author” of her class. During a conversation with the researcher, Ms. Cross said that she had the suspicion that Salma had taken things form the classroom, but she had no evidence to support her belief (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations, p. 4, lines 120-123).

Also, before the first parent-teacher conference, Ms. Cross asked the researcher to inform Salma’s parents that,
“If Salma did not pass the FCAT, she was going to repeat the third grade.”

Then, during the first parent-teacher conference between Ms. Cross, Mrs. Fernández and Salma, Ms. Cross told Salma that one of the reasons she was at risk of failing was because whenever she chose books from the classroom library to be read at home, she chose very easy books, instead of picking books that were on her reading level. In response, Salma told Ms. Cross,

“I thought I could choose any book I wanted to read.”

Also, Ms. Cross repeated several times that she thought,

“Salma had a serious problem not understanding that Walt Disney was the man that Disney World was named after.”

Also later in the parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Fernandez told Ms. Cross that she had taught Salma the multiplication tables at home. However, in response Ms. Cross commented that Mrs. Fernandez could not teach Salma (because of her second grade education). The researcher explained to Ms. Cross that Ms. Fernandez had a lot of knowledge from her life experience that she could teach her children. Then, after Salma completed a six weeks of reading intervention program, Ms. Cross told Salma that she had improved 100% in her reading achievement and asked Salma,

“Do you feel that you are a very different person from the person you were before?”

Unexpectedly, Salma answered,

“No, I am the same person” (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations # 5 [Parent-teacher Conference], p. 10, lines 288-308).

**Ms. Rich’s Relations with Eduardo**

During Ms. Rich’s fourth grade classroom observations, the class was preparing for the upcoming FCAT test. During the first classroom observation when Eduardo attempted to answer Ms. Rich’s questions. Ms. Rich said,

“Eduardo, answer the question.”
Eduardo had difficulty giving answers to two-part critical thinking questions and answered with hesitation. Ms. Rich said,

“I don’t see that at all, Eduardo. We need to be aware of the question and answer every bit of it.” “Finish? You need to go back to the text. Take your time” (Ms. Rich’s Classroom Observations #1, p. 2, lines 25-31).

At the end of the class, Ms. Rich and I discussed Eduardo’s reading achievement. Ms. Rich said that,

“Eduardo is the student who had read the most books in my class. He is an amazing boy. He is very intelligent. He got the highest score in the FCAT grammar practice test in the class (91%).”

Ms. Rich stated that Eduardo was,

“Reading all the time, even sometimes while on line going to the cafeteria or to special areas.”

However, Ms. Rich also stated that,

“Eduardo doesn’t not seem to reflect on his reading because he has difficulty retelling the story and answering questions about the story’s characters and other implicit information.”

Also, Ms. Rich was not sure if Eduardo comprehended everything he read,

“Because he has difficulty expressing his ideas clearly both orally and in writing” (Ms. Rich’s Classroom Observations #2, p. 4, lines 106-113).

During another classroom observation during guided reading when Eduardo was trying to answer a question, Ms. Rich said,

“Oh, no! Eduardo where did you get that?”

Ms. Rich asked Eduardo a question concerning the plot of a story he had just read. She said,

“You have to predict who took the CD player’s batteries, Eduardo!”

Eduardo did not know the answer and started biting his nails. (Ms. Rich’s Classroom Observations #4, p.8, lines 199-204).
The Children Respected their Teachers

During the classroom observations, the Fernandez children were very polite and respectful toward their teachers. As Ms. Cross indicated,

“Having respect for their teachers is one of the greatest attributes these children have” (Ms. Cross’ Interviews, p. 13, lines 279-281).

The Fernandez children were also respectful of their teachers’ opinions and they looked to their teachers for approval. Also at home, the Fernandez children always referred to their teachers in a loving way. Eduardo said about Ms. Rich,

“Ella es una buena persona y también es bonita” (She is a nice person. And she is also pretty) (Eduardo’s Interviews).

Selena said that Ms. Drury,

“Mi maestra es buena” (My teacher is good) (Selena’s Interviews, p. 6, line 137).

Finally, Salma said with emphasis about Ms. Cross [from a girl who never emphasized anything],

“Mi maestra es bien Buena” (My teacher is very very good) (Salma’s Interviews, p. 11, line 164).

When I shared Salma’s comments with Ms. Cross, she said,

“Really? I never would have imagined that!” (Extended Field Notes, p. 25, lines 529-530).

Research Question 7: How do Home and School Literacy Practices Influence the Students’ Construction of Knowledge?

How Selena and Ms. Drury Constructed Knowledge

Ms. Drury has taught Selena emergent literacy utilizing an ecological reading method that utilized phonics at the very beginning and later word recognition instruction in a whole language environment. Also, Ms. Drury taught phonics and sight words to her students in meaningful context, which provided a print rich classroom environment that shared oral and
written personal narratives, journal writing every day, and reading aloud daily to her students, using familiar books, read-alongs and sing-alongs. Ms. Drury also said that Selena was an emergent reader who could sound most of the words she tried to read and had learned most of her sight words. As Selena expressed,

“I know all my sight words but one.”

Also, Selena liked to read books,

“Me gusta leer libros con muchas fotos. Cuando los libros tienen pocas palabras puedo leer mejor. Pero a veces hay palabras que no se” (I like to read books with lots of pictures. When books have few words I can learn them better. But sometimes there are words that I don’t know).

During classroom observations, Selena was attempting to read some additional books that were in her class by sounding the words that she did not understand. She wrote stories that could be understood by children her age. Ms. Drury said that “

“Selena just loves to read and write stories in her free time, that’s why I selected Selena as one of the two students, representing my class at the school’s Young Authors project where one of her stories would be printed and bound into a book” (Ms. Drury’s Interviews, pp. 4-5, lines 92-116).

Selena’s ESOL teacher who met with her twice a week for 45 minutes said that, Selena is a very good student who is doing extremely well in the English Language Learning Program, an oral language development system. Also, Selena is a leader who expresses herself very well in English and reads sight words well (Informal conversation with the ESOL teacher). Ms. Drury thought that the only thing that Selena needed in order to continue to be successful in literacy at this level is to continue writing and sharing her stories with her family. Selena said she would like to be an animal or a person doctor when she grew up,

“Quiero ser doctor de animales y cuando no puedan respirar ponerles algo para que respiren y también a la gente quiero que respiren mejor” (I want to be a doctor. When some animals are not breathing I put on something to help them breathe. Also to the people, I want to help them
breathe better (Her sister Salma recently was taken to the hospital because she could not breathe one night) (Selena’s Interviews, p. 7, lines 165-167).

**How Salma and Ms. Cross Constructed Knowledge**

Ms. Cross also utilized a balanced reading method with Salma and her third grade classmates. According to Ms. Cross her class is at a point where,

> “Phonics are brought up into the picture when they are needed, but otherwise a whole language instruction method is used.”

This approach is in agreement with most of reading researchers (Cummins, 2001; Pearson, 2004). During classroom observations, Salma read fluently, answered questions about the readings, and negotiated meaning effectively. She also asked and answered questions of her reading partner. Salma said,

> “Me gusta leer los libros de mi clase” (I like to read my classroom’s books).

Salma also felt that she had learned to write better this year because,

> “He aprendido más porque antes no sabia como escribir las letras” (I have learned more, because before, I didn’t know how to write the letters). (Salma’s Interviews, p. 4, line 52; p.15, lines 253-254).

One day, Salma described what she had read at school to her father. She said,

> “Fíjate, papá que hace muchos anos había dinosaurios con la boca de barredora que comian mucho” (Daddy, a long time ago there were dinosaurs with a vacuum cleaner mouth that ate a lot) (Participant Observations, p. 32, lines 603-608).

When I shared with Ms. Cross about Salma sharing the dinosaur knowledge with her dad, she was impressed (Conversations with Ms. Cross).

**How Eduardo and Ms. Rich Constructed Knowledge**

Eduardo loved to read freely. He said,

> “Me gusta leer libros con muchas palabras para aprender a leer mas acerca de cosas diferentes” (I like to read books with lots of words and to learn to read more about different things) (Eduardo’s Interviews, p. 3, lines 35-37).

Ms. Rich said that he is,
“The student in my class who has read the most number of book sections. He has read 1,200 fifteen minutes reading sections.”

But also Ms. Rich had a doubt that perhaps,

“He is just reading many books to win awards. Eduardo also received the class’ highest FCAT pre-test score in grammar, a 91%.”

However, Ms. Rich reminded Eduardo that he was in a gifted class without having qualified for it so he had to work much harder to maintain his status in the class. (Ms. Rich’s Classroom Observations, #2, p. 4, lines 106-113). Ms. Rich perceived Eduardo as

“Acting rambunctious at times, and having language articulation problems. It is evident when he was asked critical thinking questions, he cannot think clearly as he searches for the proper English words.”

Ms. Rich also was critical of Eduardo’s writing because she detected organizational problems in his writing, even though he had great ideas,

“Eduardo doesn’t write so great, because he stubbornly wants to put the elements he wants in the story. However, he was willing to revise his story ten, or twenty times, or as many times as she had requested” (Ms. Rich’s Interviews, p.6, lines 120-122).

However, Eduardo said he liked to write,

“Me gusta escribir acerca de cuando mis primos y tíos vienen a visitarnos para celebrar navidad juntos. También me gusta escribir de los regalos que ellos nos traen. También me gusta escribir sobre las cosas buenas que me han pasado y las cosas que he recibido de mi familia” (I like to write about my cousins, uncles and aunts when they visit us to celebrate Christmas together. Also, I like to write about the gifts they bring us, the good things that have happened to me, and the things that I have received from my family).

Also, Eduardo discussed his future,

“Yo creo que cuando crezca me gustaría ser pintor y ganar mucho dinero con mis cuadros (I think that when I grow up, I would like to be an artist and paint a lot and earn money for my paintings)” (Eduardo’s Interviews, p.3, lines 46-49; p. 16, line 253).

