Portada tesis

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Transnational Family Literacy Practices: Three Case Studies

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Abstract

This thesis examines literacy practices embedded in the home domain of three transnational families from a new sending region in Mexico with the aim of understanding the relationship between literacy and transnational migration. Data was collected in the homes through interviews, observations and analysis of texts, events and literacy practices involving children and adults.

Few direct effects of transnationalism were found, with letter-writing serving a restricted sentimental purpose. Indirect effects of transnationalism were economically connected, with many literacy practices embedded in the running of a family business, financed with remittances. Results also show that families use remittances for securing children's full participation in school and school-supportive activities. The co-construction and movement of texts were found to be affected by the Mesoamerican family structure described by Robichaux (2002). Results suggest incipient transnational families negotiate social and family roles and relationships which shape new literacy practices.

Implications for school practices include incorporating Vygotskyan-based literacy activities into curriculum and relating school subject matter to students' *funds of knowledge* (González and Moll, 2002), with several examples, based on materials and instruments developed *in situ*. Implications for school policies and future research are also discussed.

1. Introduction and Literature Review

1.1. Introduction

> *... Él también les leía cuentos a los hijos, él también ... se ponía ahí a enseñarle... las letras a ellos...en eso ha cambiado en que ellos- pues él ya no les puede enseñar pero pues él sí, sí sabía más que yo porque él estudió la secundaria y yo no... en eso sí ha cambiado, en que él sí les puede ayudar más.... lo buscan ellos [los hijos] porque pues él era el que jugaba, el que les enseñaba, el queee decía- llegaba y decía –pues ora' vamos a ir a la calle o los voy a llevar al parque- entonces eso es lo que les afecta a ellos, les afectó mucho.* [He would also read the children stories, he would also ... be there to teach them ... the letters to them ... that's what has changed, in that they – well he can't teach them anymore but well he did, he did know more than I because he studied secondary and I didn't ... that's what has changed, in that he can help them more .... they (the children) look for him because well he was the one who would play, the one who taught them, the one who'd say – he'd come home and say – well now let's go into town or I'm going to take you to the park – and so that's what affects them, it affected them a lot.]
>
> Interview with Monica, case study participant

Monica (to ensure anonymity for participants, all names are pseudonyms), a Mexican mother of six children ages eight and under, has been caring for her children, running the household, and directing the building of the second story of their house with the economic and moral support of her husband, Fidel, who lives some two thousand

miles away. Despite her many responsibilities, Monica made time to meet with me three times in the hope the experience might have a positive impact on her children's school achievement. When we first met, Monica had been in close communication with her eldest daughter's teacher because she was concerned about her daughter's academic performance; Araceli was in second grade that year, and although she had held second place in her group, her grades had recently dropped. Without her husband's knowledge and presence at home, Monica valued the individualized guidance the teacher had given her daughter throughout the school year. Near the end of second grade, the teacher suggested to Monica it might be a positive experience for the family to participate in this study, and so, in spite of her busy schedule, Monica agreed to talk with me. Like thousands of other women, Monica is a woman with dreams and hopes and enough strength and perseverance to make them happen, even if it means being separated from her husband for a time.

As I relate in this study, transnational migration is a theme which involves much more than politics, economy and history, yet it is all that too. It is a reality for millions of individuals and families the world over. In recent years, however, the phenomenon has intensified, and more people like Monica, Fidel and their six children are feeling the effects. Migration brings changes to the family members' roles and responsibilities. Families adapt, altering their routines and traditions, and these changes have an impact on all aspects of their lives. As Monica mentions above, her husband is not there anymore to provide the children with the fun time at the park or the quiet time of story reading and teaching. Literacy and migration are the themes that this thesis deals with. In this thesis I present three families who have recurred to international migration "*para sacar a los*

hijos adelante [literally, to get their children ahead]," and whose thirteen children range in age from two to fifteen. I focus on the reading and writing practices embedded in the daily activities of these three transnational families. I analyze how these literacy practices serve the different members of these transnational families as well as the growing transnational migrant circuit of which they are a part.

The theoretical framework on which I based this study is that of literacy as a culturally situated social practice. Seen as social practice, literacy occurs within culture and everything culture represents, including customs, roles, goals, and history (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). For this reason, proponents of the sociocultural framework of literacy view literacy in close relationship to issues of politics and power (Luke 2003, based on Bourdieu 1991, 1998). Indeed, legislation dealing with language and education often tops news headlines, most often in relation to presumed conflicting interests of different language and ethnic groups.

According to The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) at the University of California, Santa Cruz (as reported by González Moll, & Amanti, 2005) the most effective pedagogy involves relating the subject matter to what the students know, do, and value. The increased presence of children of Latin American descent in school systems in North America has educators concerned about meeting these students' needs (González et al., 2005). As a result, recent sociocultural literacy research focuses on literacy practices in the homes of these students (González, et al., 2005, and Faulstich Orellana, Monkman, MacGillivray, 2002). Relatively few studies have been done, however, on literacy practices in Mexican homes. Moreover, the growing presence of transnational families should be of interest to Mexican educators as well

(Smith, 2005). In this thesis, I present three socioculturally based case studies of literacy practices in Mexican families experiencing migration. Case studies have the advantage of being able to show specific, concrete examples of what participants actually do and say, and are thus effective for learning about the underlying ideologies involved in literacy practices.

A sociocultural view of literacy practice also considers the influence of space and time on shaping these practices. The language variety we speak is largely circumstantial to what family we are born into and the social networks in which we move. When people move to new linguistic environments, we take our customs with us, including our customary literacy practices. A new location presents new circumstances, and people adapt literacy practices to accommodate changes in individual and family roles and goals and in response to demands placed on us by school, work, and the law. Over time, if the literacy practices continue to be relevant, they evolve into traditions, if not, they evolve into something new or are discarded (González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzáles & Amanti, 1993). A study of literacy practices of migrants, and especially migrants who cross-linguistic borders, proves relevant then for sociolinguistic concerns of migration as well as for educational concerns. The fathers of the three families who participated in this study are migrants who have crossed a linguistic border.

Sociologists have called for more in-depth, local studies of families experiencing migration in order to better understand the phenomenon of migration and how it becomes embedded in time, space, and society (Castillo, 2005; Goldring, 2005; Guarnizo, 2005). This study uses ethnographic methods of research in order to document local, contextualized data concerning literacy practices of families involved in migration.

Ethnographic methods allow the participants to tell their stories, which can lead to a fuller understanding of the relationship between literacy and migration as they are embedded in the daily lives of members of a transnational migrant circuit.

1.2. Aim and justification for the study

The research carried out in this study aimed to contribute to a small body of literature focusing on literacy practices in transnational families from the Mexican perspective. This study is distinct in that the majority of the data collected are from members of transnational families, and in particular, children, who live in a relatively new sending region of Mexico. By concentrating data collection in the homes of such families, I hoped to attain a fuller understanding of transnational migrants' literacy practices that would, in turn, suggest effective approaches taken by educators, language and literacy policy-makers, and other professionals who work with members of transnational migrant networks both in Mexico and the US.

1.3. Overview

In the first half of this chapter, I present the theory of literacy as a sociocultural construct, the terminology used to discuss sociocultural literacy research, and the ethnographic-based research precedents, which shaped my research and guided my data analysis. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss the history of Mexican migration to the U.S, I present statistics concerning recent trends in the incidence of migration in Mexico and in the south central Mexican state where these case study families live, the

socioeconomic profile of the migrants, and the economic transitions which migrants and their families experience.

Recent studies show that the remittances sent by Mexican migrants play an increasing role in the economies of migrants' families and communities. In 2002, remittances constituted 47% of Mexican migrants' families' total incomes (CONAPO, 2006b). Migrant families report spending 78% of the remittances received on household expenditures and 7% on education (Suro, 2003). The resulting impact on families could be that, with the basic needs being covered, younger members might be able to stay in school longer and, as a result, participate in learning activities in which academically based literacy practices are central. Mexican census statistics show the percentage of the Mexican population 19 and older having passed at least one year of preparatory high school, rose from 7.5% in 1990 to 10.2% in 2000 (INEGI, 2000a). The percentage of the population 24 and older having passed at least one year of university study rose from 9% in 1990 to 12% in 2000 (INEGI, 2000a). Furthermore, remittances might allow the opportunity for individuals to participate in other literacy activities, which would otherwise be impossible, for example, access to academic and cultural resources such as school outings or computer technology.

In fact, in the region where this study took place, Gustavo Rodríguez, a local social activist comments "on the one hand, it is satisfying that many remittances are used exclusively to avoid desertion from school, even though, in the end, it does not help much since, a large number of students who finish middle or high school end up emigrating anyway, once they find that in their community, in their state, they cannot expect any better lifestyle (my translation, García, 2005, p. 7)." In spite of this, and with the

understanding that people and the phenomenon of migration are in constant flux, I present information on who sends remittances, how much, and to whom. I discuss how remittances are used, what they signify, and their effects on society and families.

I briefly present methodological precedents, which have been used to study recent Mexico-U.S. migration, terminology used in discussing migration, and the migration-related terminology as used in this study. I then focus on the migration – literacy link and present the assumptions under which I carried out this study. I end Chapter One with the specific research questions, which guided this work.

In Chapter Two, I present the methodology followed in this study, from initial contact with the community through gaining access to the families, data collection and analysis. In Chapter Three, I introduce the participants of the study, that is, myself, the research community, and the three transnational families, looking at each family's history and experience as related to migration. I present the results of the study in Chapter Four, reviewing the literacy practices of the case study families as they relate to the research questions. In Chapter Five I discuss my findings in terms of larger questions concerning literacy and migration. I also discuss the limitations the study presents and the implications my findings could have for education. I end with suggestions for future research on literacy and migration.

1.4 Literacy Literature Review

1.4.1. A Sociocultural Perspective of Literacy

Reading and writing mean different things to different people. A sociocultural perspective at literacy looks on literacy as a verb more than a noun. As a result,

movement, direction, and intention all play a part in literacy. From a sociocultural perspective, literacy is seen as a social practice involving space and time and occurring within social experience. Literacy is enacted in a domain between people who are fulfilling roles and working toward goals within a culture with its own customs and history. Literacy practices project values and beliefs and in turn influence the same social structures in which they occur. More- and less-competent readers and writers interact, and these interactions effect changes and, when repeated over time, establish traditions. As a result, literacy plays a significant role in socialization and education (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). This study looks at literacy practices in the homes where much socialization occurs and where a sense of literacy first develops.

Except in the case of completing school-assigned homework, home literacy events do not typically have literacy as their core purpose. Rather, literacy events are typically circumstantial to some ulterior, meaningful goal. Literacy becomes a medium for accomplishing life's tasks, and, as one accomplishes those tasks, one's proficiency in literacy develops. The literacy event not only aims at fulfilling some ulterior goal, but also shapes future acts of reading and writing (Barton, 1999, p. 49). Similarly, Paulo Freire's view (expressed in 1973) is that literacy is "purposeful, contextual, and transformative . . . intimately connected to language itself (cited in Walsh, 1991, p. 6)." Consequently, much literacy learning may take place in homes, and so, literacy in the home has become the focus of much interest in literacy research (e.g. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1983; Heath, 1983; Guerra, 1998). This chapter offers a look at some of the main contributions offered by recent studies.

Kendrick & McKay (2002) drew on a social constructivist orientation when they analyzed what images children construct about reading and writing in their own lives, at home, school, and in the community. They assumed Vygotsky's (1978) theory that 'spontaneous concept development' originates in children's personal experiences and can be reflected in their drawing. The drawing works as a window to that knowing. They also drew on Vygotsky's (1988) framework that assumes transmission and acquisition of cultural knowledge, such as literacy, takes place interpersonally between individuals before it is internalized on an intrapersonal level. They looked at children to learn what literacy is and how it develops. Methodologically then, they used children's thoughts, ideas and drawings as valuable research resources. I drew on these same theoretical constructs and in part, on this methodology for the classroom exercise which I developed extending the subject matter to include migration. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter Two.

Sociocultural literacy studies assert that parents and families make important contributions to children's literacy development (González & Moll, 2002). In a quantitative study, Bennett, Weigel, and Martin (2002) found that families' literacy-related activities, for example reading aloud to children and engaging in writing activities in front of children, and beliefs, such as reading enjoyment, correlate highly with children's emergent language and literacy skills. These findings indicate that such family literacy practices present learning opportunities to children. Vance's (2005) study of family literacy practices in the same Mexican community as the present study found that the father and mother's roles in the family affect children's literacy development. Children who have access to materials for reading and writing at home and who see their

parents reading and writing are more likely to achieve academically (Vance, 2005). Most interesting may be the fact that families, regardless of socioeconomic status or cultural background, provide literacy learning opportunities (Vance, 2005; Cairney, 2002; Auerbach, 1997).

1.4.2 A Look at Family and Network Literacy Practices

Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988), in an ethnographic study of the homes of inner-city African-American children living in poverty in the U.S., found rich and complex uses of literacy including close family involvement in children's homework activities, with mothers sitting side-by-side with their children in the process. They recorded a wide variety of texts present in the homes, and found that family members were able to discuss the content of the texts. They also observed rich intra-family communication, with members sharing opinions on different topics and attempting to solve economic problems most often incorporating print in meeting their needs.

Other studies have described the influence of broader family and community networks on literacy development (e.g. González and Moll, 2002; Smith, 2001; Guerra, 1998). Based on theory that literacy is socially constructed, these studies, dealing with a 'working-class Latino community,' a 'Mexican-American neighborhood,' and a 'transnational Mexicano community,' respectively, show that contact with these networks provides students with sources of knowledge which affect their values, their sense of identity, and their language.

One of the principal reasons that minority homes, whether so-called because of ethnicity or language, are of special interest to literacy researchers working from a

sociocultural perspective is because of the possible influence on pedagogy. Educators are concerned with improving pedagogy to meet the needs of these learners. González & Moll (2002) found that when teachers recognized the value of households' competence and knowledge, it enabled positive pedagogical actions. González et al. (2005) note that children from varied socio-cultural backgrounds bring to school a wealth of knowledge and skills, which they learn at home. They suggest that effective teaching strategies build on these funds of knowledge when they are presented in contextualized learning situations. Similarly, transnational families, like the participants in this study, might provide linguistic knowledge or skills which educators could draw on in order to enrich school practices (Smith, 2005).

Although homes have become a legitimate literacy research area, research on literacy practices in Mexican homes, where history, cultural values, and beliefs differ, has been limited. Understanding these contextualized literacy practices could help enlighten school practices in Mexico, and in the U.S. and Canada, countries with an increasing number of Mexican heritage students.

1.4.3. Literacy in Mexican Schools and Communities

One of the goals of public education in Mexico is to "transform the function of the schools to favor the goal of learning of all students (García Monsreal & Cruz Rodríguez, 2004, p.1)." Recent studies indicate, however, that Mexican classrooms teach reading and writing as school objects using activities which are de-contextualized and which lack originality and communicative functions (Teague, Smith & Jiménez, 2006; Castillo Rojas, 2004; Ballesteros, 2003). Although the presentation and form of writing,

such as conventional use of accenting, spelling, handwriting and punctuation are highly valued, teachers seldom integrate them into meaningful and practical tasks. Furthermore, in studies carried out in the same south-central Mexican region as the present study, Teague, et al. (2006), Ballesteros (2003) and Jiménez, Smith & Martínez-León (2003), found a gap between school literacy practices and the wider communities' actual literacy practices, in which meaning tends to prevail over form. González et al. (2005) stress that contextualized teaching of literacy has proven most effective and concerns giving students formative activities, which are meaningful to them, that is, making explicit connections between school and students' lives.