Ms. Rich said that other teachers have pointed to Eduardo and said,

“Look at his face. He’s always looks worried.”
And the teachers continued by saying to Ms. Rich that she should not encourage him to go to college because possibly he could not take the pressure (Ms. Rich’s Interviews, p. 8, lines 169-174).

How the Parents, Teachers, and Children Constructed Knowledge

Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences

Since the Fernández parents desired their children to succeed in school, they requested a parent teacher conference with each of their children’s teachers to ask their advice about what they could do to help their children improve academically. Although Ms. Drury was unable to meet with the parents for the conference, she requested that the researcher conveyed to the parents what they could do to help. In reference to Selena, Mrs. Drury said that

“Although Selena is doing well, she could do better. Mrs. Fernández did a wonderful job acknowledging and signing Selena’s 100 book challenge and it gives her what Selena needs. Also, Selena just loves to read and that her parents should continue to give her the encouragement to read and to write stories during her free time, and to give Selena the pencils and crayons and papers to write and illustrate stories with, because I think she has a lot inside of her.”

However, Ms. Drury recommended that the Fernández’ work with Selena to help her express her Young Author’s story better,

“It takes a little bit to get it out of her. But if they can encourage her and let her read to them and let her share, she will improve” (Ms. Drury’s Interviews, p.10, lines 213-221).

The Fernández’ responded by buying Selena the writing and drawing materials that she needed and they also encouraged her to prepare for the Young Authors program by urging Eduardo, her brother, to help her write her story. As a result, Selena worked harder and improved academically at school (Conversations with the Fernández, p. 5, lines 104-107).
Ms. Cross’ First Parent-Teacher-Student Conference

Salma was in danger of being retained in third grade

Ms. Cross and the Fernández’ had two parent-teacher conferences where they discussed Salma’s academic progress and utilized the researcher as translator at both times. During the first conference, Ms. Fernández and Salma met with Ms. Cross who explained that the reason for the meeting was to inform Mrs. Fernández that Salma was in danger of not passing the FCAT and therefore in danger of not being promoted to the fourth grade. Ms. Fernández responded by asking Ms. Cross’ advice as to how she could help Salma pass the FCAT tests.

Plan for Salma to improve her reading comprehension

Ms. Cross said that Salma needed to read for 30 minutes each day at home. And, she also suggested that Salma should discuss the books she had read in class with her brother, Eduardo, who had read the same books the year before when he was Ms. Cross’ student. Also Ms. Cross said that she was going to change Salma’s classroom seating arrangement, so that she would be facing Ms. Cross and the front of the room. (Ms. Cross Classroom Observations # 5, p. 10, lines 288-308). Then Ms. Fernández requested the researcher to tutor Salma, (which I did every day for a week). A few days later, Ms. Cross informed the Fernández’ that during a Child Study Team meeting, Salma’s academic progress was discussed, and it was decided that Salma was to receive reading intervention assistance instead of her present ESOL services because she had passed the IDEA Basic English Test (Conversations with Ms. Cross).

Ms. Cross’ Second Parent-Teacher-Student Conference

Salma’s great improvement

About six weeks later, Mr. and Mrs. Fernández had a second parent-teacher meeting with Ms. Cross where they inquired if Salma had improved in her reading skills. Ms. Cross said,
“Salma has made a 100% improvement…. When the researcher came into the picture and focused on Salma and then when we switched her to the reading interventions program. She became motivated. Because, she has made great improvement, I can only think that it’s because of the attention that has been focused on her. Also, she is really trying harder than ever.”

*Salma was chosen for the Young Authors Program.* Ms. Cross informed the Fernández’ that Salma was going to be one of the Young Author representatives from her class and that if she passed the FCAT test, perhaps she could spend her summer being involved in some kind of group activity like the Girl Scouts where she would have the opportunity to learn to speak English better by interacting more with American girls her age.

**Ms. Cross encouraged Salma to go to college**

Ms. Cross said that because of her academic improvement, she was definitely college material. The Fernandez parents responded that they would do their best to help her attend college. Salma looked very happy.

**Ms. Cross has many strict rules in her classroom**

At the end of the parent-teacher-student conference, Salma asked for a piece of candy from Ms. Cross’ reward jar, because she usually gave a piece of candy to students when they had accomplished something special. Instead Ms. Cross said,

“Salma, you know that I don’t give candy when students ask for it.”

Her remarks were followed by a moment of silence, so Ms. Cross took out a toy treasure chest and said,

“I am going to give a little prize to each of the Fernandez children for their good behavior during the meeting.”

Selena, Baby Delia, and Eduardo ran to pick up their prize. However, Salma stayed behind quietly until Mrs. Fernandez urged her to pick something (Ms. Cross’ Parent-teacher-student Conference, pp. 1-10, lines 5-246).
Ms. Rich’s Parent-Teacher-Student Conference

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Fernández met with Ms. Rich, Eduardo’s fourth grade teacher. Although they thought that Eduardo was doing well based on the many reading awards and medals he had received, they were interested in finding out how else they could help him academically. Also present at the conference was the researcher who served as translator.

Eduardo being a good student, but having an academic problem

Ms. Rich said,

“I am very proud of Eduardo. He just got another award today for his reading. He is very very bright, but he has to learn to articulate better, which means that he has to be able to choose words better.”

Then Ms. Rich attempted to demonstrate Eduardo’s difficulty by saying,

“Remember, instead of saying migrant, you said pioneer… we were talking about a person who goes from place to place. But you did not connect the word to the thought.”

In response Mrs. Fernandez explained Eduardo’s use of the word. She said that,

“En la casa usamos la palabra ‘pionero’ en relación a ‘peon’ y también relacionamos la palabra pionero a trabajador migrante” (At home we use the word ‘pionero’ in relation to ‘peon’ (the worker) and we also relate the word ‘pionero’ to migrant worker).

Therefore, Mrs. Fernandez believed that Eduardo confused the word “pioneer” for “pionero” a term that the family gives to a migrant. When Ms. Rich asked the parents if Eduardo had problems expressing himself in Spanish. Mr. Fernández replied, “

“Nosotros entendemos todo lo que dice en español” (We understand everything that he says in Spanish).

Brainstorming to find strategies to help Eduardo improve his reading comprehension

Mr. Fernández wondered if Ms. Rich was implying that Eduardo needed to take a Spanish course. Instead, Ms. Rich suggested that the parents should teach Eduardo to learn more Spanish. She said,
“Most of the Spanish words spoken are Latin rooted anyway. So that if he understands the prefixes, he can very much look at a word and comprehend what it’s saying. Also, one of the other things he can do to increase his vocabulary in English is that you can work with him to increase his vocabulary in Spanish first. You know, there are easy words in Spanish like the word “fácil” which in Spanish means easy which is related to “facile” in English taken from Latin.”

Ms. Rich also suggested that Eduardo tried to learn a couple of vocabulary words a day, (and if his parents helped) he should have a bigger vocabulary by the end of the summer.”

She also asked the parents to encourage Eduardo to utilize harder word synonyms for easy words and to also encourage him to talk often by asking him questions. Mr. Fernández responded,

“No se porque no habla en la escuela, porque en la casa si. Yo le pregunto de qué se trata la película? Como va la historia? Que es lo que va a pasar? Y el nos dice” (I don’t know why he doesn’t explain things in school because at home he tells us when we ask him, What is the movie about? What is going on in the movie? And what is going to happen in the future).

Then, Mr. Fernández suggested,

“Cuando esta leyendo no lo interrumpimos en su lectura, solo cuando tenemos que hacer algo de la familia. Pero de ahora en adelante creo que vamos a tratar de hacerle ese tipo de preguntas” (When he is reading we don’t interrupt his reading, unless we have to do something with the family. But from now on, I think we are going to ask him those kind of questions).

Ms. Rich showed the Fernandez a booklet and said,

“I got this booklet about the hierarchy of questions from the gifted class. It goes through the levels of difficulty of thinking. And on the first level are simple questions…. Next level would be compare and contrast.”

Referring to the highest comprehension level, Ms. Rich asked Eduardo,

“What’s the main idea of the whole Harry Potter movie, Eduardo?” (Eduardo tried to answer…He was thinking….).

Ms. Rich said to the parents,

“Did you see how long it took him to answer this question? When he gives a high comprehension answer to the question, the processing that’s taking place in his mind is
building his intelligence. Every time he makes these connections in his head, the message is moved faster and he creates a new connection.…”

Mrs. Fernández interjected,

“Porque en la casa cuando Eduardo está viendo telenovelas en la televisión también contesta a preguntas difíciles acerca de los personajes que les hacemos” (At home, when Eduardo is watching Mexican soap operas on televisión, he also answers more difficult questions about the characters that we ask him about).

Ms. Rich responded,

“So you know those are some of the things he can do at home. He has to work harder….to increase his vocabulary and making those connections faster.”

*Ms. Rich shares a personal experience to help Eduardo.* Referring to Eduardo’s need to increase his vocabulary, Ms. Rich told the Fernandez about a reading problem she had experienced sometimes,

“When I am reading and I got distracted and I lost the thread of the story. Then, when I realize it, I go back and read the passage again. I think this may happen to Eduardo sometimes, like me, he reads and doesn’t understand the story but keeps on reading. He has to become aware of when he has lost the story’s meaning and stop and go back.”

The solutions that Ms. Rich suggests are that Eduardo can look up the words he doesn’t understand in the dictionary or break down these known words into smaller words that he understands. Finally, Ms. Rich gave Eduardo a book and explained the book to his parents,

“It’s a book with Spanish word exercises that could help Eduardo learn academic English words during the summer.”

Ms. Rich seemed convinced that if Eduardo understood what the words mean in the stories he could succeed in making high comprehension connections.

**Eduardo is college material**

Then as the conference was concluding, Ms. Rich advised the Fernández’ parents that Eduardo should go to College and she explained some of the various kinds of financial aid available after he graduates from high school. In response, Mr. Fernandez said,
“Si Eduardo tiene interés en estudiar en la universidad, nosotros haremos todo lo que sea posible por apoyarlo” (If Eduardo wants to study at the university, we will do everything that we can to support him in this endeavor). (Ms. Rich’s Parent-teacher-student Conference, pp. 1-13, lines 1-273).

Accomplishments Achieved as a Result of the Parent-Teacher-Student Conferences

Several things pertaining to the Fernández children’s academic achievement were accomplished during the teacher-parent-student conferences. Primarily, the parents were made aware of how they could help their children. Although, Ms. Drury was not able to meet with the Fernández family, the message that she sent with the researcher disclosed the things that the parents could do for Selena which resulted in the eventual positive effects on Selena’s motivation and parental help. Ms. Cross’ parent-teacher conferences resulted first in the parents being informed of Salma’s risk of being retained. However, when she began to receive help from the reading intervention program, her parents, and the tutoring by the researcher, her initiative increased. And she made academic improvement. The teacher reported that she felt that Salma would perform well on the FCAT tests and recommended that Salma participate in the Girl Scouts. Finally, in the case of Ms. Rich’s parent-teacher conference with the Fernández, the teacher informed the parents of Eduardo’s difficulty with oral expression, and a need to increase his vocabulary in English and Spanish. The Fernandez parents consented to help Eduardo overcome what Ms. Rich perceived as Eduardo’s problems, because based on their concept of educación they believed that in order for their son to succeed that had to follow teacher’s instructions. Also, appreciating Ms. Rich’s efforts, Eduardo’s parents agreed to support him in any way they could so that one day he could be able to attend college.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the literacy practices of a Mexican immigrant family, their three elementary school aged children, and children’s teachers. The family’s socialization practices and the teachers’ educational practices were also described to provide a contextual background and to explain how the children constructed meaning from them. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the findings, to describe the theoretical and practical implications of this study, and to provide suggestions for further study.

Summary of the Findings

Literacy Practices of the Mexican Immigrant Family

Creating a stable life for the family in Parsons

Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez’ literacies were based primarily on their early family life. As poor farm laborers in Mexico in their youth, they had few luxuries. However, they had a close-knit family life where they were taught educación, a code of literacy, which was to work hard, help each other, and show respect for their parents and others. Mr. Fernandez, one of twelve children, who worked to sustain his family’s meager farm, was unable to earn an education beyond the sixth grade. Mrs. Fernandez, the oldest child in a family of ten migrant farm laborers, moved often living in sub-standard housing supplied by the farm owners. She did not acquire an education beyond the second grade. However, now living in Parsons, Florida the couple have chosen to work as farm laborers, cutting floral fern year around in the local ferneries. Because the Fernandez’ no longer need to move to find employment, they have created stability for themselves and for their children (Riley, 2002). They presently own a large reconstructed mobile home on a large lot in a quiet part of town (Riley, 2002).
Symbolic representations in the family’s home

The observations of the dwelling reflected the family’s literacies. The walls were covered with photographs of the children, awards, and artwork (Tenery, 2005; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2005). Photographs of the extended family and of the parents when they were married were also visible. In the center of one wall, there was an area dedicated to religious icons that reflected the family’s catholic religion (Tenery, 2005; Coady, in press). Throughout the home there were the daughters’ dolls, the son’s miniature cars, and various examples of the mother’s crafts products which she and her children produced to sell to the community (Moll et al., 2005).

Parents taught their children to be industrious

The father spent much of his time, repairing the family’s home and vehicles and raising livestock which he used to supplement the family’s food supply. Both parents were unselfish in spending time and effort so that they could provide a good life for their family. In return, the children learned their parents’ educación: To be hard working, cooperative and to be respectful of their parents at home and of their teachers at school (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Moll et al., 2005). Their teachers’ comments confirmed the children’s strengths such as respectfulness, politeness, hard working and that they admired their students’ parents’ guidance (Teachers’ Interviews).

The family’s conceptions of “educación” and literacy

The concept of educación that the parents promoted was inherited from their culture and taught to them by their parents. Teaching educación included teaching children to be good, well-mannered people who are honest, industrious, and school oriented. A person with educación is described a good, well-mannered person who is honest, loyal, sincere, truthful, industrious at school, and oriented toward achieving a successful career (Browning-Aiken, 2005; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). The Fernandez parents’ concept of educación strongly emphasized ethical
behavior. They expressed that having respect for other people was the most important thing they could teach their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Tenery, 2005; Valdes, 1996)

The Fernandez believed in life long learning

The Fernandez family’s concept of literacy “knowing how to read and write in their native language,” was the traditional view of literacy (Street, 1995). Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez showed their eagerness to continue learning when they recently showed their interest in reading a book about the history of Mexico. Also, they were observed to listen carefully and to show interest in what their children had learned at school. One example of their interest in learning was seen when Mrs. Fernandez tried to register for classes to become a nurse’s aid. Unfortunately she was unable to do so because of her undocumented status (Tenery, 2005).

Parental involvement with the school

When the Fernandez’ drove their children to and from school, they often stopped to talk to school personnel concerning school procedures. The Fernandez often contributed food and other things that the school needed and attended fund raising activities. When their children’s teachers called them for assistance, they always attended the parent-teacher conferences that the teachers had requested (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; White, 2005). Also, the Fernandez family frequently participated in parental activities at the school, such as Parent-Teachers Organization (PTO), the School Advisory Council (SAC) meetings, and other school activities such as spaghetti dinner fund raising programs and eating breakfast with their children on the school’s “Eat with your children day (Delgado-Gaitan 2004). However, the Fernandez’ did not know enough about how the school system worked. They were unacquainted with the school’s discourse, and did not know enough English. Thus, they interacted cautiously with the teachers and school personnel, and kept their distance, some teachers perceived them as not caring about their children’s education (Valdes, 1996). Fortunately, as observed during parent-teacher conferences between
teachers, parents, and students these meetings allowed them to understand each other better
(Amanti, 2005). For example, the positive conferences that took place between Ms. Cross and
Salma and Ms. Rich and Eduardo and their parents, Mr. & Mrs. Fernandez.

The Teachers’ Literacy Practices

Teaching the Curriculum

The three participant teachers’ literacies were based primarily on teaching their
curriculums to their class and hoping to prepare them adequately to pass the state’s FCAT tests
(Peabody, 2005). Because Parsons Elementary School is presently experiencing a negative
academic status on the federal Annual Yearly Progress report (No Child Left Behind Act of
2001), Ms. Cross, the third grade teacher believed that she had to hurry to include all the
curriculum before the FCAT test was given. She hurried although she believed that some children
were unable to grasp all that they should. She said that she did not have time to help each child
individually.

Preparing Students for the State Test

Ms. Rich, the fourth grade teacher, was worried because she was a first year teacher
without tenure and her evaluation was going to be based primarily on her students’ FCAT test
scores. Unfortunately she had been told by other teachers that Mexican students traditionally did
not do well on the FCAT test. Because both teachers felt rushed to satisfy their curriculum
demands, they misdiagnosed their participant students’ needs. Perhaps, Ms. Drury, the
kindergarten teacher, was not concerned with preparing her students to pass the FCAT test,
because kindergarteners are not required to take the test. She chose not to help Selena during the
first class observation.
The Teachers Improved their Perceptions of the Children during the Study

Ms. Drury was observed ignoring Selena during the first class observation when Selena experienced some shyness and did not want to cooperate with her classmates. Perhaps another reason why the teachers misdiagnosed the participant children was that they were applying “the deficit theory” (Coleman, 1990). This theory is evident among many educators. According to researchers some educators assume that minority (Mexican) people are unable to learn adequately from others’ efforts (Peabody, 2005). Gonzalez et al. (2005) described the change in attitudes and behaviors among teachers when they become involved in learning the literacy practices of their Mexican immigrant students. Through training, the teachers acquired a better understanding of their students’ literacy practices which allowed the teachers to understand, appreciate and accept their Mexican immigrant students more (Gonzales et al., 2005). Among those changes that Amanti (2005) expressed was a change in the participant teachers in the “funds of knowledge”. The specific example of this circumstance in this study was when the teacher learned that her lack of understanding was due to culturally embedded knowledge, like the “mouse” rather than the “tooth fairy” who gives money for a loose tooth according to the Mexican folklore (Ms. Drury’s Classroom Observations).

The Teachers’ Literacy Methodologies

An ecological balanced approach

All of the participant teachers in Parsons Elementary utilized an ecological balanced approach to literacy, a combination of whole language and phonics whenever needed, which has been recommended by most reading scholars (Crafton, 1991; Cummins, 2001; Ornstein & Sinatra, 2005; Pearson, 2004). However, their methodology was geared toward the native English speakers who comprised 24% of the school’s population, while the majority Mexican immigrant student population’s (76%) literacies were not considered and they were expected to
achieve grades at the same level as the English speaking children. The participating children (ELLs) were initially enrolled in the ESOL program to help them acquire Basic English language social skills. However during the study, only Selena’s ESOL classes continued. In the middle of the study, Salma passed the IDEA test and was allowed to transfer from the ESOL to a more advanced reading interventions program. Although both Salma and Eduardo were no longer enrolled in ESOL, they still were in the process of developing their English academic language skills. This process typically takes from 5 to 10 years provided that there is native language support. This process takes even longer for students of an English immersion school such as Parsons Elementary School (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

**English academic language development**

The participant teachers did not indicate that they were aware of the need to continue helping the children in their progress toward English academic language acquisition after the students had completed their ESOL training. Thomas & Collier (1997) recommended that teachers take a four component process approach to help their students acquire English academic language development, including, sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive processes. For example, the sociocultural process takes into consideration individual variables such as self-esteem, anxiety, and the literacy practices of the students. The linguistic process includes the oral and written systems of the English language across all domains. The academic development process includes the vocabulary necessary for learning language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies vocabulary for each grade. The cognitive process includes a knowledge-based progressive thinking development (Ovando & Collier, 1998). To continue developing English academic language and to become good readers, capable of comprehension, students need to master
“Sophisticated vocabulary, complex linguistic materials and discourse structure” (Cummins, 2001, p. 92).