In order to foster this connection, schools need to understand literacy practices present in students' homes. González et al. (2005), suggest going into the homes and taking inventory of not only the literacy practices but also the wider funds of knowledge with which the families organize and live their lives. As previously stated, it is within these day-to-day activities that literacy practices are almost always embedded (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

1.4.4. Literacy Terms

Barton, Hamilton and Ilvaniç (2000) refer to situated literacies to show that we may be literate in one place at one time, while in another place at another time we find ourselves unable to fulfill the needs and goals of the situation. In this light, we can speak of being musically literate or becoming computer literate. For the purpose of literacy as a subject of scientific study, Barton & Hamilton (2000) propose looking at texts, events and practices – *texts* being, in this case, instances of written language; *events* being

activities involving the written text – it may or may not include talk which deals with the text as a subject; and, *practices* being how people use and value these literacy events, that is, "how people talk about and make sense of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 7)." Texts and events are observable, while practices include the unobservable underlying ideologies involved in these events. I use these three tools as the base of data collection in this study.

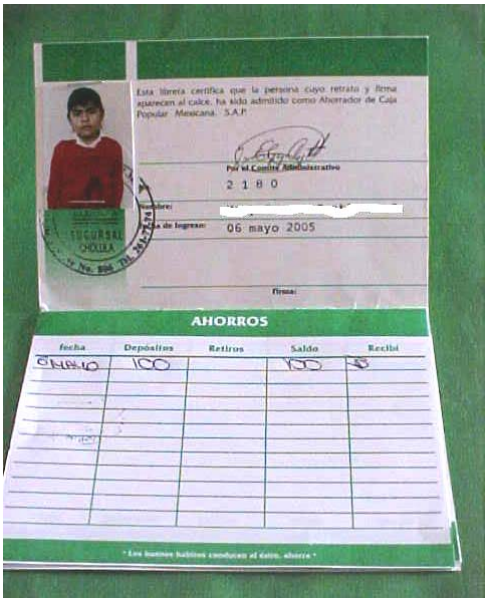

Figure 1.1. Savings booklet, open to first entry

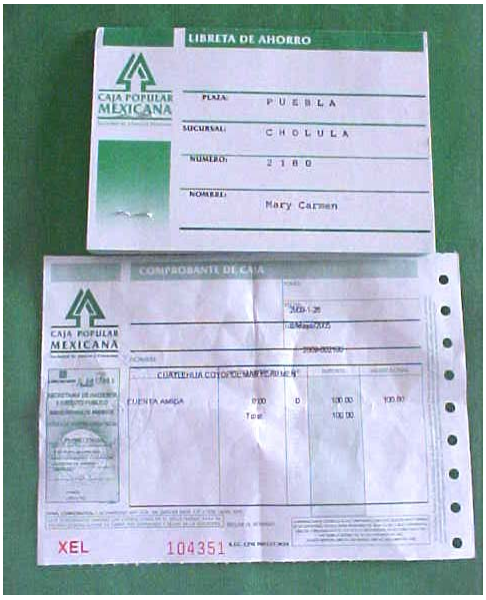

Figure 1.2. Savings booklet, cover and first deposit receipt

To illustrate the concept of a literacy practice, I present an example centering on savings accounts. At different times in the past, the Tenahua Tlatehui family opened various savings accounts. Today each member has his or her own account. The most recently opened account was for the family's youngest member, Belen. In order to open the account, various papers had to be presented as well as a photograph and an amount of money. Upon opening the account with $100 (approximately 9 U.S. dollars) they received the booklet, seen in *Figure 1.1* in which the cashier had typed the identifying

information of the new account, and had handwritten the date, the amount of the deposit, and his or her signature. Belen's photograph was also included and sealed with the association's stamp. The association's president had also signed the booklet, while the space for Belen's signature, seen in *Figure 1.2*, was still left blank. *Figure 1.2* also shows the printed receipt of deposit on which appears the fiscal seal of the association.

With the members having their own booklets, the family can see how much each has saved, showing a bit of the economic history of the family. Looking at the dates in the different booklets, they remember what was happening at the time. For example, Belen's eldest brother opened his account a couple years before when his grandparents gave him money in appreciation for his help with springtime planting. The children also identify the booklets with the money, which represents their hopes for the future. Their mother particularly wants to have something set aside in case the children should want to continue their education.

For Belen, it also represents her father's continued effort and interest in her well being since he temporarily resides in the Los Angeles area and sends the remittances that make her deposits possible. Belen was able to observe the steps involved in making the document official, involving her mother, a photographer, the cashier, and the association's president. The combined result created in Belen a feeling of importance, pride, and happiness.

The savings booklet is socially constructed in that it required various people to make the booklet a socially-accepted financial document; that is, a document which represents the financial institution's responsibility in holding and eventually providing the deposited money once again to the cardholder. The savings booklet is socioculturally

embedded in that the booklet itself is circumstantial to the practice of setting aside money in a financial institution. We can appreciate how the literacy practice involving savings booklets deals with much more than the words written on them.

A text may have one author or many; it may have one reader or many, and each may play a distinct role or participate for different purposes. Through time, the significance of a text may remain or change in relevance. Through space, the significance of a text may also change. A text may reflect the family history and family or community values or beliefs. Discussion surrounding the text may enforce traditional values or may reveal a stance toward change. From the example above, we see a family who values each member, no matter one's age or sex, and who trusts the financial future of this institution. Indeed, Luke (2003), based on Bourdieu's social class-based literacy model and a sociocultural view of literacy, finds that literacy crosses into "fields of power and practice in the larger community (p.140)." Luke (2003) sees certain literacy forms as examples of cultural capital and access to them as class-based. Today, many families spend large sums of money in making certain literacy materials available, for example, in the form of a computer and printer. The *availability* of literacy materials, that is, the physical presence of the tools and the print material that might serve a purpose in a literacy event, makes *access* to literacy, that is, opportunities to participate in literacy, more likely. However, it is only through interactive participation in literacy events that *appropriation* of reading and writing, gradually assumed responsibility and self-direction of an activity, in this case literacy practices, can occur (Rockwell, 1992; Farr, 1994; Kalman, 2003).

In this study, I use *literacy practices* to refer to patterns of collective uses and the assigned value each participant holds for these events including feelings, awareness, and construction of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

Following Kalman (2003), I use *availability* to refer to the physical presence of the tools and the print material that might serve a purpose in a literacy event and *access* to refer to opportunities to participate in literacy events.

I use Rockwell's (1996) term *appropriation* to refer to interactive participation in literacy events when people select, use, interpret, adapt and transform texts, making them their own.

The study presented in this paper looks at the availability and access of literacy in the homes of three transnational families in a south central Mexican community and to see if appropriation has come about as a by-product of contact with and use of new forms or practices resulting from migration.

1.4.5. Ethnographic-Based Literacy Research

Because of the social complexity of literacy, many literacy researchers conduct their work using ethnographic-based research methods. The ethnographer's job is to elicit the participants' sociocultural knowledge – that is, how the participant makes sense of social behavior and communication – as systematically and yet as naturally as possible using instruments, schedules, and questionnaires which are developed *in situ*. The instruments are created in response to a perceived need, and interview protocols are developed and modified as the researcher analyzes data and determines what is salient (Spindler & Spindler, 1987).

Taylor & Dorsey Gaines (1988), Guerra (1998), Barton & Hamilton (2000) and González & Moll (2002) focused on *practices,* observing through home visits what family members do. González & Moll (2002) delineate three home inquiry-based visits in which the researcher approached the home as a learner with 'an anthropological lens,' focusing on family history, household activities, parenting, schooling, and language use.

Following the home visits, González and Moll (2002) stress the importance of detailed field notes, which yield a partial representation of reality – a "strategic theoretical reduction of complexity of people's everyday experiences without losing sight from the rich and dynamic totality of their lives (p. 635)." Audio- and videotapes can also aid in faithfully documenting participants' words, providing another rich source of data. González & Moll (2002) also implemented 'study groups' where theory, methods, and data were discussed by the various researchers working on the project. Reading and re-reading the fieldnotes or transcripts periodically, as well as reviewing documents, helps the researcher gain perspective, create new questions, and recognize patterns and underlying meanings. By constantly comparing data collected from participants using different methods, the ethnographer hopes to understand the participants' view of reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Each of these methods was used in the collection and analysis of data in the present study.

1.4.6. Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis begins with writing fieldnotes and interspersing observer's comments within them, continues with the reading and re-reading of fieldnotes, and follows with coding the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In

categorizing literacy practices of *Mexicano* families in Chicago, Farr (1994) adapted four domains used by Goody (1986). According to Farr (1994), Goody found writing to be "historically and cross-culturally" central to religion, economy, politics, and law. Because of changes in American policies at the time of Farr's study, the political-legal activities in which the *Mexicanos* were involved moved her to merge the domains of politics and law. Furthermore, the data revealed literacy practices which could not fit within those categories, and in order to accommodate them, she added the domains of *education*, which included both institutional and personal educational endeavors, and *family/home*, which included practices of a strictly personal realm.

Faulstich Orellana, Reynolds, Dorner & Meza (2003) drew on Farr's five domains in their study with other immigrant families in the Chicago area, but added community, financial and medical domains in order to accommodate the household texts they found. Farr (1994) contends that categorizing literacy practices within domains allows researchers to situate the practices in a social perspective rather than concentrating on a more utilitarian perspective.

Borrowing strategies for categorizing is helpful within the field because studies and their results can then be compared and contrasted. Variation in analytical strategies is thus a necessary response to the nature of the data found. For example, cultural differences may make a previous category obsolete or a new one necessary, or the difference in research focus may require new categories or find that others are unneeded. I discuss category formation further in Chapter Two.

1.4.7. Literacy Literature Review Conclusion

The sociocultural focus on literacy, the great influence homes have on children's literacy development and use, and the scant literature available on literacy practices in homes in Mexico, all compelled the research presented here. Choosing a population for study is a compelling subject, and it can perhaps best be explained by returning to Barton & Hamilton's definition of literacy (2000). The idea that literacy involves space and time, as mentioned in the Introduction, relates directly to the idea Pedraza (1987) proposed: "....that a person's migratory history is the most critical factor influencing language behavior as cited in Mercado, 2005 p. 239)." I elaborate on some of the complexities of migration in the following section.

1.5. Literature Review of Mexican Migration

As I mentioned in the Overview, in this section I describe the context in which Mexican migrants have traditionally moved across international borders and the condition of migration in Mexico today, with a particular focus on the state of Puebla, the place where families of many transnational migrants make their homes. I sketch a socioeconomic profile of transnational migrants from this region and the economic transitions which they and their family's experience. I also give estimates on remittances, the impact these have on migrant families, how these families use them and what they come to mean, particularly in terms of written language. I discuss methodological precedents in studying migration and the terminology used. Finally, I present the terms as I use them in this study.

1.5.1. History of Mexican Migration to the U.S.

According to the Mexican *Consejo Nacional de Población* (CONAPO) (2006a), the origins of Mexican migration to the U.S. can be characterized as principally labor-related, conditioned by the demand of labor in the U.S. CONAPO identifies four periods of relatively stable Mexico-U.S. migration. The first period began near the end of the nineteenth century and lasted until the Great Depression. Durand (2004) notes that, during this stage, Mexican emigrants were often considered 'traitors' by their compatriots, for working and strengthening their neighbor instead of their homeland. The second period lasted from the Great Depression until 1941. During this time U.S. demand for Mexican workers decreased and the majority of them were deported.

By 1940, World War II had depleted the U.S. labor force and the U.S. looked once more toward Mexico to satisfy the labor needs of wartime economy (Durand, 2004). This third period, lasting from 1942 to 1964, is termed the *Bracero* era that refers to the U.S. – Mexico-regulated program facilitating temporary contracts for seasonal workers. Initially the program was put into effect in order to meet U.S. food supply needs; in later years the program also supplied workers to the railroad companies (Meissner, 2004). The *braceros* were typically "young, male, temporary laborers from rural areas who went to live in the US and work in agriculture (Durand, 2004, p. 18)." Against the Mexican government's urging to renew the program, the U.S. unilaterally cancelled it in 1964 because Mexican migrant labor continued to arrive outside the agreed channels, and thus began the period of 'no policy politics' (Durand, 2004), the fourth period of Mexico-U.S. migration.[1]

[1] Today, the former *braceros* on both sides of the border are demanding that money that had been deducted from paychecks and sent back to the Mexican government finally be returned to them. While the Mexican Congress has approved the creation of a special fund to compensate the former Mexican guest workers, a payment plan has yet to be finalized (Paterson, 2005).

According to Durand (2004) “Mexico’s government simply ignored the matter and abandoned its migrants. In this [fourth] phase, *laissez-faire* attitudes and policies reigned, though both governments would pay the costs 20 years later (p. 18).” In the void of policy, the supply and demand for Mexican migrant labor continued and intensified through the early 1980’s. CONAPO (2005) reports between 260 and 290 thousand migrants offering their labor in the U.S. between 1960 and 1970. The total estimated number of migrants between 1970 and 1980 increased to between 1.2 and 1.55 million (CONAPO, 2006b).

Throughout these four periods of migration, the majority of the migrants were agricultural workers originating mostly from the northern and central states of Zacatecas, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Nayarit, and Durango, and to a lesser degree, the states of Aguascalientes, Colima, Jalisco, and San Luis Potosí, all of which are considered part of the *traditional* sending region (CONAPO, 2006a). In the early 1980’s these patterns began to change, with the ensuing intensification and diversification of migration attributed to two decades of successive economic crises in Mexico and changing economic and migratory policies, both commercial and political, within a context of growing globalization (CONAPO, 2005).

Without a comprehensive national and bi-national migration policy, and in the face of intensified migration, attempts to study the phenomenon have become more complex. Attempts to quantify and describe the phenomenon have also become controversial, as can be seen in the next section.

1.5.2. Present State of Migration in Mexico

1.5.2.1. Incidence of migration in Mexico and profile of Mexican migrants

Figures for migration tend to vary widely, with some figures including both documented and undocumented migrants, and others only one group or the other. Numbers of undocumented migrants can only be estimated. According to Passel (2004) Mexico represents the largest source of immigration to the U.S., accounting for approximately one-fifth of the documented immigrants and 57 percent of the undocumented immigrants in the U.S. The Pew Hispanic Center (PHC) estimates that 3.5 million of the 6.3 million undocumented migrants in the U.S. labor force are from Mexico (Kochhar, 2005). Based on INEGI figures, CONAPO reports between 1997 and 2002, approximately 2.5 million Mexican migrants traveled to the U.S.

The loss in the Mexican work force has been systematic and increasingly perceptible. Today, an estimated 9.9 million people who were born in Mexico (approximately nine percent of the population) presently reside in the U.S., and a reported 16.8 million people born in the U.S. are of Mexican descent (CONAPO, 2006a).