And to feel ownership of the English language by being creative with its utilization (Snow, 2002).

**The Teachers’ Strategies with Mexican Students**

In kindergarten, Ms. Drury said she utilized her students’ cultures by comparing the ways that American children and Mexican immigrant children celebrated holidays so that she could inspire the students to write their own family stories. In the third and fourth grades, Ms. Cross and Ms. Rich said they tried to utilize Spanish to facilitate the learning of the English academic language in which they said both were derived from Greco-Latin words as well as their pre-fixes and suffixes (Cummins, 2001). However, it was observed that when the Spanish vocabulary was introduced, the words were used out of context. Thus if the students were unfamiliar with a particular Spanish term and experienced difficulties, this could have made the participants feel less capable of utilizing Spanish to facilitate their learning of English. Ovando & Collier (1998) suggested that teachers of English language learners should plan their lessons to include their students’ literacy practices or previous knowledge so that it can lead to the discovery of new knowledge through interactive tasks. For example, including the students’ home literacy practices in the classroom curriculum like the “funds of knowledge” project would represent “bona fide” resources for classroom teaching and learning (Moll, 2005, p. 277). Amanti (2005) gave a testimonial on what it meant to her when she visited her students’ homes in her participation in the “funds of knowledge” research.

“Through home visits we become real people to each other…. The impact on personal relationships in the educational setting goes unrecognized. I go out of my way for students whose homes I have visited” (pp. 139-140).
Teachers’ and Children’s Construction of Knowledge in the Classroom

Besides teacher’s methodology, Cummins (2001) explained that the image the teacher conveys to the students is

“Who they (the students) are in the teacher’s eyes and what the teachers believe the students are capable of becoming” (p. 21).

The participant children were eager to learn and cooperate with their teachers (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004). However, during the interactions between the teachers and the participant students, it was evident that at first, the teachers’ reactions were not positive.

Ms. Drury and Selena

Ms. Drury seemed to ignore Selena when she was first observed, later, Ms. Drury began to urge Selena, in a pleasant way to join her classmates. However when Ms. Drury recognized Selena’s shyness, she chose to initiate an important positive action to encourage her to participate. Selena responded by showing a new interest in learning.

Ms. Cross and Salma

In the case of Ms. Cross, Salma’s third grade teacher, because she was in a rush to cover her curriculum, it appeared that she didn’t have time to get to know her students. During the first observation, Salma and several other students were sitting at their desks with their backs to Ms. Cross and the board. Ms. Cross was observed reprimanding Salma by saying “Pay attention!” “Focus!” and “Sit up straight!” But during the study, Ms. Cross later corrected her mistake by providing Salma with a chair and desk that faced her and the board. During the time that Salma was seated incorrectly with her back to her teacher, Ms. Cross sent Salma’s parents several notes accusing Salma of “being a day dreamer” and “not paying attention in class” (Ms. Cross’ Classroom Observations, p. lines 37-41; Ms. Cross’ Parent-teacher-student Conference, p.1, lines 6-7).
Later, Salma passed the ESOL test and was placed in the more advanced reading interventions program. Ms. Cross didn’t admit she had misdiagnosed Salma’s intellectual potential. Instead, Ms. Cross credited Salma’s motivation as being new because of the recent school interventions she had been experiencing.

“When the researcher came into the picture and focused on Salma and then we switched her to Dr. Carter (the reading interventions teacher), she has probably made more improvement in the last six weeks than during the whole beginning of the year. Because she is really, really motivated now, it can do it for her.”

Later however, in a separate conversation with Dr. Carter, she added that,

“Salma had received 26 Harcourt Intervention program lessons correlated with Ms. Cross’ lessons. These lessons included phonics skills, vocabulary words, fluency, comprehension skills, main idea, details, facts and opinion, compare and contrast, and summarizing. Then finally we tied everything together.”

During later class observations, Salma appeared to have considerably more self-confidence and academic skills since her seat was changed. In addition, Salma had been chosen by Ms. Cross to represent her class as one of the two participants to write original stories for the Young Authors program, a much-honored award. Unfortunately, in the most recent classroom observation, the researcher discovered that half of Ms. Cross’ students (nine) were still seated with their backs to Ms. Cross and to the board. Placing students with their backs to the teacher or the board, places students at a considerable disadvantage.

**Ms. Rich and Eduardo**

Finally, during a classroom observation with Ms. Rich, Eduardo’s fourth grade teacher, the researcher observed her reprimanding him several times. She also inferred that he had a mental problem because he could not express himself well enough when she asked him to explain the plot of a story he had just read. She said,

“I don’t see that at all, Eduardo! Oh, no, Eduardo where did you get that? Eduardo, be quiet!”
Eduardo’s response was the same. He couldn’t answer her questions, looked frustrated and started biting his nails. Fortunately, later Ms. Rich realized Eduardo’s problem during a parent-teacher-student conference. She realized that he needed to increase his English vocabulary. Because he did not understand many of the words he read, his limited vocabulary hampered his ability to comprehend the stories he read. Even though, the researcher agrees that all English language learners who are developing their English academic language need to continue to expand their English vocabulary, in the case of Eduardo, Ms. Rich’s demands and lack of wait time probably caused Eduardo to become too anxious to participate.

The Children’s Literacy Development

Selena

Selena acted shy at the beginning of the study and was not participating actively in her kindergarten class. After Ms. Drury began encouraging her, Selena responded well to Ms. Drury’s balanced reading method. The method utilized phonics and sight words in a meaningful context which is recommended for emergent literacy kindergarten students (Au, 1993; Perez & Torres-Guzman, 1996; Tinajero & Huerta-Macias, 1993; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Pearson, 2004). Then, when Ms. Drury expressed,

“Selena is making good academic progress. She has reached the bench mark for the highest level of accomplishing for kindergarten. She knows all of her sight words and is blending words by sounds when reading books…. I think she will do well in the first grade.”

But toward the end of the study, Ms. Drury reported that,

“Selena seems to be less shy than she was at the beginning of the year but her self-esteem still has room to blossom even more.”

However, at home Selena was observed as self-confident and assertive. At school, her positive self-concept seemed to lessen, somewhat (Celedon-Pattichis, 2004; Cummins, 2001).
Salma

Salma read fluently and answered correctly many of the questions she was asked in her third grade class which demonstrated to the observer that she had good reading comprehension.

Her teacher, Ms. Cross said,

“Salma is a good reader. Although, not the best reader in the class, but she is one of the better readers in her group. Her problem is in dealing with understanding the vocabulary and connecting the title of the reading with the story’s key words and what she knows about this country.”

In an informal conversation, Dr. Carter, Salma’s second grade teacher and her present reading interventions teacher said,

“Salma reads quickly, however, she lacks prosody and needs to adjust her reading rate to the text in order to understand what she reads. Also, Salma has improved in her ability to summarize a story. But she needs to continue to improve in her reading expressiveness and her answers to critical questions.”

Dr. Carter added that although, Ms. Cross stated that Salma was a “day dreamer” and did not express “empathy” for other people. Dr. Carter said instead,

“I never had a problem with Salma being distracted or not on task, during the time she was with me in second grade and during this year’s reading interventions.”

The effects of this situation are explained by Dulay, Burton, & Krashen (1982) who reported that when a second language learner student doesn’t feel at ease, or had been falsely accused as was in the case of Salma, “the affective filter” prevents comprehensible input from reaching the student’s ‘language acquisition device (Chomsky, 1965) which was evident during the first half of the year. However, although the FCAT scores were unavailable, during a recent inquiry Ms. Cross had given Salma a summer science application suggesting that Salma would benefit from participating in the program this summer.
Ms. Rich Eduardo’s fourth grade teacher, perceived that Eduardo had a thinking problem that caused his oral language expression to suffer. English language acquisition experts recommend that classroom teachers develop their students’ oral English language skills by teaching in context and systematically the essential linguistic structures that are introduced within the language arts curriculum. Teachers should provide both structured and unstructured opportunities for oral production, in order to promote highly proficient oral language skills in students. Students who have been immersed in English language instruction do not develop fluency and grammar ability through subject matter instruction alone (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Swain, 2000). This was seen in Eduardo’s behavior. He had difficulty with advanced reading comprehension of texts that included knowledge of low frequency vocabulary, primarily from Greek and Latin sources, complex syntax, and abstract expressions. His difficulty stemmed from a need to develop his ability to interpret and produce increasingly complex written and oral language and to learn metalinguistics so that he could plan his own learning, develop cognitive strategies, and manipulate the material to be learned while feeling positive about himself (Cummins, 2001; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990). At one point, Eduardo’s teacher implied that he was reading too much. This made his parents consider controlling his reading. But finally, Ms. Rich made it clear that he should continue reading as much as he had because extensive reading for pleasure would expose to a broader vocabulary (Krashen, 2004). Also, in order for him to learn new vocabulary words, he needed to encounter each new word many times (Cummins, 2001; Krashen, 2004). Another problem that Ms. Rich perceive that Eduardo was having while reading without comprehension, is as Snow (2002) recognized that

“(ELL) children need to learn strategies on how… to learn new concepts, to get deeply involved in what they’re reading, to evaluate critically what they read, and to apply their new knowledge to solve practical as well as intellectual problems (p. 5).”
Instructional programs that promote reading comprehension emphasize extensive and varied exposure to meaningful print and provide instruction to help students develop metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies to recognize words and compare the native with the second language (Cummins, 2001).

Integration of Family’s and Teacher’s Literacy Practices

Bringing Their Literacy Practices to the Classroom

In this study, the participant children brought their literacy practices to their school. For example, when Selena wanted Ms. Drury to know that it was “el ratón (the mouse) and not the tooth fairy that brought money to the Mexican children in exchange for the children’s fallen teeth, she wrote a story about “el ratón (the mouse) and showed it to her teacher. Also another example of the children’s home literacy practices is educación which includes parental respect and caring for the members of the family, was when Ms. Cross recently presented her third grade class with a Young Author’s party where Salma, a recipient of the award, read her book “Flowers” to her class and to her invited parents. Salma, although happy to be the center of attention, took the time to be respectful to her parents. She asked for Ms. Cross’ permission to act as a hostess and be the one to serve her parents plates of snacks and cups of soft drinks. In the fourth grade classroom observation, Eduardo showed his educación literacy practices when he told his teacher, Ms. Rich, how much he cared for his family. Eduardo told her he was worried because his sister Salma had been taken to the hospital because she was unable to breathe. Later when the Fernandez’ came to the parent-teacher conference meeting, Mr. Fernandez sat Salma on his lap, but Ms. Rich tried to tell Salma to go to the back of the room and read a book during the meeting. Then, Eduardo took the initiative to explain to Ms. Rich,
that Salma was the sick girl (la enfermita) on that day, that’s why the family had to treat her in a special way.

Also, during Eduardo’s parent-teacher meeting with Ms. Rich, Selena gave her brother a kiss on the cheek. Eduardo explained to Ms. Rich,

“Selena wants to wish me good luck in the conference.”

Other examples of the participant children’s literacy practices were their work ethics. Ms. Rich said,

“Eduardo doesn’t mind correcting his stories, ten, twenty times if necessary, until I tell him that his work is well done.”

Ms. Drury said that Selena worked on her stories with great dedication, until she felt that she had thoroughly expressed her ideas. Also, when Salma found out that she was in danger of failing the third grade she worked harder to improve her reading comprehension and was recognized for her improvement.

**The Children Reflected Their Literacy Practices in Their Young Authors’ Books**

Eduardo, the oldest wrote two Young author’s stories when he was in 3rd grade. His first story was about his dog who was rundown by a train which prompted the family to move away from the railroad area of Parsons. The second book was concerned with his grandparents. Because he had never traveled to Mexico to see his grandparents and the small farm, his imaginary trip to see them showed his interest in his extended family and exploring his roots.

Salma, the third grade student wrote about her interests in belonging to an American and Mexican girls’ club. Although one of the parents refused to allow his daughter to participate in a sleep over, eventually the parent agreed and the girls club called “Flowers” had their first sleep over party. Recently Salma’s dad rejected her teacher’s idea that Salma should join the Girls Scouts, because he did not want her to sleep away from home.
Finally, Selena, the kindergarten girl wrote about her desire to be a mother like Mrs. Fernandez and cook like her mother and sip her favorite potato soup with her sister Salma on the mobile home’s porch. Also she would like to live in a large home with a big backyard where a family of giraffes lived. Selena has always identified closely with her mother and has said that she wanted to be the mother of a baby girl when she grew up.

**Knowledge Construction during the Parent-Teacher-Student (PTS) Conferences**

The parent-teacher-student conference promotes affirmation for children and parents and it is the best forum to integrate both the family’s and teacher’s literacy practices to benefit the student’s academic achievement. The Fernandez had three parent-teacher-student conferences with Ms. Cross and Ms. Rich. Also the Fernandez attended Ms. Cross’ third grade Young Author’s party.

**Developing a student academic plan for Salma**

The first parent-teacher-student conference took place among Ms. Cross, Ms. Fernandez and Salma with the researcher as a translator. The purpose of the meeting was for Ms. Cross to notify Mrs. Fernandez that Salma was in danger of being retained in the third grade. Ms. Fernandez prompted a discussion of possible ways Salma could be assisted academically to improve. Ultimately, the decision they made resulted in the three of them signing a compact initiating an academic plan which included a change in Salma’s seating arrangement, the exploration of Salma being transferred from ESOL to the reading interventions program. Salma also began checking out books which were on her reading level from the classroom library so that she could read at home for at least 30 minutes every night. In response, Mrs. Fernandez agreed to supervise Salma’s reading. Then, Salma and her mother left with the hope that if Salma did what she was supposed to do, she would be promoted to the fourth grade.
Follow-up PTS conference to review Salma’s improvement

Six weeks later, a second parent-teacher-student conference took place among Ms. Cross, Salma, her parents, and her siblings. Ms. Cross happily told them that everyone’s efforts to help Salma had succeeded because she had improved 100% and she was no longer in danger of failing the third grade. Ms. Cross also explained that she felt that it would benefit Salma if she joined an organization like the Girl Scouts during the summer that would allow Salma to associate with English speaking girls her own age who would model English for her and help Salma improve her English usage.

PTS conference with Ms. Rich

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez scheduled a meeting with Ms. Rich to discuss Eduardo’s progress. During the parent-teacher-student conference among Eduardo, his parents, and his teacher, Ms. Rich told them that Eduardo had a problem answering critical questions about his reading and that perhaps he did not understand what he was reading. She also said that he rushed through his reading and answered many of the computer test questions incorrectly. Ms. Rich suggested that Eduardo was interested in just accumulating awards and not primarily interested in learning the story’s content. When she asked Eduardo’s parents if he had the same difficulty perceiving the meaning of stories at home. They explained that he had no difficulty explaining anything that the family discussed or with what he had observed on television.

After the parents’ input, Ms. Rich began to speak in a more negotiating way, and changed the abrupt tone of voice that she had been observed using with Eduardo in class. It appeared that, as a result of her increased effort to understand Eduardo’s problems in school, she decided to talk about her own reading problem when she was a younger person. She explained that because she was frequently distracted, that she lost track of the story’s plot. However instead of continuing, she went back and re-read the part she had missed. In response, the Fernandez parents showed
their appreciation for what Ms. Rich had shared with them and they suggested that Eduardo should double-check what he had read in order to understand his stories better as Ms. Rich had done. Eduardo agreed to try. In order to help Eduardo understand the words he had missed when he read, Ms. Rich shared an advanced vocabulary booklet with him, which he could utilize for the rest of the year and during the summer. This negotiation resulted in the teacher realizing Eduardo’s problem. By discussing the matter with the parents who were also interested in Eduardo’s welfare, they came to understand that it was natural that an English language learner needed to develop a wider vocabulary in order to fully understand what he had read.

Table 5-1. Summary of home and school literacy practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Literacy Practices</th>
<th>School Literacy Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural Literacy Practices. There are many literacies</td>
<td>Do it may way. There is only one literacy, the American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>according to the sociocultural context</td>
<td>mainstream literacy in general, and the FCAT, specifically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of family and social relations. Children</td>
<td>Importance to curriculum, standards, tests and classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wanted to be liked by teachers and receive their teacher’s</td>
<td>control. No ESOL strategies observed. No knowledge of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approval.</td>
<td>Florida Consent Decree (1990) was evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents encouraged children to learn. Children</td>
<td>Teachers did not have time to check for student understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were working very hard to learn.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children wanted to learn Academic English language.</td>
<td>Teachers did not utilize home literacy practices. Did not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understand their students’ English language acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children were perfect for their parents.</td>
<td>Teachers had a deficit orientation toward their Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5-1 Continued.

| Parents perceived children as obedient, caring, intelligent, and hard-working. | Teachers perceived children as lazy, distracted, daydreaming, unfocused, non-empathetic, and having problems with their thinking. |
| Parents wanted to be involved in meaningful parental involvement, like improving student learning. | School did not encourage parents to attend meetings because they did not provide translators. |

**The Researcher’s Role**

While positive interactions that take place between the Mexican immigrant students and their teachers are central to students’ success, negative interactions overt, covert, intentional or unintentional can disempower students and their families (Cummins, 2001). During the study it became an ethical necessity for the researcher to become an advocate, to interact, validate, and affirm the participant students’ identities, because inaction from the part of the researcher would have been detrimental for the participants (Cummins, 2001). The researcher had to intervene when Salma was in danger of being retained. The researcher explained to Ms. Cross that Salma’s self-esteem would be diminished and it would increase her risk of dropping out of school in the future. Also the researcher had to become Selena’s voice so Ms. Drury could understand what Selena was writing about. When Ms. Drury acknowledged Selena’s cultural contribution to their writing activity, Selena’s self-esteem was heightened (Cummins, 2001). Finally, the researcher was asked by the teachers and the family to act as a translator and home-school liaison during the parent-teacher-student conferences in order to contribute to an understanding of the children’s academic problems that otherwise could not have taken place without the researcher’s assistance. The researcher’s status as a high achieving Hispanic and Mexican woman may have prompted the teachers to pay closer attention to the participant family and children’s needs than if the researcher had not shared cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
The Leadership in the Education of Mexican Immigrant Children

In this study, the school leadership did not seem to be visible or highly involved. Thus as the findings indicated, it is necessary that school’s instructional leadership becomes aware of the vicious circle, the findings indicated that are taking place in the school in the interactions between teachers and Mexican students. In these interactions, elements of the teacher’s deficit orientation toward Mexican students add negatively to the family’s concept of educación creating a vicious circle which is detrimental to the education of Mexican children. The teachers approached Mexican immigrant students with a deficit orientation because their literacy practices differ from those of mainstream America (Coleman, 1990). The parents seemed to accept the teachers’ deficit attitudes but responded with their literacy of educación’s practices of excessive respect for teachers. Parents saw teachers with symbolic investiture, with a high status in the educational structure, and with power and authority to fail students. Parents were unaware that in the American culture parents had the right to question teachers’ perceptions (Bolman & Deal, 1991). The teachers, who expected a behavior congruent to American literacies, felt that the excessive gratitude from parents was an acceptance of the teachers’ deficit orientation negative views toward their children. These actions lead the teachers to confirm their unconscious and unquestionable deficit orientation. In order to break this vicious circle the teachers need to change their deficit mental models. The parents also need to change their mental models to learn to assert themselves to teachers and school personnel. One such example occurred in this study when Mr. and Mrs. Fernandez responded to Ms. Rich at the parent-teacher-student conference that Eduardo did not have a mental problem because he communicated perfectly with them in Spanish at home (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978, Schein, 2004).