The socioeconomic profile of the Mexican migrant has been changing, increasing in heterogeneity. As shown in Table 1.1, a smaller percentage of younger people are attempting to cross, but percentages for young people remain extraordinarily high. PHC (2005) reports that most survey respondents (72%) lack high school education. This figure supports CONAPO's findings, as seen in Table 1.1, but in general, the number of years in formal schooling for Mexican migrants has risen. PHC found that younger and more recent arrivals tend to have higher levels of schooling than the adult population of Mexico at large, with the share of respondents that studied as far as high school being three times as large as for Mexico's adult population in general (Kochhar, 2005). Most

migrants have a conjugal relationship and are the heads of households in Mexico (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1
Profile of Undocumented Migrants

Profile Of Undocumented Migrants		1993 – 1997˅	2001 – 2003˅˅
Average annual number	*	454 489	458 771
	**	643 139	484 150
Ages*	12 – 24	29.2%	23.2%
	25 – 34	38.3%	32.9%
	35 – 44	21.8%	29.8%
	45 and older	10.6%	14.1%
Ages* *	12 – 24	52.0%	42.6%
	25 – 34	34.3%	38.1%
	35 – 44	10.2%	14.8%
	45 and older	3.4%	4.6%
Having a conjugal relationship*		62.5%	71%
Head of household**		68.5%	70%
Education*	No schooling	8.5%	5%
	Primary school incomplete	28.2%	19.9%
	Primary school complete	29.2%	26.9%
	Secondary begun or more	34.0%	48.2%
Originating in rural areas (less than 15,000 inhabitants)			
	**	27.9%	41.4%
	*	46.0%	52.5%

*CONAPO, 2006, Seasonal migrants heading to the US, 1993 – 2003.
**CONAPO, 2005, Percentages of those turned back at the border by the border patrol.
***PHC's December 2005 report (Kochhar, 2005).
˅Statistics collected from Mar. 28, 1993 to Mar. 27, 1994, from Dec. 14, 1994 to Dec. 13 1995, and from July 11, 1996 to July 10, 1997.
˅˅Statistics collected from July 11, 2001 to July 10, 2003.

As seen in Table 1.1, the percentage of migrants coming from rural areas has risen significantly but the PHC Survey reports that newer arrivals are less likely to have been employed as farm workers than in commerce and sales (Kochhar, 2005). The PHC Survey (Kochhar, 2005) found that only 5% of the respondents had been unemployed before leaving Mexico, thus suggesting underemployment rather than unemployment as

the main reason for migrating. CONAPO (2005) places the percentage of migrants who had been actively employed in Mexico consistently near 70% between 1993 and 2003.

The PHC Survey (Kochhar, 2005) also reports that over the past fifteen years, more migrants originate from farther south, primarily from the four new sending states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Puebla and Veracruz. This survey reports that 24% of all migrants come from these four states. This seems high compared to CONAPO (2005) figures which show estimates ranging from 6 to 14% for all four states combined; however, the tendency from both studies show a rise.

Looking at Puebla more closely, since this is the home state for the three families in this case study, migrants are leaving from more places within the state. The traditional sending region has been the Mixteca, a rural region in the southern part of the state, inhabited primarily by indigenous people, while the new sending zones now include central communities such as Atlixco, San Pedro Cholula, San Andrés Cholula (the focus community of the present study) and the Sierra Norte (García, 2004, Lozano, 2005). Circular migrants, who measure their goals according to accomplishments achieved in the sending community and migrate with the intention of returning to their home communities, are the most prevalent found in the state of Puebla (Binford & D'Aubeterre, 2000).

1.5.2.2. Reason for migrating

Portes & Rumbaut (1996) report "evidence suggests people do not migrate out of invidious comparisons with the sending country, but in order to survive and prosper in the country of origin (p. 291)." Recent reports about Mexican migration support this

claim. Suro (2003), in a report summarizing results of a two-year study by the PHC and the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), reported that remittances:

> ... are keeping large numbers of working-class families from slipping into poverty....though most of the money goes for food and rent, anywhere from a quarter and a third of remittance recipients report putting some of it into savings, educational expenses or small investments.... an important source of sustenance for those that remain behind.... (p. 5).

This, together with the fact that most migrants are employed in Mexico before leaving for the U.S., points to jobs paying such low wages that families cannot fulfill their basic needs.

When I asked the participants in this study their reasons for migrating, general responses supported this line of reasoning. Ernesto, one of the case study fathers said, "*...pues más que nada porque allá el dinero no no alcanzaba y este pues también para salir un poco más adelante, para que no le faltara nada a mis niños*" [... well more than anything because there the money didn't last and well, to get ahead a little, so that my kids wouldn't be lacking anything]. Monica, the wife of another migrant explained,

> "*Porque ya no alcanzaba el dinero ... para nosotros, o sea, para la casa, ya había poco trabajo y teníamos que meter a los niños a la escuela y ya no nos alcanzaba el dinero"* [Because the money didn't last ... for us, or, for the house, there was little work and we had to get the kids into school and the money didn't last anymore.]

It is important to emphasize that both emigrants had paying jobs when they left for the U.S.

The development of networks is a crucial aspect of migration and the fact of having family members already in the U.S. also influence the decision to migrate (Kochhar, 2005; Alba, 2004; Suro, 2003). In explaining how Ernesto had made the decision to emigrate, Licha, his wife, said,

> *Porque su hermano de él ya estaba allá y uno de sus tíos y como veíamos que, pues, los gastos ya eran muy, sí, ya estaban muy fuertes porque, pues, ya empezaron ir a al secundaria los dos grandes y la niña a la primaria"* [Because one of his brothers was already there and one of his uncles, and since we could see that, well, expenses were very, yes, they were big because, well, the two big kids had begun to go to secondary and the girl to primary].

Also relevant is that both families mention concerns about the children's schooling. Teague (2004) mentions in his description of a Mexican school in the same research community as this study, "both private and public schools in Mexico have many other hidden costs, such as money for uniforms, materials and donations (p.27)." Although the students of these case study families attend public schools, school-related expenses were among the central factors in the decision to migrate. Ernesto explained,

> *el año pasado en cuando el día que iban a entrar a la escuela en el 2004, fue en julio cuando son las inscripciones y todo eso, (...) Donde va Jesus en el Centro Escolar, fue la cooperación de 1,200 pesos, después (...) de los demás del otro parte [de Jaime], de Belen también. O sea, ese tiempo sí me vi un poquito presionado. O sea, no sé como conseguí el dinero, pero de todas maneras, yo pagué todo ese dinero, y, pos,' orita,' (...) antes de que entraran a la escuela, ps' ya, o sea, ya lo habíamos pagado todo eso, y ya 8 días antes, creo, ya le había comprado los útiles de la escuela y-y sus mochilas. O sea, no fue lo mismo de hace un año.* [Last year, the day they were going to start school in 2004, it was in July when registration and all that was (...) Where Jesus goes to school, the family quota was 1,200 pesos, then of the others, the other part [from Jaime], from Belen too. Really, at that time, I was a little pressured. Really, I don't know how I got the money, but anyway, I paid all that money, and, well, now (...) before they started school, well, we had already paid everything and even eight days before, I think, she (his wife) had already bought the school supplies and their backpacks. So really, it wasn't the same as last year.]

The price this father has paid to get his children to school in the required uniform and with the required materials has been to migrate.

1.5.2.3. Economic transition for migrants and families

According to the PHC survey (2005), 95% of Mexican migrants in the U.S. usually find work within the first six months of their arrival. However, over a third typically

experience periods of unemployment which may last over a month. Also, the more unstable the job, the more poorly paid. Other factors, which affect wage levels, are sex – women typically earn less than men, and time – the longer the length of residence, the potentially higher the earnings. Speaking English well also improves migrants' wages, as does possessing a US government-issued identification, such as a valid US driver's license (Kochhar, R. 2005).

Approximately two-thirds of PHC's survey respondents (2005) were employed in agriculture, construction, manufacturing or hospitality. Today, 42% of the migrants find jobs in construction and hospitality industries as compared to 27% fifteen years ago. In the same time period, the number of Mexican immigrants working in agriculture has decreased, from 15% to 9%.

Family networks play a significant role in the migrant's job search, with perhaps 80% of the respondents having a relative other than a spouse or child in the U.S., and 45% using family network contacts in their job search (Kochhar, 2005). These family networks may also serve to buffer the effects of salaries below the US federal poverty level. Households with multiple earners keep many migrants living above the poverty level (Kochhar, 2005).

With migrants' incomes typically being low and interspersed with periods of unemployment, sending remittances home is no small feat. Despite these circumstances, the number of dollars being sent to Mexico annually has soared into the billions, allowing for millions of Mexicans to procure the basic food to overcome hunger, and allowing the youngest members of the population to continue in school, to set new goals and perhaps to imagine new horizons. Literacy practices are embedded within these endeavors, as are

remittances. Upon receiving remittances, families may find they finally have access to the literacy tools and resources that are available in the community. Whether and how families appropriate literacy tools and resources in literacy practices is a part of the focus of this study. The following section offers a look at who actually receives remittances in Mexico, how they use them and what they mean for them.

1.5.3. Remittances

1.5.3.1. Who sends how much to whom?

To quote Suro (2003), "people move north and money moves south (p.5)," with some six million immigrants from Latin America sending money to families back home on a regular basis (Suro, 2003). The *Banco de México* cites remittances as the most stable source of currency for Mexico in the last ten years, with the average rate of growth rounding out at twenty percent per year over the previous decade. In Mexico, income from remittances remains second only to income from petroleum (González Amador & Martínez, 2005).[2]

At a national conference of Mexican governors, May 2005, it was reported that Mexico obtains 18 billion dollars annually from an estimated 20 million Mexicans in the US (Cancino, 2005). The then governor of Puebla, Mario Marín, reported that the nearly two and a half million *Poblanos* (people whose origins are in the state of Puebla) in the US, residing mainly in the New York area (1.2 million), Los Angeles (400,000), Chicago (120,000), Las Vegas (80,000), and San Antonio and Houston (80,000), send remittances to Puebla which exceed two billion dollars annually (*Muestra EU*, 2005). This reflects a

[2] This is, in part, because of the exceptionally high prices at which petroleum has been set since 2002 (González Amador & Martínez, 2005).

significant increase in recent years even when compared to earlier estimates calculated by the *Banco de México*. Family remittances rose from 178 million dollars in 1995 to 792 million dollars in 2003 (COANPO, 2005). For both time periods, this placed Puebla in sixth place nationally for sending and receiving remittances. Thus, although *Poblanos* made up 3.1% of the Mexican resident population in the US in 2003, they sent 5.9% of the dollar amount of received remittances nationally.

The PHC-MIF Survey (Suro, 2003) reported 18 percent of the adult population in Mexico receiving remittances. Furthermore, receivers of remittances were from all socioeconomic sectors and practically all regions of Mexico. The one characteristic common to receivers is that the majority are women (Suro, 2003). Indeed, Malkin (1998) shows it is a woman's role to receive the remittances and to negotiate the male migrant's status and respect in the community of origin.

1.5.3.2. How are remittances sent and how much does it cost to send them?

Seventy percent of senders report using wire transfer companies, whereas seventeen percent use informal means such as the mail or individuals who carry the funds by hand, and eleven percent use banks (Suro, 2003). Although the cost of sending remittances today is a third of what it was at the turn of the century (González Amador & Martínez, 2005) costs remain high and reducing the costs has become a priority. One of the Multilateral Investment Fund's programs aims to cut the costs of remittances by fostering competition among service providers (Suro, 2003). The state of Puebla has established locales called *Casas del Migrante* [The Migrant's House] in the US to provide *Poblanos* with orientation on sending remittances at lower costs, among other

services (Cancino, 2005). Federal and private institutions on both sides of the border are working together to bring costs down as well as to offer a free on-line course dealing with money management and safety and cost issues of sending remittances (González Amador & Martínez, 2005). One of the first steps toward financial cooperation was for the financial institutions to accept a consulate-issued identification as a document to obtain their services (González Amador & Martínez, 2005).

1.5.3.3. What remittances represent

As mentioned above, the majority of remittances are used for basic human needs such as food, housing and education. According to a social activist and parish priest, Gustavo Rodríguez, the remittances sent to the *Mixteca Poblana* and other marginal regions have prevented a hunger crisis in Mexico, and arguably, a revolution (García, 2004). Suro claims,

> These remittances are the expression of profound emotional bonds between those separated by a border ... They also represent a new kind of integration among nations undertaken not by trade negotiators but by ordinary folk to assuage their economic woes (Inter-American Development Bank [IADB], 2003, p.1).

Malkin (1998) discusses gender, status and modernity in relation to remittances in a transnational migrant circuit, and finds migrants use Mexico as the source of their identity. According to Malkin (1998), in part, male migrants are dependent on women to take the remittances and "materially manifest their presence in absence (p.7)." Male migrants seek social status and respect through their generosity, partly in terms of remittances sent. By sending generous remittances the migrant seeks to be recognized as "the benevolent patriarch," and as provider for *La Familia.* In the case where it is men

who are the migrants, women are responsible for generating and negotiating the men's status in the community of origin.

1.5.4. Effects of migration, remittances and transnationalism on Mexican communities and families

Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) report that goods, information, and symbols move back and forth re-shaping migrants' communities and making for significant social transformation 'back home.' Levitt (2001), in a study of a transnational community spanning a village in the Dominican Republic and Boston, Massachusetts in the US, documented numerous economic as well as social remittances. She found clothes, appliances, toys and food originating in the U.S, but also linguistic concepts that people on both fronts shared. News of illness, infidelity, or the granting of travel visas, spread equally quickly in both locations. The range, frequency, and intensity of these practices differ, in part on how much is shared collectively and on whether the migrants and their community of origin think of themselves as a group (Levitt, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2002).

Scholars have also addressed the status dichotomy in which transnational migrants find themselves. While they may be considered of low socio-economic status in the U.S., in their homeland, if they are passing economic or other remittances to their families, they may be rising in prestige. Depending on the degree of development of the transnational social field, they may also rise in prestige by empowering hometown social and economic organizations (Levitt, 2001; Malkin, 1998). As migrants begin to distribute economic and social resources, they also distribute their loyalty between the two home fronts through transnational practices (Levitt, 2001).

Attempts at maintaining communication with the homeland may be one way for migrants to express loyalty. Faulstich Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam (2001) found that first generation migrants, with relatively few economic resources for traveling back and forth, exerted considerable effort to maintain communication. They found traditional handwritten letters sent through regular mail as well as special delivery services established by other immigrants, which are especially used for sending letters with money. However, if there is no money to share with those 'back home,' communication can falter and relationships become strained (Faulstich Orellana, et al., 2001; Levitt, 2001; D'Aubeterre, 2000; Malkin, 1998). Besides letters, telephone, e-mail, and video cameras were also mentioned, while other electronic forms of communication, such as 'messenger' or 'chat' were not.

Migrants make more telephone calls to Mexico than to any other country (Guarnizo, 2005). According to the Mexican *Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones*, (Cofetel), at 4.5 pesos (approximately 50 US cents), the cost per minute is as much as 900% more from Mexico than from the U.S., at a half peso (approximately 5 US cents) (Domínguez Ríos, 2005).

Government official also look to increase migrants' loyalty to their communities of origin through innovative communication techniques. The state of Puebla, together with the *Universidad Autónoma de Puebla* (UAP), is promoting teleconferences, which aim to put migrants in New York in touch with their hometowns, principally in the Mixteca (Martínez Jiménez, 2005). They hope that migrants, who have not been able to return to their homeland, might be able to see with their own eyes what their "*migradólares*" have been able to accomplish. By showing films of building and restoration projects, which

had been funded by remittances, officials hope to give migrants a sense of satisfaction and motivation to continue sending remittances. By showing films of families, officials also hope to strengthen family relationships (Martínez Jiménez, 2005).

DÁubeterre (2000) addressed the effects of migration on gender roles within families. She stresses that migration automatically changes relationships between men and women. In a study on a transnational circuit in Puebla, she found that women carry out "arduous and subtle work oriented toward maintaining family solidarity and relations (p. 82)." She found they do not accept with resignation and passivity the return of their husbands, but creatively work at rescuing the affection and obligations of their husbands.

D'Aubeterre (2000) and Malkin (1998) also discuss the prestige attained by migrants through knowledge of the migrant experience, *un imaginario colectivo* [a collective imagery]. Malkin (1998) found this prestige to be gender-related, describing migration as a practice through which masculinity is constructed, legitimized for men through the discourse of work and hardship, and a transition away from ignorance to valued knowledge. Migrants do not earn this respect automatically, but rather, negotiate it, as mentioned above, often through female family members. It is also negotiated in the face of *chisme* [gossip] and criticisms, which may be circulated about migrants even in their physical absence (Malkin, 1998).

In the following section, I discuss the methodologies used to study the phenomenon of transnational migration.

1.5.5. Methodology Specific to Transnational Migration

In order to quantify undocumented migration, numerous data collection methodologies have been attempted and new methodologies are constantly being developed. Different studies utilizing different methodologies result in differing figures. Numbers of transnational migrants are calculated (a) as they head toward the U.S.; (b) as they return from the U.S.; (c) as they are turned back at the border; and (d) as they request services at the Mexican consulates in the U.S, among many others. According to Leite, Ramos & Gaspar (2003) the data made available by *Encuesta sobre Migración en la Frontera Norte de México* [Survey on Migration at the Northern Border of Mexico] (EMIF) may be the best systematic and continuous observation of migratory movement of Mexicans to the US. EMIF utilizes the first three methodologies mentioned above.

Many of the statistics offered by CONAPO are based on EMIF data collected in collaboration with the *Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social*, the *Colegio de la Frontera Norte*, and the *Instituto Nacional de Migración* (all based in Mexico). CONAPO also uses some data based on figures collected by the Mexican census bureau (INEGI), although it is important to point out that when comparing migration figures based on a survey of families in the same research community as the present study with INEGI figures, INEGI numbers concerning migration appear low (Vance, 2005).

The Pew Hispanic Center (PHC), an independent research organization based in the US develops original methodologies for each study. In 2003, the PHC in collaboration with the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), an autonomous fund administered by the Inter-American Development Bank, which helps finance private sector development projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, conducted a study on remittance receivers

and senders. Data included individual and focus group interviews in five Latin American sending countries and telephone interviews with transnational migrants living in the U.S.

Another PHC (2005) survey on Mexican migrants concentrated on the labor background of undocumented Mexican immigrants, their transition into the US labor market, and their economic status in their new jobs in the US. Over a period of six months at seven different Mexican consulates across the US, 4836 immigrants requesting a *matrícula consular*, an identity card, completed a 12-page questionnaire.[3] One concern in this study might be, for example, whether the profile of migrants seeking this document might be different from those who do not seek it, thus skewing the data. No single quantitative methodology may represent the undocumented migrant population perfectly.

Studies on transnational migration have also been carried out using qualitative data collection methods. Throughout the recent literature, experts suggest that migration is best understood in terms of *practices* as they relate to social networks, as they relate through time, and as they relate through space. Using qualitative methods, Fitzgerald (2002), D'Aubeterre (2000), and Malkin (1998) analyze practices of negotiation between members of migrant social networks over time and space.

Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt (1999) call for more qualitative research on migration and propose "the individual and his/her support networks as the proper unit of analysis.... [Beginning] with the history and activities of individuals is the most efficient way of learning about the institutional underpinnings of transnationalism and its structural effects

[3] The usefulness of this card has been the concerted work of interested parties in both the public and private sectors, especially those who wish to claim some overseeing of the multi-billion dollar remittances, particularly in regard to lowering the cost of money transfers. Those in possession of this card would be able to open bank accounts in the US and by and large are undocumented workers.

(p. 220)." Although transnational activities may evolve in reaction to government and commercial policies, it is the individual who initiates and conducts them. Portes et al. (1999) point out that case studies are particularly effective in the early stages of transnationalism, that is, before the social networks develop into complex fields. This is the case in the families of the present study.

Guarnizo (2005) also suggests looking at transnationalism as the mix of habitual or sporadic practices, relations, and interactions adopted by actors – people or non-government institutions which transcend territorial nation-state boundaries, and which implies social, spatial and temporal embeddedness. Because space and time are integral to an analysis of migration, Levitt (2001) and Portes et al. (1999) suggest space- and time-compressing technology are a necessary pre-condition to the proliferation of transnational practices and access to transport and communication technology should also be analyzed in relation to transnational practices. In this study, I present the families' relation with digital literacies and telephone practices.

Guarnizo (2005) also suggests more data, both quantitative and qualitative are needed from both "here" and "there" concerning gender, especially on women, and concerning the cultural effects, especially the intangible costs of migration. Changes in literacy practices and language choices might be one expression of an intangible result of migration, however, rather than causing a deficit, the result might be considered a resource. I discuss this further in section 1.6, but first, I discuss the terminology used in scholarly literature concerning transnational migration.

1.5.6. Terminology Specific to Transnational Migration

In scholarly literature about migrants and migration, terminology is often based on the migrant's legal status in the host country; thus, the classification of *documented* and *undocumented* immigrants, which the PHC prefers. Also, literature refers to *settled* or *permanent* migrants, those who are assumed to have settled in the host country, and *sojourner* or *circular* migrants, those who move back and forth across borders between two residences.

Fitzgerald (2002) deems the term *transnationalism* has been useful in highlighting the variety of migrant experiences in relation to the sending and receiving countries, in contrast to earlier literature based on assimilationist ideology. To make the international – transnational distinction he clarifies "an 'international' is constituted by national units while a 'transnational' organization does not imply constituent national-level units (Fitzgerald, 2002, p.4)." He further disaggregates transnationalism as follows. First, while *trans-* refers to crossing or transcending, *nation* may refer to an imagined ethnic community or a political unit. In discussions of intra-family issues, he notes, the distinction may be insignificant, but in discussions of economic and political analysis this difference becomes important. Second, transnationalism has been used to both refer to migrants who identify with one nation but physically live in another, and to migrants who politically identify with two distinct nations. Finally, in scholarly literature, transnationalism has been interchangeably used to discuss identity issues at various levels, that is, the local, regional and national. Fitzgerald's case study concerns mainly transnational political issues regarding an immigrant labor union, and he describes how the participants' actions, views and concerns often mix the types and levels of 'nation' referred to.

Portes, et al. (1999) also analyze the term transnationalism, settling on an economic-, political-, socio-cultural-based definition referring to "occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contact over time across national borders for their implementation (p. 219)." In this context, *nation* refers to the political or territorialized unit. In contrast, D'Aubeterre (2000), in her study on gender and conjugal relations in a transnational social space, bases her work on an economic-, political-, and socio-cultural-based definition of transnationalism offered by Basch, Glick & Szanton (1995), which de-territorializes the social space.

Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001), speak of transnational migration as characterized by migrants who refer to success *not* as assimilating and growing deep roots in a new land, but rather as returning to their country of origin after achieving the goals that motivated them to migrate in the first place, that is, after earning the financial and/or social resources that enable them to have a better life 'back home' (p. 29).

According to Levitt (2001) when people migrate, they may become integrated into the receiving community and lose ties to the homeland, return home and not continue in migrational practices, or maintain or deepen close contacts on both sides of the border and grow into a *migration social network*. Levitt (2001) explains that migration spreads through social networks. If the networks mature, deepening social, religious, political and economic relations, which span borders, they become *transnational social fields* (Levitt, 2001). Much recent literature on migration refers to networks, fields, spaces and/or circuits.

D'Aubeterre (2000) chooses to use the term *transnational migrant circuits* because it recognizes actors taking active roles in the construction of their life conditions, a set of

practices carried out by actors in diverse areas of social life (politics, religion, family, marriage) which are shaped from historic conditions and which in turn contribute to modifications in these areas, through negotiation of differing and not always compatible interests. D'Aubeterre (2000) attributes the concept *transnational migrant circuits* to Rouse (1991), who defined it as "the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information for the involved people on both sides of the border who are so strongly tied, they look at themselves as one sole community (my translation, p. 64)."

Looking carefully at how migration has been described also forces researchers to re-conceptualize our definitions of family or domestic group or homes, and so we find terms in the literature such as *transborder homes, binational homes,* and *transnational homes and families.* As D'Aubeterre (2000) explains, the ties between these related groups are "reinforced through time and space by means of an intricate networking of transactions which can be manipulated and constructed according to circumstances and independently of time and space (my translation, p. 66)."

In this paper, I use D'Aubeterre's (2000) concept *transnational migrant circuits* to refer to the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information for the involved people, on both sides of the border, who are so strongly tied, they look at themselves as one sole community.

I use the term *family* to refer to the people the participants identified as members of their immediate families, and *extended families* to refer to the families of origin of each of the parents of the family, as well as their families or origin's *families* as they might define them today. In this study, *transnational family* is used to refer to those who identify themselves as *family* and who are actors within the *transnational migrant circuit.*

I use *home* or *household* interchangeably to refer to the smallest edifice which they consider fully theirs, including the *family*, and the environment and atmosphere therein. H*ome place* or *home plot* refers to the land, building, environment, atmosphere, and *extended family* to which the participants identify as belonging to the *extended family*.

In the following section, I present the reader with research precedents, which have dealt specifically with literacy as it relates to transnational circuits.

1.6. A Deficit vs. Resource Perspective: The Literacy – Migration Links and Gaps

In the face of migration, people from different backgrounds and different cultures often come together in order to achieve a common goal. The common goal may lead people to believe they are working under the same assumptions. Using qualitative data collection through participant observations in homes, classrooms, and community programs, and analysis of transcripts of focus groups and interviews, Faulstich Orellana, Monkman, & MacGillivray (2002) conducted a study with teachers and parents of US-born children of 'Latino' immigrant parents in order to examine how parents and teachers talk about children's academic and social development.

They found that these parents and teachers operated with different points of reference for what a good education was. While parents, some of whom had college degrees, compared their children's schooling to their own schooling, teachers compared the children's schooling to middle-class American schooling. Also, whereas the parents saw obstacles to success as primarily inter-personal, mentioning gangs and drugs, teachers saw obstacles to the children's success as more social, citing prejudices and

poverty. How might these differing points of reference play out in the classroom and in the homes?

One explanation is that the children participating in the Faulstich Orellana et al. (2002) study live with parents and study with teachers who are of two historically and culturally distinct backgrounds. Results suggest that teachers often overlook the possibility that hardships may give children an understanding of the world that more materially privileged children may never have, and that this understanding might be tapped as a source for learning and development. This is comparable to the deficit vs. the resource perspectives discussed by González et al. (2005).

Through inquiry-based visits in Mexican migrant homes in the U.S., González, Moll, Floyd Tenery, et al. (2005) found that Mexican parents believed some schools in Mexico were academically ahead of the U.S. schools, and that discipline was stricter, with children in US school. Floyd Tenery was surprised to find Mexican immigrant parents wanted more homework, more communication with the schools, and stricter discipline. This contrasts with Valdés' (1996) study of Mexican immigrant families in the U.S., which found that the disciplining techniques of detention, and homework assignments, which were dependent on parental involvement, could be viewed as interfering with family life. Again, misunderstandings can arise from the differences in the children and teachers' social and educational backgrounds.

Portes et al. (1999) suggest case studies of literacy practices in transnational homes are needed to inform language and literacy-in-education policy (Teague et al., 2006; Luke, 2003; Farr, 1991) and to understand the relation between the local and the global (Street, 2005). Case studies, like the ones in this study, offer culturally situated views, which

might aid in understanding the ideologies underlying transnational migration and literacy. In the following section, I present the assumptions under which I conducted the study, and the questions, which guided it.

1.7. This Study's Assumptions and Research Questions

I carried out this study under the following assumptions.

- Because transnational migrants continue to play parental roles, I assume the transnational experience should have an impact on the literacy attitudes and practices of children of transnational families.
- I assumed analysis of literacy practices specific to transnationalism might shed light as to the roles of different family members in the migration process, as well as to the role of literacy in the migration process itself.
- I assumed that homes experiencing transnational migration incorporate literacy practices particular to the experience of transnational migration and that these can be used as resources in novel literacy practices.

With a perspective of literacy and migration practices being culturally situated in time, transcending place, and being used for different ends, I arrived at the following research questions:

- What literacy practices can be found in the homes of transnational families who live in this community?
- What texts do these families use in these literacy practices and how do they use them?

- What texts do these families produce in these literacy practices and how do they produce them?
- What role do different family members play in these literacy practices?
- What purpose(s) do these literacy practices serve in the family?
- What purpose(s) do these literacy practices serve in the transnational migrant circuit?

These questions guided this study. In the following chapter, I take the reader through a more detailed account of the methodology that shaped this case study, including gaining access to the families, the data collection process, and the data analysis.

2. Methodology

In this chapter I present the methodology used to collect and analyze the data, describing the steps in detail. Although the study's focus is on three transnational families, more than three families were involved along the way. The qualitative data collection principally followed the three-step, home inquiry-based visits described in Chapter One. Analysis at each step in the study guided the methodological decisions I made along the way. Methodological decisions were also constrained by the families' willingness to work with me. In the following sections, I present the core aspects of the methodology I followed and the reasoning behind them.

2.1. COSOLEM

This study was carried out under the auspices of a federally funded research project conducted at a private university in the southeastern region of Mexico. The project, *Construcción Social de Lectores y Escritores en México* (COSOLEM), sought to analyze the social construction of readers and writers of Mexico, and in particular, in one community in central Mexico.[1] This project director offered a qualitative research seminar in which I had the opportunity to practice, observe, and analyze qualitative data collection techniques with a focus on literacy practices. As a research assistant, I attended meetings where we practiced research data collection techniques in role-playing situational fieldwork. We also discussed theoretical issues in an attempt to link scholarly

[1] Over a three-year period, the project dealt with recording literacy practices at three levels: the schools, the community, and the homes. This study was conducted primarily within the context of the last level – that of the home. As student research assistant, I participated in data collection covering the three levels of the project over a period of two years. The research was conducted under the direction of three researchers, two professors at a private university in the research community where this study was carried out, and the other a professor at a private university in the U.S.

literature and the data, which we were collecting. For example, we addressed theoretical questions of *México Profundo* and *México Imaginario* as discussed by Bonfil Batalla (1987, 1996), masculinity, and migration, all of which were useful in the interpretation of data from this study. González and Moll (2002) proposed the value of such research meetings, putting into practice the Vygotskyan mediating function by providing the researchers with a context for the *appropriation,* as defined by Rockwell (1996), of theories.

The COSOLEM project also sponsored my attendance at an international conference on migration and a meeting on educational research, as well as my participation in national conferences on applied linguistics and sociolinguistics and the sociology of language. These experiences also helped to shape my understanding of theories and questions involved in literacy and migration practices.

2.2. Quantitative Data: Linguistic Census of School Population

In the fall of 2004, the COSOLEM team conducted a quantitative survey called the *Censo Sociolingüístico de Padres de Familia* (see Appendix A for a sample form) at the Alfonso Cano Elementary School (pseudonym), a primary school in the research community. The census was developed specifically for the project by COSOLEM members in order to obtain a linguistic and social profile of local school populations. COSOLEM researchers had already used the instrument at two other schools in the same city, and members incorporated modifications to the census *in situ* as new questions arose, as suggested by Spindler & Spindler (1987). In part, results provided a quantitative

description of the population from which I chose the participants of this study. (See Vance, 2005 for a more complete analysis of results.)