An institutional change would be necessary to break the vicious circle school wide and help develop a virtuous circle in the opposite direction. This cultural change at the school would
require structural and process adjustments including the school personnel, as well as parents. Schoolwide training on the Mexican immigrant family’s literacy practices would have to take place. The school personnel’s mental models, values, premises, and assumptions about the deficit theory have to be questioned and changed. Also, the school vision needs to be expanded. Time and resources would be needed so that personnel could generate activities. It will also be necessary to revise teachers’ and support personnel’s job descriptions. Finally, parents will need advocates/mentors to guide them through the change, one family at a time and to help them continue constructing knowledge during parent-teacher-student conferences (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Schein, 2004; Senge, 1990).

Implications for Theory

The findings in this showed how the children constructed knowledge while integrating the family’s and teachers’ literacy practices. Knowledge in this study was understood by the children’s successful acquisition of literacy of both the native and English languages at home and in school while integrating and relating their two literacy practices to their own life experiences (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2005).

In general, the literacy practices observed in this study of a Mexican immigrant family in Central Florida, confirms what has been documented by most scholars of Mexican immigrant families (i.e.: dedication to their family, work ethics, sense of community, religion, and values, and concept of educación (Coady, in press; Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Guerra, 1998; Lopez, 1999; Moll et al., 2005; Riley, 2002). The literacy practices of the Fernandez’ in their specific sociocultural historical context were geared toward survival. These circumstances included the availability of year around agricultural work, living close to their extended family, and being able to provide a stable home and a good education for their children, while under the cloud of fear of deportation because of their undocumented status. The parents’ hope for the future is that
their children who are American citizens will experience a successful education and ultimately will attain successful careers in the United States.

The teachers did not seem to be aware of the Florida Consent Decree and children’s home literacies. The teachers’ literacy practices were their use of a balanced eclectic literacy method while using direct instruction as their primary model of delivery (Behar-Horenstein & Seabert, 2002; Ramirez, 1992). The teachers covered the mainstream English language curriculum without utilizing many of their Mexican immigrant students’ literacy practices or their previous knowledge, even though the Mexican immigrant population was in the majority at Parsons Elementary School (Joyce, et al., 2004; Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Also, it was observed that the teachers did not indicate if they had knowledge of the processes of first and second language acquisition even though the participating children (ELLs) struggled with academically. The participant students had received ESOL basic social language instruction, but they needed assistance from their classroom teachers or from specialist teachers to continue to develop their English academic language, background knowledge, explicit reading comprehension skills, and metacognitive and metalinguistic skills (Cummins, 2001; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Snow, 2002).

Initially, the three teachers did not seem to have a positive perception of the participant students. They did not display a welcoming attitude toward them and they failed to provide the emotional support that the three participant children needed. However, later in the study, the teachers developed a more favorable perception of the participant students in their classes. In turn, the teachers’ newly formed positive attitudes contributed to two of the participating students’ self-confidence and ultimately to their extensive academic achievements. These findings indicate that the school system should evaluate their teachers’ training in English
language development and multicultural education and should identify how the resources for diverse students will be utilized before new teachers begin teaching at Parsons Elementary School. Despite their children’s difficulties in the interactions with teachers, this Mexican family was very invested in their children’s education.

At the school level, it was discovered that Parsons Elementary School needs to provide professional development for teachers about the Florida Consent Decree, and Mexican children’s literacy practices. It is also necessary for the school to evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of the extrinsic reading rewards utilized and consider initiating an intrinsic reward system that would develop students’ pleasure of reading. The participant students in the third and fourth grades were given awards based on the number of lines they read which seemed to distract them from discovering the intrinsic rewards associated with understanding and acquiring the pleasure of reading (Coady, in press; Krashen, 2004). The school should provide materials in a language that the family can understand, whereas they did not.

The study’s contribution to theory is how the parent-teacher-student conference aided the integration of family’s and teachers’ literacy practices as seen in the children’s construction of knowledge. A conference, where parents, teachers, and students meet face to face is necessary, in order to understand nonverbal literacies and to learn each other’s verbal and cultural practices with the goal being to provide a more inclusive and relevant education for culturally diverse children. Parents come to the conference with the expectations that meaningful interactions will occur. Because the literacy practices of the Mexican people stress the importance of freedom of expression through the use of oral language, the parent-teacher-student conference is the communication of choice for the family (Jimenez et al., 2003). In addition to the parents, the students should also have the opportunity to attend the conference and be allowed the freedom of
oral expression so that they can present their point of view. Facilitating the construction of knowledge between parents, teachers, and students is needed so that the school can provide a facilitator who is bilingual, bicultural, and knowledgeable of education and educación, of the school system’s functions, and how they relate to the Mexican immigrant community.

The study showed how participating children as literacy practice agents, actively brought their literacy practices from home to the classroom through their writing and through their speech. The children’s concept of educación, expects them to be respectful to their teacher, and not to interrupt or contradict what their teachers say. In return, the teacher should be informed about the importance of providing the student with the opportunity to talk about the things they know and care about. Bringing information about their home literacy practices to their teachers at school will encourage the Mexican immigrant student to continue to express themselves verbally, to gain self-respect and ultimately thrive in their academics. The child’s literacy practices could provide their teachers with a means to guide students in acquiring academic English beyond the acquisition of English social skills and specific strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key points of theory</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Theory confirmed or refuted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociocultural Historical Literacy Approach (Vygotsky, 1978)</strong></td>
<td>The participant family’s literacy practices were developed in a unique way in their specific sociocultural historical context.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, &amp; Gonzalez, 1992)</strong></td>
<td>The participant family had knowledge that they acquired in their country of origin and in their survival in Parsons, USA.</td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5-2 Continued.

| The Concept of Educación (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994) | The participant family followed the concept of educación taught to them by teaching their children good values, respect, hard work, and helping others. | Confirmed |
| Collision of Discourses (Lopez, 1999) | The participant children had problems integrating their literacy practices with the teachers' American literacy practices. | Confirmed |
| Mexican Children cannot succeed in mainstream practices (Valdes, 1996) | The participant family believed in the benefit of their children complying with school’s requirements and they felt that through negotiations some solutions to their children’s academic problems were reached. | Refuted |
| Illegal alphabets and adult biliteracy (Kalmar, 2001) | The participant family utilized the Spanish letter-sound code to write in Spanish and to read in English. | Confirmed |
| Parent-teacher-student conference (PTS) (Sen, 2008) | The participant parents, teachers and student constructed knowledge in the forum of a parent-teacher-student conference. Also teachers became acquainted with the family’s literacy practices. | Confirmed |
| Breaking the deficit-educación vicious circle (Sen, 2008) | The participant parents responded to Ms. Rich that Eduardo did not have a thinking problem because he could communicate perfectly in Spanish with them at home. | Confirmed |
Recommendations for Further Study

a) A longitudinal study of revised ESOL training based on the findings reported in this study for regular classroom teachers that focuses on helping mainstream English language learners after the students had passed the basic social English acquisition training, yet continues their English academic language development for up to ten years in an English immersion program school, like the Parsons school (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

b) A study of parent-teacher-student conferences, with a focus on how the school can facilitate this process among immigrant families more efficiently and how these processes impact changes in students’ construction of knowledge.

c) A study of how a policy that is designed to ensure that teachers explore the literacy practices of their Mexican immigrant students by visiting their homes and a focus on how home visits influence teachers’ instructional practices and student engagement.

d) A study that explores teachers’ use of students’ literacy practices and how this practice impacts students’ development of English academic language skills (Cummins, 2001).

e) A follow-up study of this family.

f) A study that examines the leadership behaviors/actions at a school of predominantly Mexican children and how well they do on the FCAT.

g) A study that describes the accountability between the role of the Florida Consent Decree (1990), accountability, and teachers’ practices.

h) A study that explores principals’ perspectives about requiring teachers to know children’s literacies.

i) A study that explores the congruence between the reading materials that a Mexican student school population have and need.

j) A study that describes schoolwide reform efforts aimed at eradicating teachers’ deficit orientation.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, a review of the findings of this study was provided. Also the implications of the results of this study, specifically as it relates to the integration of the literacy practices between the home and the school, were described. Suggestions for further research at the classroom, school, and policy levels were given. This study described the literacy practices of one Mexican immigrant family in this sociocultural-historical context of non-migrant agricultural
workers in Central Florida. The Mexican immigrant family’s concept of educación and their involvement in the school, the teachers’ literacy practices (including their philosophies of education, their literacy methodology, and their strategies for teaching Mexican immigrant students), the participant children’s literacy development, and how the teachers and students constructed meaning were described. Finally, how the participant children integrated both their home and teachers’ literacy practices were also described.
APPENDIX A

TABLE OF FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES

From: 12/07 To: 5/08 Participants: The Fernandez Family (Josué, Soledad, Eduardo, Salma, and Selena)

Home décor:

The participant family’s home was an old, reconditioned trailer 50 feet long and 20 feet wide with a front wooden porch with a table, chairs and a hammock. The home was located on a large piece of land with pens for chickens, turkeys and a small pig.

The family’s living room was spacious, recently painted and partially carpeted with two large matching sofas facing a large television set and a large stereo. The room had curtains with printed flowers matching the many artificial flower arrangements in the room.

One section of the living room's wall displayed religious icons of the Catholic faith. There were two large oval images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, on each side of a huge image of Jesus Christ being taken down from the cross. Also, there were some plastic flowers arranged around the icons.

On the other wall area, there were school pictures of Salma, the third grader and Eduardo the fourth grader, Selena, the Kindergarten girl, and Baby Delia. On another wall, there were pictures of the parents wedding, the children’s baptism and Holy Communion. Another wall had a huge portrait of the mother’s mother. On the same wall, there was a picture of Salma and her Kindergarten certificate. Under the picture and certificate were the sound system and two dolls.