We obtained permission from the director of the school to conduct the census at the entrance to the school and, on days of festivals or meetings, in the school patio where we approached parents after they had dropped their children off or had finished tending to their children's school business. Approximately 25% of the families at the school completed the census and we believe the results are a reliable and representative socio-economic-linguistic profile of the overall school population. The school requires families to attend bi-monthly parent-teacher conferences, and we were informed as to when they would be held. Also, the responsibility for organizing each school ceremony is rotated among the different classrooms, and parents are encouraged to observe their children's participation. In cases where parents are unable to attend these school-held functions, families typically send a representative usually a grandparent. We took these characteristics into consideration when scheduling linguistic census visits. We also feel assured they are reliable because, for the most part, the results are consistent with results from two other schools where the census was given in the same community: an alternative semi-private school (described by Teague, 2004 and Vance, 2005), and a nearby public school.

Census questions focused on family members in the school and home, the services in the homes, the educational profile of the interviewed parent or adult family member, the linguistic background and practices of the family, and the family's contact with migration and indigenous languages. I was able to share the results, a socio-economic

and linguistic profile of families attending the school. I refer to these data principally in Chapter 3, in the description of the community and the participants of this study.

2.3. Gaining Access to Families through the School

The interim between February 2004 and June 2005 was important for developing trust and building rapport with the school administration and faculty, the students, and the families. I was first introduced to the director and teachers when I attended a COSOLEM-sponsored teacher workshop in February 2004. This was helpful because I was able to hear teachers speak about their attitudes toward their own literacy practices. My contacts that day led me to work with the teacher Fide Coatl who later expressed her interest in working with me. Because Alfonso Cano students remain with the same teacher and classmates throughout first and second grade, I was able to work Fide and her students over a period of a year and a half. During this time, I carried out two separate research projects based on data I collected in her classroom, and in the course of many visits, I also became better acquainted with the director, teachers, children, parents, and the general organization and history of the school. Other colleagues of mine were simultaneously researching in other classrooms at the school, and two of these papers were published (Sullivan, 2005 and Vance, 2005a).

Part of my strategy to gain access was to visit Alfonso Cano at different times of day. If I wanted to speak with the director or to observe the flag ceremony, I went early on Monday mornings. If I went in order to photograph student-produced writing on display, I could go later in the day, overlapping with lunch and recess. *Figure 2.1* shows a sample of the kinds of student-produced writing exhibited to celebrate the Mexican,

Day of the Dead. *Figure 2.2* shows a sample of a student-made poster for a literacy campaign.

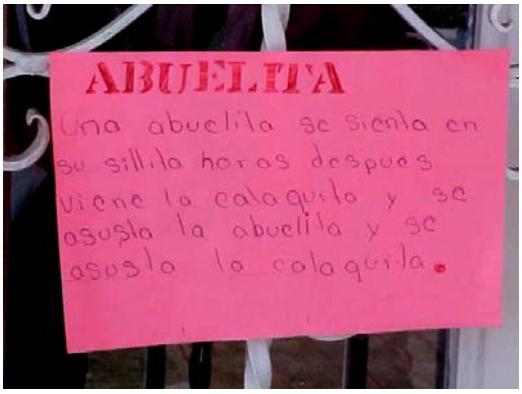

Figure 2.1. Abuelita. Una abuelita se sienta en su sillita horas después viene la calaquita y se asusta la abuelita y se asusta la calaquita [Granny: A granny sits on her little chair hours later comes the little skeleton and the granny gets frightened and the little skeleton gets frightened].

Figure 2.2. Si quieres saber de la cultura Empieza con la lectura [If you want to know about culture Start with reading].

On these visits, children often accompanied me around the grounds. Also, I was able to chat and have lunch with the teachers with whom I developed a friendly relationship, to the point that we lent books back and forth.

Based on our growing knowledge of the school, the project director and I developed the first of three instruments developed *in situ* in this study. The Teacher / Migration Questionnaire allowed me to estimate the extent of migration in the different classrooms, and gauge the disposition of the teachers to work on a research project with me (Appendix B). I was then able to approach the director with a specific proposal for target classrooms, and he consulted with the appropriate teachers. As a result, Fide and her (then) second-grade class, a fourth-grade teacher and group, and a first-grade teacher and group were invited to participate. I then followed with two observations in each classroom in order to

begin identifying students' names and faces and to learn more about the general atmosphere in which the children studied.

In order to identify children living in transnational migrant circuits, I prepared an experimental interactive literacy activity for the three different classrooms. I drew on methodology developed in Kendrick and McKay's study (2002), *Young Children's Images of Literacy at Home, at School, and in the Community,* based on children's drawings as windows to their concept of migration and the Vygotsky (1988) assumption that transmission and acquisition of cultural knowledge, such as literacy, takes place interpersonally between individuals before it is internalized on an intrapersonal level. This activity extended the subject matter to migration.

I worked together with an elementary school teacher, another member of the COSOLEM team, to design lesson plans that were grade appropriate, and then piloted the lesson with a group of interested children. (For a sample lesson plan, see Appendix C.) I also gave the teachers a copy of the corresponding lesson plan a few days before entering into the classrooms. The activity centered on Sofía Meza Keane's *Querida Abuelita* (1997), a colorful book in which a Mexican child migrates to the U.S and writes his grandmother letters about his experiences. The idea was for the children to use the medium of drawing and writing to express their understandings of migration.

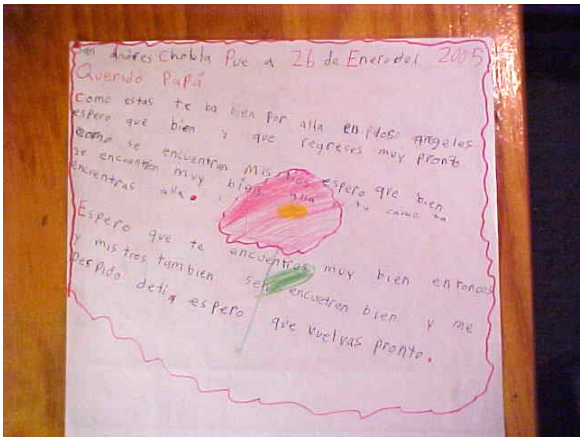

Figure 2.3. Querido Papá [Dear Pa]

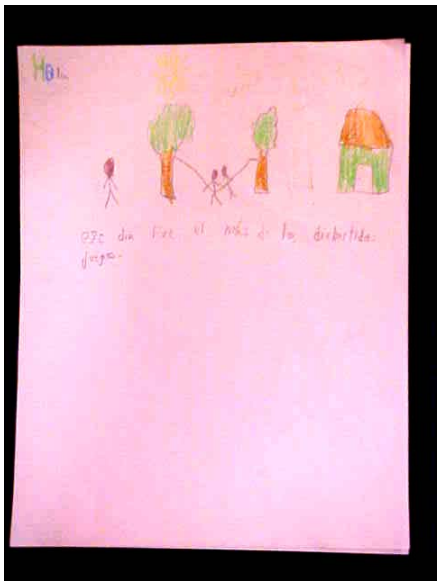

Figure 2.4. Ese día fue el más de los divertidos juegos [That day was the most fun].

In the first part of the activity, I introduced the theme of migration, established the idea of communicating through letters, read selected letters from the book and invited the students to comment. The second part of the activity called for the children to write, or write and draw, letters to a migrant, or someone who lived "far away." This gave me a first collection of child-produced documents to analyze. *Figures 2.3* and *2.4* show letters produced by fourth- and second-graders, respectively, who were later selected as participants. COSOLEM members videotaped the activity and thus I was able to view the videotapes with the teachers afterwards and hear their perspective of the children's participation. Triangulating data from the tape analysis, the letters, and the teachers' knowledge of the family guided my decisions in making a list of possible families to work with.

My first direct contact with transnational parents occurred at a meeting, which the director called on my behalf. Based on the results from the *Querida Abuelita* exercise, I

had requested the attendance of fifteen families with migrant connections. At the meeting, the director of the school introduced me to the families, and I presented them with a letter signed by the director of Alfonso Cano, the director of the COSOLEM project, and me, in which the objectives of the study were described. The letter (Appendix D) explained the purpose of the study and the data collection plan of three home inquiry-based visits. I made it clear that participation was voluntary, results would be anonymous, and that, depending on the results of each stage, families might be invited to participate in the next. I also asked the parents in attendance to fill out a contact information sheet (Appendix E), including home address, telephone number, and indications such as house color and neighboring landmarks, which would help me find their home. This last bit of information was important because many homes in the community do not have house numbers visibly marked.

Since participation in the project was voluntary, parents were given the opportunity to indicate whether they were or were not interested in participating or whether they wanted more information before deciding. Of these fifteen families, two indicated they "preferred not to participate," and one added his own response to "*no participa*," and placed an X before it. Twelve families indicated they either wanted more information or were willing to participate, so my next step was to meet individually with each of these families.

2.4. Data Collection in the Households

Of the twelve families who either requested more information or indicated that they were willing to participate in the study, I conducted nine initial interviews. One family I

was never able to make contact with. Another family was never at home at the times they suggested meeting. The third family decided it was in their best interest not to participate. Two families preferred to have the initial interview at the school, and each time the administration found a place for me to conduct the interview.

As a result of this first round of visits, I made contact with two more families with children at Alfonso Cano School. One student was from Fide's second grade group and a first cousin of one of the original nine children. It was through Fide that I obtained the initial interview with this family. The other student was also a first cousin of one of the nine children but from a different second-grade group. Her second-grade teacher helped to arrange a first meeting by having the mother fill out a contact data sheet. Thus, I was able to conduct a total of eleven initial interviews with families who had an immediate or extended family member residing outside Mexico, with at least one child either in first, second, or fourth grade (one family had a child in second and fourth), and who voluntarily consented to participate in the project. Table 2.1 shows the general characteristics and the nature of the participation of each of the eleven families.

Table 2.1:
Family Participation

Families, their characteristics and participation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	total
Migrant,												
Immediate family member					x	x		x	x		x	5
Extended family member	x	x	x	x			x			x		6
Grade in school, First	x											1
Second		x	x	x				x	x		x	6
Fourth					x	x	x	x		x		5
Querida Abuelita letter	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	10
Family social history form	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	11
Literacy inventory	-	x	x	x	x	-	-	x	-	x	x	7
Interview	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	3

2.4.1. First Home Visit: Family Social History

The purpose of the initial home visits was to collect data concerning the make-up of the family, including family history concerning education, work, their transnational experience, their experience with indigenous language, and family interests and activities, including those involving literacy. Researchers in the COSOLEM project had previously developed the Family Social History Form (Appendix F). I piloted the form with a family from the school who was not taking part in the study, and found it to be very helpful in giving the families a sense that my visit was professionally objective and delimited, and thus contributed to an initial sense of trust in me. The form covered a wide range of pertinent information, allowing me a sufficiently in-depth introduction to the families. The children of the family were usually present during these initial visits and they participated in the informal interview. I usually took the letter the child had written in the *Querida Abuelita* class and used this text to help open discussion on migration. During the first visit, I always requested a second visit and asked how the family would feel if I were to take a camera to visually document the reading and writing of their home. In order to impress on them the importance of taking photographs, I also showed them photographs I had taken in the school, as shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 and those I had taken in their classrooms. As an expression of reciprocity, I left the families with a copy of a photograph in which their child appeared.

2.4.2. Second Home Visit: Literacy Inventory

Following the eleven initial interviews, I completed a second home inquiry-based visit with seven of the families. The purpose of the second visit was to describe and

record the texts found in the home, and to elicit talk about those texts. I came to see the visit itself as one very big multi-literacy event. Using a digital camera, aside from myself, occasionally the participants themselves photographed the print examples, which the families shared with me. Another student researcher and I developed a literacy inventory (Appendix G); to record the kinds of text available in the homes, and to describe the access different members of the family have to these texts. We piloted the literacy inventory in several homes, attempting to use local terms for texts in an attempt to eliminate any form-meaning discrepancies. The recording of the presence and use of texts is important because it is only through availability and access to texts that people encounter opportunities to interact with reading and writing, and that "appropriation," as defined by Rockwell (1996), may occur (Kalman, 2003). The inventory offered a space to record the availability – access information simply, as well as information on who participated with certain texts and for what purposes. I found it only of limited help as a guide for the family visits, but, by adding to it after each visit I kept it up to date, and it was actually of more help in the data analysis stage of the study.

When participants shared a text – an instance of written language, whether handwritten or machine printed – I asked them to tell me about it. For example, I wanted to know what they called each text. If it had been produced in the home, I wanted to know who, how and why they had produced it; how they used it; and where they kept it, if they did. If the text had been produced elsewhere and brought into the home, I asked how it had arrived to the house, who had brought it, why they had brought it, and how they used it. I hoped these questions about texts would lead me to identify the literacy

practices of the family, to understand the function(s) they served, and to discern their possible relationship with the transnational migrant circuit.

Most often, the children became actively involved in the second visit by finding print examples and oftentimes getting out their favorite texts or their most recent writing activity. Several children were inquisitive and outgoing enough to want to learn how the digital camera worked, and we would look back on the pictures we had taken. A few of the children participated by taking the pictures themselves. Of the three case study families participating in this study, I was able to take photographs on four occasions with one family, on two occasions with another family, and only once with the other family.

In general, I sensed a feeling of excitement from most families during these visits and perhaps a bit of nervousness. Five out of the seven families had a calendar hanging in the sitting room, where most families began the visit, and I found these calendars to be a non-threatening starting point. I also liked to begin with the calendars because reading a calendar does not necessarily fit with what people might traditionally think of as reading.

Before we took the picture of the calendar, I would often ask one of the children if they could find *today* on it, telling them, if they could find it, we could take a picture of it. Sometimes, if there were siblings, an older sibling would help the younger one find the date. Thus, it became a literacy event involving a socially constructed meaning of a text. The following is an excerpt from my fieldnotes describing the calendar during the literacy inventory at the Salazar Oaxaca home. The images can be appreciated in *Figures 2.5* and *2.6*.

> **...Pregunto a Giovani si puede encontrar el día de hoy en el calendario. See Calendario_Malu_Giovani.JPG. Dice que no, pero lo baja y hago preguntas a Oswaldo para guiarlo al día....*

Le pregunto que día de la semana es pero no sabe. Le pregunto porque están los números rojos abajo del D, y no sabe. Le digo que pregunte a su hermano y dice que es por días festivos... [...I ask Giovani if he can find the day on the calendar. See .... He says no, but he takes it down [off the wall] and I ask Oswaldo questions to guide him to the day.... I ask him what day of the week it is but he does not know. I ask him why there are red numbers under the *D*, and he does not know. I tell him to ask his brother and he says that it is for holidays...].

**Más tarde, Mariana me dice que entre el 24 y el 31 de diciembre, cuando uno hace las compras en los lugares de costumbre, les obsequia o un calendario o un toper, o algo que piensen que puede ser útil. Ella los ha recibido en la recaudería, la tiendita, la dulcería, o la zapatería.* [Later, Mariana tells me that between the December 24 and 31, when you shop at your usual stores, they give you a gift or a calendar or a plastic recipient, or something that they think might be useful. She has received [gifts] in the fresh produce shop, the miscellaneous store, the candy store, or the shoe store.]

*Pregunto a Mariana del otro calendario; see Calendario_CopaOro_Giovani.JPG, que es de Copa de Oro y lo había traído de su trabajo.... Pido a Giovani que busque el día en ese calendario y no se tarda en encontrarla. [I ask Mariana about the other calendar; see ..., which is from *Copa de Oro* and she had brought it from work.... I ask Giovani to look for today on this calendar and he does not take long in finding it.]

Figure 2.5: Malu calendar

Figure 2.6: Copa de Oro calendar

As the fieldnotes describe, I was able to learn where the calendar texts came from and how the family came to have them. This also informed me about certain business practices in the community. I also found out to some extent what some of the members knew about the text.

With some of the seven families, the literacy inventory was limited to one. Other families took me to different places in the home, including their shop or store. The literacy inventory results do not pretend to reflect a complete picture of the literacy available in the households, but the event does allow the participants to tell me what they do with literacy and how and why. In the next section, I discuss the subsequent in-depth interview that allowed further understanding of their literacy practices.

2.4.3. Third Home Visit: In-Depth Interview

The third home visit consisted of in-depth interviews. In order for the interview data to be useful for the larger COSOLEM project, I followed the interview protocol other researchers had developed, adding new questions relevant to transnational families. (See Appendix H.) Throughout the in-depth interviews, my purpose was to invite the participants, both adults and children, including any siblings who wished to participate (no members of the extended family participated), to discuss their ideas on and personal experiences with reading and writing. I also invited them to talk about their experiences with transnationalism, how it affected them, and what they thought about it. I explicitly asked about reading or writing practices and forms, which resulted from the family's transnationalism. I hoped to come to a fuller understanding of these issues from the participants' perspective, and thus to gain insight into the underlying ideologies involved.

Of the seven families who participated in the literacy inventory, four had immediate family members living abroad at the time, and these were the families, which most interested me in my research. Three agreed to being interviewed. In total, ten members of the three case study families participated to some extent in the interviews, which I

audio-recorded with their permission. Table 2.2 shows a summary of details of the contact I had had as I conducted the in-depth interview with the participants. The number of family visits reflects the number of opportunities I had to observe the families' interactions and practices and to listen to what they had to say. These observations guided my interviewing. During Belen's interview, she brought out writing she had been doing and we looked through it and discussed it, much like what we had done in the literacy inventory. The interview with Ernesto Tenahua I conducted by telephone, approximately six months after the first home inquiry-based visit. He is the only migrant I was able to interview, and it was a week short of a year since his leave-taking. With COSOLEM funds, I was able to purchase a telephone card in the U.S. and mail it to him. Through his wife, Licha, we were able to coordinate a time and day convenient for the call. I used a telephone with an intercom option to record the conversation. On the recording, traffic can heard behind him because he had made the call from a public telephone. It was a successful event and one we both enjoyed.

Table 2.2
Profile of Researcher's Contact with Participants at Time of In-depth Interview

Family member**	Date* of first visit	Date of interview	# of family visit at interview	length of inter-view in minutes
Licha Tlatehui	April 4	August 24	7th	80
Belen Tenahua Tlatehui	April 4	August 30	9th	55
Ernesto Tenahua	April 4	October 9	12th	80
Roberta Salazar Oaxaca	June 9	September 2	4th	20
Giovani Salazar Oaxaca	June 9	September 2	4th	10
Mariana Oaxaca, Figo & Oswaldo Salazar Oaxaca	June 9	September 2	4th	40
Monica Romero	July 14	September 2	3rd	30
Araceli Nava Romero	July 14	September 2	3rd	30

*All dates are of the year 2005.
**Pseudonyms.

2.4.4. Transcription Procedures

After recording the interviews, I wrote accompanying field notes to contextualize what was heard in the cassette. I supplied information on who was being interviewed, where, and when to the transcriber provided by COSOLEM, a native Mexican business school Spanish and computer teacher from the neighboring community. I checked the transcripts with the actual recordings, making changes on the transcriptions as needed. The transcriptions include very little punctuation while explanatory contextual comments, such as noises, indistinct voices or, interruptions were interspersed in brackets. For the purpose of using quotes from these transcriptions in this paper, I added minimal punctuation in order to aid comprehension. Because of the poor audio quality in the telephone interview, for that transcription, I included the interview protocol, rearranged as we dealt with it in conversation, wrote detailed impressions, and transcribed parts of our conversation in order to facilitate the transcriber's job

2.4.5. Teacher Interviews

I interviewed three teachers from the primary school, two who were home room teachers for three of the case study children. I conducted the interviews with the teachers near the end of June, 2005. By then, I had been working with the second-grade teacher, Fide, for sixteen months and with the first- and fourth-grade teachers, for seven months. I had carried out the *Querida Abuelita* project in their classrooms with their cooperation. They had been given me valuable feedback on the videotaped lesson, including providing background information on the families. They had also been helpful in arranging my initial contact with the families I wished to work with.

The three teachers arranged to be interviewed at the school during school hours while the children played or worked in their school books. At the time of these interviews, in late June, the children were already finished with final exams and seemed happy to have free time to socialize with their friends and classmates. Teachers at this school are free to make administrative judgments concerning their classroom activities, and it is not uncommon for groups to remain in classrooms without teacher supervision. Each interview lasted just over an hour.

Besides questions about their teaching experiences, practice, and philosophy, I asked them questions about their knowledge of the community, their own experience with migration/transnationalism and their perceptions of the effect migration may have in their classrooms. All three teachers reported personal experiences with migration. The fourth-grade teacher, Alejo, had twice before gone to the U.S. to work, once with working papers and once without. Fide and the first-grade teacher reported having brothers and cousins in the U.S.

Fide and Alejo were the homeroom teachers for three of the participants in this study. All three teachers were well informed and sympathetic to the community's cultural activities. Fide is originally from a nearby community and Alejo has also made his home in the same nearby community, having married a woman from there. The first-grade teacher was born and lives in the nearby state capital city. I also asked questions on the case study students' academic performance and socialization. Parent-teacher contact is an explicit part of school policy, and I found the teachers were well aware of the students' home environments and informed about the families' situations. This knowledge was helpful in triangulating data.

2.4.6. Fieldnotes

Table 2.3.
Profile of Number of Fieldnotes by Domains and Activities

Fieldnote domains	111	Activity	
School visits	59	Ceremonies and general environment	7
		Conversation with administration	8
		Linguistic Census	7
		Consultations with teachers	15
		Classroom observation	16
		Teacher interviews	3
		Parent meeting	1
		Family interviews	2
Home visits	37	Family Social History Form (1st Home Inquiry)	11
		Literacy inventory (2nd Home Inquiry)	7
		Interviews (3rd Home Inquiry)	3
		Subsequent visits with 3 case study families	16
Town visits and home stop-ins	9	Observations in zocalo, church, programming visits, confirming visits	9
Telephone calls	6	Confirming visits, chatting	6

Table 2.3 shows the breakdown of fieldnotes by domain and activity that I recorded between February 2004 and December 2005, a total of 111. As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), after each instance of contact with the school, families, and the community, I wrote detailed fieldnotes of what I heard, saw, experienced and thought during these encounters. Initially, my observations took place mainly at the school; between February 2004 and June 2005 I stopped in at the school on at least 59 separate visits. I observed Fide's classroom three times in a period of a month when the children were in first grade, and seven times over a period of two months when the children were in second grade. In the first and fourth grade classrooms I did two observations each, once before and once after doing the *Querida Abuelita* classes. The fifteen teacher

consultations included such activities as reviewing the *Querida Abuelita* video, scheduling the activity, and sending and receiving notifications to and from the families.

The eight school administration visits included informing the director of my progress or my plans for the next stages. As the gatekeeper of my access to the school, it was important for me to obtain and keep the support of the director. The Secretary of Public Education (SEP) declared a literacy campaign for the 2004-2005 school year. The director enthusiastically supported, several literacy-promoting activities, including student-acted plays based on scenes from an adaptation of Cervantes' Don Quixote, and other storybooks. He did not offer any comments on transnational migration, but he was interested in the results from the Sociolinguistic Census and this study.

While interviews helped me understand the participants' attitudes and experiences with migration and literacy, the fieldnotes written after home visits provided the bulk of the data for the families' actual ways of dealing with migration and literacy. Above, in the section discussing the literacy inventory used in the second home visit, I include a sample of the after I conducted the literacy inventory at the home of the Tenahua Tlatehui family.

> **TMS-058. Wednesday, April 20, 2005. 5:00 p.m. La casa de la familia de Belen Tenahua Tlatehui. San Andrés Cholula.
>
> ...*From the desk area, Licha explains she has bought books for reference, to help, especially once they get to secondary school, with the homework. She says, "Lo leemos juntos. Luego le pregunto- ¿Lo entendiste? - No. y ¿Tú? - Yo lo entendí así. Tú, ¿qué entendistes? - Pués, así. – Entonces ponga algo de los dos. Ya que no estudié más que la primaria y hace tantos años, lo hacemos así. [We read it together. Then I ask him- Did you understand? – No, and you? – I understood it like this. What did you understand? – Well, like this. – Then put something between the two [versions]. Since I didn't study anything past primary and so many years ago, we do it like this.]" ...
>
> *Licha says that she bought them [the collection of books which include encyclopedias, craft books, and a table game

with a book on facts] at the school when they went and offered books. She bought a package. The company offered a payment plan, beginning in December, she agreed to pay 23 payments of $145 [pesos] each fortnight (quincena). She goes to the bank and deposits to an account. The total price was $3510. See images Contract_, Receipt_of_payment_, and Receipt_of_payment_2_package_Chilindrina_Belen_hogar_abr20.2005.JP

*She says her father-in-law scolds her saying, "¿Porqué endrogarnos con libros? [Why go into debt with books?]" Licha explains, "A mí me sirven. Él no está aquí cuando están haciendo tarea los jóvenes. A mí me ha servido mucho. Él dice que el cuñado no usa la suya (que tiene un enciclopedia que compró). Pero porque andan (sus hijos) todavía en la primaria y kinder. ¿Hasta dónde tendría que ir para conseguir la información? Como si tuviéramos algún lugar o lleváramos todo lo que se necesita saber en la cabeza. [They work for me. He isn't here when the kids are doing homework. They've helped me out a lot. He says that my brother-in-law doesn't use his (that he has an encyclopedia which he bought). But because his children are still in primary and kindergarten. Where would we have to go in order to get the information? As though we had someplace or we carried everything we need to know in our head.]" I mention that there is a library in the zocalo. Licha says that her kids often don't start the homework until later at night, much later than the library hours, and that they would have to go all the way there and back. It's very convenient to have the reference books on hand at home. Other nephews have even stopped over to consult them.

As this example illustrates, I wrote fieldnotes in English or Spanish, and sometimes both. When taking notes would not interrupt the flow of conversation, that is, when the participant would keep speaking whether or not I kept eye contact possible, I took notes during the actual conversations in order to include participants' actual words. I later included translations between brackets for the purposes of this report. The conversation to which Licha referred in this example concerned a set of books she had purchased, and which caused some friction in the extended family. I was able to confirm much of what Licha said through subsequent observations as well as later conversations with Licha´s husband and father-in-law.

By enumerating each field note entry, I was able to refer quickly back to them. I incorporated references to texts I had photographed and filed separately in JPG format. The images themselves served to jog my memory on several points that were mentioned in the conversations and literacy events, which I observed, and therefore helped to make for much richer fieldnotes. I used photographs to record visual copies of text to accompany the fieldnotes which gave a description but also the uses and conversation surrounding the text. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest "rich data" are "well-endowed with good description and dialogue relevant to what occurs at the setting and its meaning for the participants (p. 114)." The visual also aided in doing further document analyses of the texts.

I also wrote fieldnotes when I observed texts or practices I thought might be relevant to understanding the community better. Because, some families did not have telephones, or if they did, and I had not been able to make contact with them, I sometimes stopped at their homes if I was in the neighborhood. In this way I was able to schedule several home visits.

I also wrote fieldnotes following telephone calls with participants because they were often sources of valuable information. For example, I might call before leaving for an appointment with a family, and they would sometimes ask to reschedule a visit. Whether for health, extended family obligations or other reasons, documenting the conversation was important for understanding families better. Sometimes I found children to be especially chatty on the telephone; although the mother might be busy or the family not ready to receive me, the children were sometimes willing conversationalists.

2.4.7. Documents

Literacy practices concern texts produced or used by the participants. The first texts I collected were the letters written by the children in the *Querida Abuelita* classes. Most other texts I collected in PGF format using a digital camera. I was most comfortable using this technique because I felt it was less intrusive than asking permission to take the documents away to photocopy or scan. It was also a "fun" factor for the participants, because they had not had a digital camera in their homes previously. For the three families, I was able to collect a total of 191 images: 35 for the Nava Romero family, 108 for the Tenahua Tlatehui family, and 48 for the Salazar Oaxaca family. There were not 191 different texts; rather, these images often show the same document with a different focus or lighting, or open to different pages. I also photographed the home environment in which the family keeps or uses the text, as well as the participants themselves. The children also wanted to take photographs, and sometimes urged me to take photographs of people or of favorite objects of theirs. One participant found it entertaining to photograph herself at arm's distance or much closer, as seen in *Figure 2.7*. I kept most of these compositions because, like the drawings in Kendrick & McKay's (2002) study, these compositions reflect the children's perspective of the world they live in, a key objective of my study.

Figure 2.7. Belen's self-portrait.

I also attempted to capture the participants' views by letting them choose what to show me. Because of the embedded nature of literacy in our lives I sometimes had to help the family see the literacy in their lives – for example, the calendars, described in section 2.4.2. I did not always have the camera with me, so some documents are only described in the fieldnotes and registered in the literacy inventory.

These documents were focal points for participants to talk about their literacy practices. I was able to print black and white contact sheets of the pictures and when I wanted to discuss the text with the participants at some later date, I was able to actually show them a picture to help jog their memory.

2.5. Data Analysis

As I observed and talked with the participants, I came to see how literacy was embedded in the daily activities of each family. I began noting many similarities with the home literacy practices of other published studies. Since one of the techniques for categorizing is to use strategies, which other researchers have used (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), I took a closer look at the literature.

In comparing previous studies on literacy practices in homes, I distinguished between two main approaches to categorizing. One approach categorized literacy practices according to function (e.g. Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; and Barton & Hamilton, 1998, as cited in Mercado, 2005), according to the uses the readers and writers gave to their literacy practices. The other approach categorized literacy practices within domains of use, that is, the domain in which the reading and writing occur (Faulstich Orellana et al., 2003; Farr, 1991 & 1994). According to Farr (1994),

> Domains allow a more social, rather than individual, perspective, inasmuch as they allow one to situate literacy practice in the social relationships that exist within domains, as well as to situate the literacy practices more concretely within the larger view of daily life (p. 28).

Given the sociocultural nature of this study, I attempted categorizing the literacy practices which I documented within the five domains Farr (1994) used for categorizing home literacy practices of *mexicano* families in Chicago: religious, commercial, state or legal, educational, and family or recreational. In Table 2.4, I outline the basic description of the five domains as extracted from Farr (1994) and on which I based the categorizing of literacy practices found in this study.

Table 2.4:
Domains and Descriptions of Family Literacy Practices, Based on Farr (1994).

Domain	Description
Commercial/financial	literacy practices on the job, in entrepreneurial business activities, while shopping, and when paying bills
Educational	literacy practices associated with educationally-related public and private institutions as well as personal, informal endeavors
Familial/recreational	literacy practices lying solely within the private (versus the public) realm
Legal/state	literacy practices associated with governmental and legal transactions
Religious	literacy practices, both public and private, associated with the teaching or practicing of religious faith

I found the bulk of the data from this study lie within the first three domains. After analyzing the data further, and especially by noting the views of the participants, I separated the familial domain from the recreational and arrived at subcategories of the first two domains that fit within these three domains and which can be appreciated in Table 2.5. These domains and sub-domains facilitated the analysis of the literacy practices, especially in noting similarities and differences for participants across age and sex. I found the legal/state domain superfluous, since the families did not share any literacy practices I considered as falling within this domain.