On top of the sound system there was a crocheted cloth. Other decorations in the living room included knickknacks inside the china cabinets. On the china cabinet, there was a collection of dolls, both large and small, porcelain and plastic. On another china cabinet there were souvenirs from friends and family events like weddings, baptisms, confirmations, and quinceañeras.

On another side of the living room, on the television are some trophies and medals won by the children.

The family had three bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen and dining area, and a laundry room. The first bedroom had two beds. The next room had the son’s collection of cast iron trucks and cars and ten reading medals and several trophies. Also, his drawings and paintings were posted on the walls and a Halloween mask. The last room had a large bed with a 36 inch tall statue of Baby Jesus dressed in a beautiful silk gown, lying on a crocheted bedspread. All the rooms were newly painted and in good repair. The bedrooms and the hall were carpeted.

The kitchen was a 10 ft by 12 ft. room that included a dining area with a table and chairs. The kitchen had wooden cabinets, a refrigerator, a sink, and a stove. The window and the back...
door had white curtains with red flowers. The walls were painted light green and the floor was covered with green marbled design linoleum.

Finally, there was a laundry and the only bathroom in the house that looked very clean, but it did not have a toilet seat. The bathroom and kitchen and half of the living room were covered with linoleum.

Climate:

The family’s home’s climate as well as the ride to and from school was always pleasant. The parents always had a smile and never raised their voices and were always supportive of their children. When the parents picked up their children from school they always appeared cheerful and welcoming.

The children seemed to have pride in owning their home and enjoyed the spaciousness of the house and the yard. Everyday after school, they enjoyed running, jumping rope and riding their bikes.

The children seemed very assertive at home, having command of the television, VCR, and stereo and operating them freely. Also, the children were free to get food out of the refrigerator whenever they liked.

Literacy events observed:

The parents were constantly reminding the children in Spanish how to behave properly: how to behave with visitors, how to sit, how to eat, how to wash their hands, how to clean their nose, and how to comb their hair. The children responded obediently. The parents asked the children everyday for any school correspondence papers and made sure that the children did their homework.

The parents looked over the homework before they signed the homework slip. One afternoon, Selena told a story that she had learned in school that day. Mrs. Fernandez replied that the story was similar to a story she had learned in school in Mexico. Then they both compared the similarities and differences between the two stories.

When the family played together a “la Pichada” (a combination of baseball and dodge ball), the parents took this opportunity to model the Spanish language for the children. The parents and the participant children made a strong effort to teach Baby Delia to speak Spanish correctly. Everybody modeled for her and corrected her when necessary.

The parents said repeatedly that they were very proud when they observed their son reading constantly, so they supported his reading and encouraged their daughters to do the same.

The family enjoyed watching family videos of the parent’s wedding, of Christmas holidays, birthdays, baptisms, etc. On Saturdays the children watched children’s movies that they had checked out from the Parsons public library.
The family received and made many telephone calls from their family and friends in Mexico, Texas, and from the Parsons area. They expressed that there no longer existed the need to write letters.

Literacy instruments:

During more than half of my home visits, the children had in their possession at least three books that they had checked-out from the school library.

The only books that the family owned were the two books that Eduardo had written in the third grade. The family was excited when I brought 20 books in English and Spanish to them and allowed each member of the family to choose their favorite books. The father enjoyed a book in Spanish about Mexican presidents (I saw him reading it several times sharing it with Eduardo and telling Eduardo about the different presidents during his time). The mother was interested in a primer book in Spanish that she shared with Baby Delia. Selena liked some Sesame Street and Dr. Seuss books and Salma was interested in a book about cats.

The parents had many Spanish music records from Mexico. They also, had audio tapes on religious and philosophical reflections in Spanish that they often played and discussed with the children.

Activities:

Parents had a regular place of employment where they cut fern, however, sometimes there was no work available in that particular fern farm and they had to travel to other ferneries. If there was no work for them, then they contacted Mr. Brice, their mentor, who always had little jobs for them to do on his property. As a last resort, when there was no work outside the home, they worked on making improvement on their house. The children were aware of this and they expressed their admiration for their parents for being such hard workers.

Parental involvement at school was a very important priority for the Fernandez’. They managed their work around taking their children and picking them up from school. Also their priorities included attending parent-teacher conferences after school; attending school meetings and school fund raising activities; contributing with food and volunteer work, and overseeing their children doing their homework and signing their homework slips.

Living in a clean and organized environment was observed during more than half of my home visits at the Fernandez’ home. The parents had a daily routine of cleaning the house, preparing meals for the children, feeding the live stock, washing the family’s clothes and preparing children’s clothes, and backpacks for the next day.

Relationship with family and friends was a part of every day life for the Fernandez’s. The parents, while at work met with their extended family members, who worked with them and had lunch together during their half hour lunch time. Also, they maintained close phone communication with relatives in Mexico and with friends and community members in the United States.
The Fernandez' scheduled small entertainment activities every day. Sometimes, they played “a la pichada” as a family, other times, the parents oversaw the children biking and running in the front yard; and playing in the park in the evening. After the children finished their homework, they sometimes watched T. V. soap operas in Spanish, watched family’s videos, or danced together in the living room. On Saturdays, the children watched videos that they had checked out from the public library.

On Sundays they went to church, grocery shopping, to the park, and visited relatives and friends.

On holidays, the Fernandez parents gave their children little gifts, such as, candy or coloring books and they took them to quick food restaurants for a hamburger and a soda.

Dialogue:

Mr. Fernández often told his children, “Como les fue en la escuela?” (How was school, today), “Estate en paz” or “Tente en paz” (Behave yourself), “No hagas eso” (Don’t do that), “Haz tu tarea’ (Do your homework), “Ayúdale a tu mama” (Help your mother), “Trae la silla a la senora”, (Bring a chair to the lady), “Ofrécele…a la senora” (Offer… to the lady).

Ms. Fernandez told her children loving words like, “Que Linda m’hijita” (How pretty you are, daughter), “M’hijo es muy inteligente y estudioso”, (My son is very intelligent and studious). Mrs. Fernández informed that she would have to consult her husband,”Cuando mi señor venga le pregunto si quiere que vayamos…” (When my husband comes, I will ask him if he wants us to go), “Tengo que preguntarle a mi esposo” (I have to ask my husband).

Eduardo said, “Como esta Sra. Diana?” (How are you, Ms. Diana). Eduardo told Selena and Salma, “Estate quieta” (Be quiet), “Tu no sabes jugar” (You don’t know how to play). To his parents, “Si, mama”, “Si papa” (Yes, m’am, Yes, Sir), “Ya hice mi tarea” (I already did my homework),”Te puedo ayudar, papa?” (Can I help you Daddy?).

Selena told her mother “No quiero barrer” (I don’t want to sweep the floor), “No tengo tarea” (I don’t have homework), “Quiero más pollo” (I want more chicken), “Quiero más jugo de naranja” (I want more orange juice), “No me bajo del juego” (I don’t want to get off the playground swing).

Salma told her parents,” Me fue bien en la escuela” (School was good today) “Ya hice mi tarea” (I already did my homework), “Vamos a jugar a “la pichada” (Let’s play a la ‘pichada), “Mi amiga va a venir a jugar conmigo” (My friend is coming to play with me).

Forms of literacy observed (based on Ornstein & Sinatra, 2006)

1) Visual (i.e.: watching television).

The family watched television every day, mostly Mexican soap operas. The family had many family photographs and the children’s artwork) posted on the walls.

2) Listening (I. e.: radio, conversations):
Children were used to listening to adult conversations during family gatherings and school parent meetings, where they were expected to listen without talking.

Most of the time, the children listened to music, videos, and religious taped reflections selected by their parents. However, they had the right to request the music they like.

The father bought a new musical tape that was familiar to the children. The father taught a Mexican dance to the children, telling them, “Ahora das la vuelta” (Now, you give a turn), “Ahora, zapateado” (Now you tap the floor with your foot).

A favorite pastime of the parents, during lunch at work, was to listen to inspirational audio tapes and tell stories and jokes to their group of family and friend coworkers. It was observed that parents often shared these experiences with their children at home.

3) Speaking (I. e.: telephone, conversations):

Most of the time, the children ran to answer their parents’ cell phone and brought it to their parents by saying, “Es….” (It’s such and such). The children stayed near their parents and at the end of the telephone call, their parents shared with them the topics of the conversation.

The children were eager to tell their parents the interesting or funny things that happened at school. Each child competed for their father’s attention by trying to make their story the most interesting. The parents always laughed about the stories their children told.

4) Reading (I. e.: letters, brochures, homework):

The parents were observed reading all the school notices that are written in Spanish or asked Eduardo to translate those written in English.

5) Writing (I. e.: taking notes, writing letters, homework):

The parents wrote responses to their children’s teachers concerning their children’s report card grades three or four times a year (Ms. Rich, Eduardo’s fourth grade teacher asked me to translate one of these parents’ notes and I was able to see the previous notes written on the report card).

6) Visual representation (i.e.: drawing):

Children’s art work is displayed throughout the house.

Mrs. Fernandez was interested in arts and crafts and influences her children to appreciate making crafts. Recently, Mrs. Fernandez has begun to draw as well. On an occasion it was observed that Eduardo drew and painted a picture of the car Santa Claus had brought him and his mother and sisters tried to learn from him by attempting to draw it also. The children’s drawings were displayed throughout their home and in the school’s cafeteria.
7) Technology (utilizing computers, or other gadgets):

The family did not have a computer.

The family had a large television, a VCR, a large stereo, and a cell phone. They have not been able to utilize the telephone message mailbox (The researcher called the family on the phone and attempted to leave a message, but the message procedure had not been set up). Otherwise, children were skilful in the utilization of all the appliances in the house.

Funds of knowledge observed (based on Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 2005)

1) Agriculture:

The children help their parents work at the fernery after school for about an hour, almost every day. The children had learned from their parents’ fern cuttings at work. They helped their parents gather their previously cut fern and placed them into boxes. The parents mentioned repeatedly that they were very proud that their children were such good helpers!

2) Mechanics:

Mr. Fernandez supplemented his income by repairing cars. Eduardo was always interested in observing and helping his father, handing him parts and tools. The father also takes this opportunity to teach his son the names of the parts and tools and how to repair cars. Mr. Fernandez said, “Eduardo se sabe todos los nombres en español de las herramientas que yo le pido” (Eduardo knows all names of all the tools I ask for in Spanish).

3) Appliance repairs:

The father, who was mechanically inclined, had learned a lot about repairing appliances through trial and error. He told me a story about, when out of financial necessity, he fixed a refrigerator through experimentation. Eduardo showed interest in being an apprentice to his father, in which he both helped and learns.

4) Childcare:

Parents gave a lot of importance to child care and child wellbeing. The father explained that after the family’s pet was killed by a train, he searched to find a safer home for the children. The mother was proud to volunteer at the Head Start School in exchange for a lower rate for Baby Delia’s excellent care. She always attended the Head Start School meetings and was proud to help prepare the refreshments served at the meetings.

Eduardo, Salma, and Selena helped take care of the baby. Eduardo, the oldest child, was very protective of his three younger sisters.

5) Household chores:
The mother was in charge of the household chores, however, the father and the children helped her most of the time. Mrs. Fernandez told me that Eduardo, Salma, and Baby Delia always helped her clean the house. But Selena was the only one that complained when asked to help. She, usually responded “Por que yo?” (Why me?) “Por que me castigas” (Why are you punishing me?) Mrs. Fernandez laughed tenderly while saying, “Yo no la obligo a que me ayude si no quiere” (I don’t force her to help if she doesn’t want to).

6) Cooking:

Mrs. Fernandez was very proud of her cooking skills. She cooked many elaborate Mexican meals quickly like “mole”, “tamales”, “quesadillas”, “enchiladas”, cakes, and stuffed turkey. She often volunteered to prepare food for the head Start and for various Parsons Elementary School’s fund raising activities. The children watched her and learned how to prepare the foods. Also, Mrs. Fernandez took this opportunity to teach her girls the food recipes, ingredients, measurements, mixing procedures and the names of various cooking utensils.

7) Business:

Mr. Fernandez took care of the family finances. Occasionally, he lent and borrowed money from various members of the community. One afternoon, when I accompanied the parents to pick up their children, I observed him collecting money from an acquaintance. Mr. Fernandez smiled when he talked about having been able to make good deals when buying their home and land, and their trucks. He talked about feeling good about offering the family the best life he could afford.

8) Religion:

Mrs. Fernandez was in charge of teaching the Catholic faith to the children. The parents got married by the Catholic Church in 2001. The four children have been baptized and the three participant children have had their first communion. These are important accomplishments for children who wish to follow the Catholic faith.

Mrs. Fernandez was very devout in her prayers to the Virgin of Guadalupe and Baby Jesus. Her mother gave her the statue of Baby Jesus several years ago, that the family prayed to often. Mr. Fernandez gave his wife an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe that lights up, for Christmas.

9) Sewing and Crafts:

Mrs. Fernandez sewed very well, fixing every thing her family needed. Also, she had crocheted a tablecloth, a bedspread, and the Baby Jesus statue’s clothes, and shoes. The girls were learning to crochet by observing their mother and practicing themselves.

The mother made crafts to supplement their family’s income. She asked the children to help. And also took the opportunity to teach the children the names of materials, measures, utensils, and craft supplies.
10) Herbal knowledge:

Parents knew the benefits of plants like the aloe Vera for healing wounds, cinnamon tea for colds. The family had planted several aloe Vera plants to use on wounds and had purchased cinnamon, oregano, honey, onions, and warm oil to treat the children when they have colds, sore throat, cough, and stomach aches.

11) Interpreting/Translation:

Eduardo, the oldest child translates for his parents. The mother told me that she always liked to bring Eduardo with her when she attends parent-teacher conferences, because she did not believe that the bilingual secretary, who translated at the conferences, translates every thing she wanted to say.

Also, the parents told me that they sometimes utilized Mexican community members, who were high school graduates to translate for them for a fee when they needed to visit a doctor or a hospital because of child birth or serious illness.
APPENDIX B
CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Grade: _____ Teacher: _______________ Date: ___________ Time: _______
Topic: ___________________________ Number of students: _______________

Classroom demographics:

Classroom set-up:

Classroom climate:

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<th>Teacher’s activities</th>
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Teaching methodology:

Description:

ESOL multimodels/ teaching strategies utilized:

Teaching behaviors observed:

Description:

Examples of culturally responsive pedagogy (use of home literacies):
Materials utilized:

Comments:
APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant teachers’ Interviews

Interview # 1

Background and educational philosophy
1. Describe your educational philosophy.
2. Describe your concept of literacy.
3. Describe what teaching and learning mean to you.
4. How do you include your students’ home language and culture in your classroom curriculum?

Interview # 2

Teaching Mexican immigrant students
1. What are your feelings about teaching Mexican students?
2. What are some of the literacy practices of your migrant student?
3. What are the challenges of teaching this particular migrant student?
4. What strategies do you utilize with these particular Mexican students in your class?
5. What are your expectations for these Mexican students?
6. How are Mexican students unique/different from other students?
7. What contact have you had with migrant families?
8. Describe successful and unsuccessful stories about Mexican students.

Mexican Immigrant Parents Interviews
(in English and Spanish)

Interview # 1

Background and Experience in the United States
1. Describe your place of origin and your childhood.
2. Describe your family.
3. Describe your school experiences as a child.
4. What do you read to your children? In what language?
5. What do you write every day? In what language?

Interview # 2

Experience as Parents/Beliefs about Education
1. What is your belief about education?
2. What kind of education do you expect for your children?
3. To what extent has been your participation in parental involvement in school?
4. What have you helped change in your children’s school?
5. What would you like to change in your children’s school?
6. What are your aspirations for your children’s education?
7. What changes have you noticed in the principal or teachers after you have interacted with them?

Entrevista # 1
Experiencia en su lugar de origen y en los Estados Unidos
6. Describa su lugar de origen y su infancia.
7. Describa a su familia.
8. Describa sus experiencias en la escuela cuando era niño.
9. ¿Qué les lee a sus hijos? En qué idioma?
10. ¿Qué escribe diariamente? En qué idioma?

Entrevista # 2
Experiencias con la escuela y conceptos de educación
1. ¿Cuál es su concepto de educación?
2. ¿Qué tipo de educación desea para su hijo?
3. ¿Describa su participación en el involucramiento de padres en la escuela?
4. ¿Qué ha hecho para favorecer algunos cambios en la escuela?
5. ¿Qué elemento de la escuela de sus hijos le gustaría cambiar?
6. ¿Qué aspiraciones tiene para la educación y el futuro de sus hijos?

Children’s Interviews

Interview # 1
Home and Family
1. Describe your family.
2. How do you help your family at home?
3. Tell me something that your parents always tell you to do
4. What games do you like to play?
5. What do you like to read? In what language?
6. What do you like to write? In what language?

Interview # 2
School
1. What do you like best in school?
2. What do you like the least at school?
3. Describe your teacher.
4. What things are difficult for you at school?
5. What things would you like to change at school?
6. What do you need to do to be a good student?
7. What do you think you have to do to get good grades?
8. What have you learned at school since the year began?
9. What can you do now that you were not able to do last year?
10. Have you changed your idea about what you want to be when you grow up?
11. Follow-up questions.

Entrevista # 1
El Hogar y la Familia
1. Describe a tu familia.
2. Describe a tus amigos.
3. ¿Cómo ayudas a tu familia en tu casa?
4. Dime algo que tus padres siempre te dicen que no se te olvide hacer.
5. ¿Qué te gusta leer? En que idioma?
6. ¿Qué te gusta escribir? En que idioma?

Entrevista # 2
La Escuela
1. ¿Qué es lo que más te gusta en la escuela?
2. ¿Qué es lo que menos te gusta de la escuela?
3. Describe a tu maestra.
4. ¿Qué cosas te hacen difíciles en la escuela?
5. ¿Qué cosas te gustaría cambiar de la escuela?
6. ¿Qué piensas de la lectura? Explicame por que es fácil o difícil?
7. ¿Qué se necesita para ser un buen estudiante?
8. ¿Qué se necesita para sacar buenas calificaciones?
9. ¿Cómo has cambiado desde que empezó la escuela?
10. ¿Qué has aprendido desde que empezó el año escolar?
11. ¿Qué cosas nuevas puedes hacer ahora, que no podías hacer el año pasado?
12. ¿Qué cosas te gustan ahora, que no te gustaban el año pasado?
13. ¿Has cambiado de opinión acerca de lo que degustaría ser cuando seas grande?
14. ¿Me quieres contar algo más?
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Diana Margarita Ortega Sen was born in Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico, and is presently a naturalized U. S. citizen since 1985. In Mexico, Diana received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree at the Normal Superior majoring in French and English as second languages. In addition she was employed by the Mexican Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) for seven years as an elementary school teacher. In the United States, Diana earned a master’s degree in Spanish Literature in 1973 from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, an Ed. S. in TESOL from Nova Southeastern University in 1992, and an Ed. S. in educational leadership from the University of Florida in 1999. During 1974-1976, Diana served as a Spanish and French instructor at Friendship Junior College in Rock Hill, S. C. After her two children were born, she and her husband and her children moved to Volusia County Florida, where from 1979-1999 she taught Spanish, French, and ESOL; was a migrant advocate, and the school district’s translator. From 1999-2004, she served at the Florida Department of Education in Tallahassee, Florida, as an ESOL specialist, foreign language specialist, ESOL program director, and a Title I migrant program director. Diana plans to continue her career in educational leadership in Florida serving the Mexican community.