Table 2.5:
Domains and Sub-Domains of Family Literacy Practices Used in the Analysis of Literacy Practices Found in the Homes of Three Transnational Families.

Domain	Sub-Domain
Commercial/financial	Home
	Business
Educational	School-assigned
	Family-motivated
	Classmate-motivated
	Administrative
Familial/Communicative	
Recreational	
Religious	

A major concern of this study was to situate literacy practices I documented within the transnational migrant circuit. In COSOLEM meetings, we discussed possible categories for coding transnationalism and found the task complex, to say the least. Fitzgerald (2002), Levitt (2001), and Portes (1999) discuss the many levels and sectors at/in which transnationalism has been and can be analyzed, but much of their concern is with the wider economic, political and sociocultural sectors at highly developed and institutionalized levels. This present study focused on literacy practices within the homes of relatively incipient transnationals whose practices do not yet involve other sectors or institutions. For the purposes of this study, I found that literacy practices could be

divided into four categories: those directly or indirectly related to the migrant or to the remittances.

For example, the literacy practice of writing down a thirteen-digit money order number is directly connected to remittances. The literacy practice of purchasing an encyclopedia is indirectly related to remittances. In this case, the family has other income and it is not clear if the family is using the actual money coming from the remittances to pay for the encyclopedia or if they have decided to invest in this text because they have extra money as a result of the remittances. A literacy practice, such as a child talking on the telephone to his migrant father in order to resolve a doubt, is directly related to the migrant – the migrant is involved in the literacy practice. A literacy practice of a mother helping her child with homework because she does not have to tend to her husband's needs (as indeed one mother reported) is an example of a literacy practice indirectly connected to the migrant.

Throughout the process of attempting to categorize the data, as Bogdan & Biklen (2003) suggest, I frequently reviewed my data, alone and also with other COSOLEM researchers. Input from colleagues helped me make decisions on the focus of my study, the methods I was using and the questions I was asking. I was able to triangulate the data, which I had gathered from several sources. My field notes described my observations and perceptions of the family visits, including what they said and what I actually saw them do, and descriptions of the documents they shared with me. The photographs of the documents allowed further analysis of the texts. The transcripts of the interviews with the teachers and family members allowed me to closer analyze the participants' viewpoints. Looking back at the literacy inventory, I was able to quickly identify literacy

events, which I had actually observed, rather than being told about or only observing the texts. These were the literacy events that provided the richest data for understanding the sociocultural construction of readers and writers in these families.

By triangulating data, I was able to get a more rounded, balanced picture of the context in which the literacy practices take place and to better understand the ideologies grounding these practices. It also helped sharpen my research questions. Simultaneously, I began interpreting these results by situating them into the broader questions of literacy and migration. Throughout this methodological process, I had contact with many people and had to pass through many gatekeepers negotiating entry into their professional and personal environments. In the following section, I review the forms of reciprocity offered at various stages.

2.6. Reciprocity

Gaining access to the school and to the families' homes was one of the principal challenges to this study. The mother of one family asked me if it would help their children. Having already done a few home visits, I was able to reassure her that although I was not going to be explicitly teaching the children reading or writing, each of the children I had been visiting seemed to take on a more enthusiastic approach to reading and writing both in the school and at home. This apparently convinced her. As part of the COSOLEM study, I also offered participants actions of goodwill in appreciation of their time and sincerity.

COSOLEM researchers offered a teachers' workshop at the primary school in February of 2004, and in which I took part. I gave the interested teachers copies of the

published papers in which they had been participants. I left with the participating teachers large color prints taken from the *Querida Abuelita* book (Meza Keane, 1997, illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez). I also plan to offer a conference or workshop at the school, one for teachers and another for parents. Furthermore, as I already mentioned, the results of the Sociolinguistic Census were given to the director of the school in both hard copy and on diskette. This information was anonymous, being a summary of participating families.

I was able to give the families printouts of selected literacy inventory photographs, including family portraits. I also offered to help with academic advising and study sessions, particularly in English. To date, they have not taken me up on the offer, but I may yet be able to offer something more in the future.

The data presented in this study is the data are seen through my own particular filters. I believe the results of this study are a faithful rendering of the literacy practices I observed in the three transnational families, but I cannot believe they are the only interpretations possible. In the following chapter, I describe the participants in this study – the three families and the community in which they live. I also offer a description of myself, an active participant throughout the study.

3. The Setting and Participants.

3.1. Overview

Literacy practice is situated within a culture and serves the purposes decided on by those who are involved in it. Thus, in a qualitative study such as the one reported here, it is important to understand the participants' background and characteristics, the context in which they live, and the relationships they have formed. In this chapter I first present myself, because it was primarily through me that the data was collected and interpreted. As a researcher, I aimed to understand the literacy practices from the participants' perspective; I carried with me my own set of experiences, beliefs and interests, which inevitably affected my collection, and analysis of the data.

I then present and describe the community in which the three families live in order to understand how their home literacy practices might be socially situated in relation to the community.

Third, I present the three families separately. Because the amount of time and the degree of trust I gained with each family varied, one family is presented in greater depth than the others. It may also be relevant to note that this family has experienced the migration of a family member most recently. As Portes, et al. (1999) point out, it is through individualized, local studies of migrants especially at their incipient stage, which are most effective in exploring the bases of transnationalism.

I attempt to situate the reader in each family's history, presenting the conditions under which the migration occurred, the goals which accompanied it, and the changes the migration had on the family in terms of their economy, work, roles, relationships and

organization. I also discuss each family´s education, personal interests, religious life and health because I found these factors integral to some aspect of migration and/or literacy.

3.2. The Researcher

I grew up in an all-Caucasian rural community in the Midwest of the U.S. I studied at a liberal arts college, took two semesters of Spanish, and did an internship connecting migrants to social services. After graduating, I came to live in Mexico and studied Spanish in an intensive summer course. Since then, I have continued learning Spanish, mostly through everyday experiences over the past 23 years. I consider myself a fluent bilingual. Coming to Mexico at a relatively young age, I was flexible enough still to adapt to a new culture to the point that friends on both sides of the border comment on how Mexicanized I am, not only in speech, but also in my attitudes and actions. I have made my home in the research community's neighboring town for the past twenty years.

Because of these experiences, I began this study confident I would be able to relate with people at every level – the teachers, the students, and the parents. My two children are now adolescents and I have had first-hand experience of being a parent of children in the Mexican primary, secondary, and high school education system. For over twenty-two years, I have also been a teacher of English-as-a-foreign-language to students of various ages and backgrounds at both private and public schools. My own desire for professional development led me to study a master's degree in applied linguistics. Furthermore, as a migrant myself with many migrant friends in the community, I was sensitive to the issues facing transnational families. I believe these personal experiences

were important factors in developing relationships of trust with the participants essential to the collection of rich data.

Because I live in the same community as the participants, I also encountered some personal/professional coincidences. Shortly after the interview with the fourth-grade teacher, for example, we discovered that his nephew (who lives with him) and my son are good buddies and frequently spend time at each other's homes. Also, after discussing Mariana's family of origin in more detail (she is the mother of one of the case study families), I later deduced that her brother was my son's work-study boss.

The personal aspects of my relationship with the community were therefore an added motivating factor for carrying out this research. Returned migrants, many of whom open businesses, love to brush up on their English while we conduct business transactions. Those who have family abroad are eager to find out where I am from and to talk about their loved ones in the US. Over the years I have seen and felt both the increasing linguistic and personal effects of transnational migration on this community and on the families, motivating me both professionally and personally to be a part of advancing our understanding of the phenomenon.

In the next section, I present a description of the research community where the participants of this study and I live. I present the literacy and educational profile of the inhabitants and the educational services available and a discussion of the community's economy and incidence of migration. Finally, I offer evidence of the effects of migration on the community.

3.3. The Research Community

The research community is the seat of the municipal government and home to nearly 30,000, over half of the municipality's population of 56,000 (Municipio de San Andrés Cholula, 2004). The town and the municipality share the same name. The municipality borders the capital city of the state located on the high central plains of Mexico. This community has also been described in Vance (2005a), Teague (2004), Ballesteros (2003), and Jiménez et al. (2003).

Being a community with a long history and yet a growing modernization, it is helpful to first consider Bonfil Batalla´s (1987) thesis of the existence of two Mexicos. He refers to that which is Mesoamerican, rural, and indigenous as *México Profundo* [Deep Mexico], and that which is western, urban, and "de-Indianizing," as *México Imaginario* [Imaginary Mexico]. He proposes the *imaginary* rejects the *deep* by imposing western economic, cultural, political, social, and environmental models. We can find both these Mexico's in the research community, which is a historical/archaeological center. The oldest archaeological vestiges of the area date between 500 and 200 B.C. Since then, the area has been populated continuously for over two thousand years (Suárez & Martínez, 1993), retaining traits of pre-Columbian culture in language, religion, and family and community organization which in turn affects practices involving literacy.

3.3.1. What's in a Name?

One obvious proof of the community retaining the *deep* is in the names of its people. In Table 3.1, I present 35 Nahuatl surnames found on three classroom student lists that teachers from Alfonso Cano Elementary School shared with me. In Mexico, people are

given two surnames; the first is the paternal and the second the maternal. For example, Salazar Oaxaca, Tenahua Tlatehui, and Nava Romero, are the surnames of the children in this case study. Of the 113 children on the three lists, 68 carry one or two surnames of Nahuatl origin. Of the six surnames for the three families of this study, three are Nahuatl. Not all of them are native of the community, however, and the community has a reputation for being exclusionist. According to Olivera (1971), there are historical, religiously based reasons for this. I have heard people with origins in the community clarify that a certain person with a certain last name may *live* in the community but be *from* the neighboring community, not from *this* community. Origin and identity are linked to these names. Five of the six parents of this study were born in the community, and, the one who was not admits to having few friends in the community. She does have a Nahuatl last name, however.

Table 3.1
Nahuatl Surnames Found in Three Groups at the Alfonso Cano Elementary School

Aca	Tenahua	Huixtlaca	Tecuatl	Tome
Acuca	Cuatzo	Izcoatl	Tentle	Tototzintle
Cocolotl	Cuautle	Izmoyotl	Tepetl	Toxtle
Colexcua	Cuautli	Ocotoxtle	Tepeyahuitl	Tzili
Tlatehui	Cuaxiloa	Quechol	Tlachi	Xicale
Cuacuas	Hueytletl	Tecpanecatl	Tlatehui	Zacatzontetl
Cuahuey	Huitle	Tecaxco	Tochimani	Zacatzontle

Only one of the 113 children's first or middle names is Nahuatl in origin – Iluhicamina. In fact, several are based on English spelling or pronunciation. For example, names such as Brenda, Brian, Cynthia, Denisse, Elizabeth, Erika, Jenry (pronounced Henry), Karen, Karla, Jaquelinne, Jessica, Jonathan, Nancy, Marlene, Mary and Richard all appear on the rosters. While surnames reflect identity of origin, perhaps given names reflect a modernity that

people connect with English. The rest of the names and surnames in the roster are principally Spanish.

Spanish is the first language for the majority of the municipal population, with just under 5% speaking an indigenous language (INEGI, 2004). In the sociolinguistic census conducted by COSOLEM with 218 families, just 3% reported having at least some contact with an indigenous language, and this contact was most often a grandparent who speaks or spoke the language. In contrast, 17% reported being able to speak at least some English.

People's everyday lexicons also include Nahuatl-based words, which take on the morphology of Spanish. In this community, one can hear words for household objects, e.g. *molcajete* (mortar), *temolote* (pestle); descriptive adjectives, e.g. *apoxcahuada*, (spoiled); particular foods, e.g. *zapote*; food by-products, e.g. *xaxtle* (coffee grounds); plants (*epazote*); animals (*tlacuache)*; toys (*papalote*), soil types (*tezontle*), etc. A typical homework assignment is to write a list of Nahuatl-based words. As a parent, I can vouch that this is a homework assignment at least once a year throughout primary school. In some families, this assignment becomes an intergenerational cooperative language exercise between children and elderly speakers of Nahuatl.

3.3.2. Religion in the Research Community

Figure 3.1. Welcome sign for a religious *fiesta*.

Religion affects the structure of the community in which these transnational families live, and places responsibilities on families to organize many events involving the whole family. Literacy practices are found embedded in many of these religious activities (Murillo, 2005). *Figure 3.1* shows a decorative arch made by people of the research community and placed in the *zocalo* [town square]. The displayed words welcome the venerated visiting image, in this case, the *Madre Santísima* [Most Holy Mother]. Mlade (2001) reported that nearly 94% of the people of the community profess Roman Catholicism as their faith, and religious traditions remain strong. Religious rituals, which mix Mesoamerican and Roman Catholic religious practices, are an integral part of community and family life (Murillo, 2005); they follow and shape a complex social and religious network based on *barrios* (Mlade, 2001; Bonfil, 1996, Olivera, 1971).

Mlade (2001) defines *barrios* as "the smallest division of a town, made up of mostly-related families that are protected [by] the same patron saint (p.72)." Religious events are typically called *fiestas* and include both the religious aspects, such as ceremonies and their elements including flowers and fireworks, as well as more mundane aspects, such as meals and music. Participation in the religious *cargo* system, the framework giving organization to religious events, fulfills obligations in both the religious and the social realms (Mlade,

2001). Participation allows a spiritual venue for maintaining or requesting "well-being from a spiritual source" (Mlade, 2001, p.25). Participation also allows a social venue for gaining status and prestige in the community (Mlade, 2001). In the family, Mlade (2001) mentions "a home is not complete without a family altar full of religious images of Jesus and the family's favored saints, rosaries, incense (p. 18)," and flowers. *Figure 3.2* depicts the family *altar* in the Salazar Oaxaca home. Within the family descriptions in this chapter, I will present the role religion plays specifically in the lives of these three transnational families, and in Chapter Four, in their literacy practices.

Figure 3.2. *Altar* in the Salazar Oaxaca home.

3.3.3. Family Structure

Yet another aspect of *México Profundo* is that of family structure. The family structure affects which family members come in contact with each other. Less experienced readers and writers draw from the knowledge of more experienced readers and writers in forming their own understandings of literacy (Kalman 2003). The family structure provides the opportunity for contact in literacy practices and thus for appropriation of literacy to take place. Robichaux (2002) describes the Mesoamerican family system. He notes that (a) a couple's first home is virilocal; (b) the youngest male, referred to as the *xocoyote,* is given the privilege of inheriting the family home plot, but also the responsibility of caring for his

aging parents; (c) male offspring are given priority in inheritance, with sons receiving equal shares, while daughters may also be included in receiving shares of inheritance if there is enough to go around; and as a result, (d) patrilineally-related male heads of households have their homes contiguous to each other. Murillo (2005), Mlade (2001) and Olivera (1971) found all these traits within the research community.

Olivera (1971), based on interviews with a reported 70% of the families in the community, suggests that strong tradition of patrilocal residency is beginning to break down. Nearly 40% of the respondents in her study acquired property through buying rather than through inheritance, yet 74% of the male heads of family continued living in the same *barrio* in which they were born. Partial results from COSOLEM's sociolinguistic census conducted at three schools in the community, indicate that the trend of owning homes still predominates regardless of general socio-economic level, as seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.
*Sociolinguistic Census Results of Three Schools in Research Community***

School (number of respondents)	Alfonso Cano (82)	Centro Telpochcalli semi-private (65)	*Public School (69)	The three schools (218)
Phone	56 68%	55 85%	40 58%	151 69%
Cable	6 7%	6 9%	0 0%	12 6%
Internet	6 11%	23 33%	0 0%	29 13%
Own a motor vehicle	27 33%	52 80%	10 14%	89 41%
Own their home	60 73%	47 72%	51 74%	158 72%
From the community area	49 60%	12 18%	42 61%	103 47%
Finished primary school	74 90%	61 94%	69 96%	204 94%
Finished middle school	52 63%	60 92%	23 33%	135 62%
High school / technical career	25 30%	53 81%	10 14%	88 40%
At least some university	6 7%	34 52%	2 3%	42 19%
Graduate studies	0 0%	8 12%	0 0%	8 4%
Family living abroad	38 46%	34 52%	24 35%	96 44%

*****She did not name or use a pseudonym for the school.
**Data were gathered at *Public School in fall of 2003, at Centro Telpochcalli in spring of 2004, and at Alfonso Cano Elementary School in fall of 2004.

3.3.4. Literacy and Education

The number of pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools in the community has increased in recent years (Mlade, 2001 and Olivera, 1971) reducing the need for families to send their children to neighboring towns to study, a fact that was evident in completing the Family Social History Forms with eleven families in this study. Several universities and

institutes of higher learning are also located in the periphery of the municipality (Municipio, 2004). Within the city limits, there is one private university offering 5-year undergraduate programs and several graduate programs. A rich symbiotic relationship has developed over the three and a half decades since the university's founding, with the city gradually meeting more of the consumer needs of the relatively prosperous academic and administrative members of the campus, and with the university offering jobs, a limited number of scholarships, and cultural and educational support to the residents of the community.

INEGI calculates the self-reported literacy rate for the municipal's population 15 years and older at 92.3% in 2000. Referring once again to Table 3.2, Public School, is a large primary school established in the community over forty years ago serving 627 students in 2003 (Ballesteros, 2003). Four of the six participating parents in this study studied some of their education at this school. Centro Telpochcalli was established in 1985 (Vance, 2005a), and in 2003, the student enrollment had reached nearly 400 (Jiménez et al, 2003). Alfonso Cano Elementary School, also a public school, was established 22 years ago and during the 2004-2005 school year, served 335 families, with an enrollment of 529 (personal communication with the director). In-depth descriptions of the schools themselves and results from studies on literacy practices carried out there can be found: for Alfonso Cano Elementary School, in Sullivan (2005) and Vance (2005b); for Centro Telpochcalli, in Vance (2005a), Teague (2004), and Jiménez et al. (2003); and for Public School, in Ballesteros (2003).

Results presented in Table 3.2 also reveal a wide variation in formal education among the populations. Completion of primary school varied only six percentage points between the three schools, at an average of 93%. The percentages having finished secondary school

however, showed wide variation among the respondents from the three schools, and an even wider difference was found for completion of high school. Vance (2005a) notes that it is understandable that families from the semi-private school appear to have higher socio-economic and educational levels since those families pay monthly tuition at the school, while at the public schools, of which Alfonso Cano is one, there is no monthly charge. Nevertheless, Centro Telpochcalli offered a sliding scale for tuition based on income.

Recent studies of literacy in local schools show great variation between literacy practices and attitudes. Teague, et al. (2006), Zamora (2005), and Jiménez et al. (2003), found that writing in the wider community seemed to favor meaning over form. The opposite occurs in the school-based practices, where form receives more attention than meaning (Jiménez et al., 2003 and Ballesteros, 2003). In attitudes, however, both form and meaning are valued both at school (Vance, 2005b; Teague 2004) and home (Vance, 2005a). Few data on school-based literacy practices have been collected at the secondary school level in this community.

Public secondary schools in Mexico include computer classes as a core requirement. The community also offers computer classes at the municipality's center for Integral Family Development (DIF, for its abbreviation in Spanish, but also thus called by residents), and at least ten cyber cafés offering computer services can be found in the town (Salazar, 2005). In a recent case study of the digital literacy development of one university student from this community, Payant (2005) found that the availability of computers in the home, school, and commercial Internet businesses positively affected this student's digital literacy development. This university student had developed digital literacy practices for both work and pleasure. As mentioned in Chapter One, Levitt (2001) and Portes, et al (1999) suggest

space- and time-compressing technology are a necessary pre-condition to the proliferation of transnational practices. Digital literacy practices concerning the three case study families will be discussed further in this paper in the family descriptions of this chapter and the results in Chapter Four.

English is also a core requirement in public secondary schools and, according to results from the three-school linguistic census, a high priority for local parents. When parents were asked about a second language for their children, English was the language most often mentioned. They also gave reasons as to why it is important: to improve opportunities for future employment; to allow more complete access to computers; to make their profession, job, books and technical activities easier for them; and for travel and entertainment. The local, private university's international influence and the transnational profile of this community have also contributed to the presence of English in the community.

3.3.5. Socioeconomic Profile of the Community

Most people in the community make their livelihood in agriculture, animal raising, commerce, construction, industrial manufacturing, or non-government services (Municipio, 2004). Álvarez, Corro & Landi (1992) reported the percentage of residents dedicated to agriculture had diminished. Teague (2004) reports "a denser population and the construction of houses, businesses, and streets have made parcels of land and open fields increasingly scarce within the city limits (p.24)."

Mlade (2001) and Olivera (1971) both report the community itself is economically subordinately linked to its closest neighboring city. Olivera (1971) reported that at that

time there were only twelve general stores in the city, three corn mills, five barbers that were open only on Saturday and Sunday, but no drugstore, hardware store, nor doctors. Today there are at least three hardware stores, three drugstores, several barbers and beauty salons open everyday of the week, and many more general stores, among other small businesses. Furthermore, professionals such as doctors, dentists, lawyers, veterinarians and at least one notary public offer services in private offices, usually from their homes. One can also find family-run auto repair shops and other businesses.

The growth of the local university has also spurred much recent economic activity and growth. Some of the newest and most visible buildings in this community are five-story apartment complexes. These apartments are rented to university students. Many students hire out for cleaning services, and most often women from the town fill these positions. There are also laundry services, carwashes, cafés, restaurants, bars, and, *antros,* where young adults go to dance and drink. Two banks have also opened branches in the community. Nevertheless, there are no wire transfer services and the three families participating in this study travel to the neighboring town to collect their remittances.

Within the agricultural sector, the raising of traditional basic food crops such as corn and beans may be decreasing, being replaced by the economically higher yielding edible *nopal* cactus and floriculture. Puebla is the largest producer of flowers in Mexico, with production increasing 120 times between 2000 and 2003 (Proal, 2005). While local producers of *nopal* see potential in the national, and especially the international market, they have not found economic backing to support such an enterprise (*Productores*, 2005 and personal communication, 2005).

Mlade (2001) cites significant progress in social and public services in the research community since 1997. She mentions a cultural project to restore and protect historical architecture and an improved waste management plan. Some projects, such as a health center offering mental health services, basic physical health check-ups, and specialized disability care, were built and equipped together with a local, private foundation. The DIF provides a variety of services for adults and children at minimal cost, including classes in English, computers, basic education, machine embroidery, and also legal counsel. I found several families actively attending community classes and utilizing community health services. However, Mlade (2001) also reported that only the main streets were paved. Since then, the government has paved several more kilometers of streets with cobblestone, or, more precisely, *adoquines,* hexagonal bricks made from *tezontle,* the red dirt found locally. The effect is that of a quaintly finished look, which is purportedly ecologically friendlier than blacktop pavement (conversations with residents). Mlade (2001) found the people of the community were very proud of the accomplishments of recent years, and through the home visits I made in this study I found this also to be true.

According to the sociolinguistic census conducted by COSOLEM (Table 3.2), 69% of the families interviewed have telephones, above the national average of 50% reported by Cofetel in Domínguez Ríos (2005). Moreover, the percentage of homes with telephones may be even higher now. Between December 2004 and April 2005, a telephone company offered, free the installation of telephone lines and telephones to families wishing to have the service. Two participating families had no telephone at the time of the census, but had obtained telephone service by the time of the home visits. Public pay telephones, shown in

Figure 3.3 are still easy to find, however, and telephone cards make calling easy, but not cheap.

Figure 3.3. Public phone in the community.

The interplay of factors – the prime agricultural resources versus the lack of interest by public or private investment in agriculture; the consumer needs of the affluent university population together with the townsfolk's need to survive and will to flourish; – may explain in part how this community has become both a receiving and sending location of migrants as reported by CONAPO (2005), Lozano (2005) and Smith (2003a). In the following section, I present a profile of the community in relation to migration.

3.3.6. Migration in the Research Community

INEGI places the average annual growth rate between 1990 and 2000 for the country of Mexico at 1.9%, while for the state of Puebla at 2.11%, and for this municipality at 4.05% – that is twice the average growth rate as for the state or the country – yielding a 48% increase in population in ten years, as seen in Table 3.3. The research community,

perhaps because of the proximity to the capital city, the intellectual, industrial and economic hub of the state and an important hub of southeastern Mexico, has become a recipient zone for migrants (Lozano, 2005 and Smith, 2003a). The increasing immigrant profile of the people of this community is reflected in the INEGI statistics in Table 3.3 and the sociolinguistic census results shown in Table 3.2, with over half of the respondents coming from areas other than the research community or its surrounding areas.

Table 3.3.
*Mexican National Census Data for the Municipality**.

population living in the municipality	in 1990	in 2000
# registered	37,788	56,066
% born in the state	92	84
% born in another state	7	10
% born in another country	0.5	0.75

* INEGI 2000

Simultaneously, the community is also within the new expulsion zone of migrants (CONAPO, 2005). People from this municipality leave their homes to work in the nation's capital; cities solely geared economically to *grand* tourism, such as, Cancun, and various locations throughout the U.S. and Canada (CONAPO, 2005). In the *Querida Abuelita* migration-literacy activity several children spoke about their relatives working in Cancun and Mexico City.

Although national census figures show less than one percent of the municipality's population living outside the country (INEGI, 2000), 44% of the respondents of the sociolinguistic census reported having a family member living abroad. At the Alfonso Cano Elementary School, 38 of 96 respondents answered affirmatively to a question on

family members living abroad. Eleven families reported a member living in New York, and six each for Chicago and Los Angeles, while other places mentioned were Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina, and Texas. Some reported not knowing where the family member lived. Because responses included extended family, and because respondents may be related, reference to the same emigrant may have been made more than once. Nevertheless, these figures suggest that many local children have some relation to the migrant experience. INEGI's migration figures may be low because respondents decided not to inform the census-taker for some reason, for example mistrust of government institutions, avoidance of complicating the information, etc., or perhaps because respondents actually consider that the migrant still lives at their house since it *is* the migrant's home.

In the community we find an abundant presence of material capital gained from the migration experience in the form of trucks, vans and sports utility vehicles with US license plates. Also visible are non-traditional (for this community) architectural styles being incorporated into the construction of new homes. Malkin (1998), from her studies of transnational migrant circuits spanning Mexico and the US, suggests this is actually a material culture representing the symbolic capital of a "privileged knowledge of modernity" which comes with the migration experience.

Other manifestations of migration can be found in the community. For example, the ad in *Figure 3.4* appeared in a local newspaper published in May 2005 offering advertising space in "the only Mexican newspaper" which is published in New York. The advertisement stresses that *'LA VOZ DE MEXICO,'* [The Voice of Mexico, which is the name of the newspaper] circulates in the city (New York) where nearly one million Mexicans live and where 80% are *Poblanos* [from Puebla]. In the next section, I tell the

stories of three transnational families to show how migration has affected family life and the community.

Figure 3.4. Local newspaper advertisement for ad space in Mexican New York newspaper.

3.4. The Case Study Participants and Their Households

3.4.1. Tenahua Tlatehui Family

3.4.1.1. Overall description

The Tenahua Tlatehui family makes their home just over a kilometer due east of the town square. Ernesto, the father, 34 years old, residing in the Los Angeles, California area for the last year, keeps in close contact by telephone with his wife, Licha, 33, and their three children Jaime, 15, Jesus, 13, and Belen, 10. They have converted what used to serve as the kitchen area into a small general store selling basic household goods, canned, dried, and fresh food products, and bottled drinks. Licha and the three children alternate tending the store with other daily activities of housekeeping, studying, and, for the boys in particular, tending to their small collection of animals –a few turkeys and hens, and recently, fighting cocks.

In the following section, I present the Tenahua Tlatehui family before Ernesto's migration, focusing on their family history, education, personal interests, religious life, health, economy, and work history. I then describe the reasons motivating the migration, the goals they had in mind, and the actual leave-taking experience. Finally, I present the family as they have been since Ernesto left, noting especially their feelings and observations about the changes in their lives.

3.4.1.2. Family history

Ernesto, the eldest of five siblings, and Licha, the eldest of six, grew up in farming families in the same *barrio*, just a few blocks apart. The Mesoamerican virilocal family patterns (Robichaux, 2002) are evident in both families. Both original home plots abut land owned by paternal relatives. When Ernesto and Licha were first married, they lived in a room at his parents' home. Licha told me that she worked hard making fresh tortillas for the extended family and doing washing and other household tasks, examples of the extensive labor assigned to daughters-in-law (Robichaux, 2002) mentions.

The Tenahua Tlatehui family has since made their home on land inherited by Licha. That a woman inherits land is not a total break with the Mesoamerican virilocal pattern however. Land may be given to daughters if there is enough to go around. Also, the plots, which Licha's father left in inheritance, were not contiguous plots, but scattered in the area. The growth of the capital city led the government to expropriate land in this community to build a thoroughfare, as a peripheral highway to the growing city. In the transaction, Licha's father received a quantity of money, which he decided to re-invest in land, bequeathing a plot to each of his six children, male and female alike. Perhaps the power of the virilocal tradition led her father to buy strategically, because one of the plots lay directly

across the road from Ernesto's family's place. The siblings were able to choose the plot they preferred, and Licha chose precisely the one contiguous to her in-laws' property.

The unfenced yard and the one-story brick housesit high up off the dirt road. The yard contains a well and a few wire pens for hens and turkeys. The house's main entrance leads directly into a large front room. One end accommodates a three-piece living room set, a rectangular table with a few straight-backed wooden chairs against the far wall, an *altar* above the table, seen in *Figure 3.5*, just as Mlade (2001) describes. adorned with a candle and fresh flowers as and another smaller rectangular table in the corner lined with reference books, loose papers, smaller agenda-type books, and family photographs as seen in *Figure 3.6*. At the other end of the room there is another rectangular wooden table, and wooden chairs of the same design, and a refrigerator. This front room gives access to two bedrooms, which are curtained off, to the former kitchen, which is now the store, and to the bathroom, which now serves as the kitchen. The floors are finished with large tiles and the walls are painted white. Our interest lies in the people who live between these walls and their relationship to migration and literacy.

Figure 3.5. Tenahua Tlatehui family altar.

Figure 3.6. Tenahua Tlatehui family's *Esquina de lectura* [Reading corner].

3.4.1.3. Education and personal interests

3.4.1.3.1. *No sé nada de secundaria*

Licha says she first learned to read in the parish kindergarten. Both she and Ernesto studied through the sixth grade at what was then the only primary school in town. Licha says she would like to study more. About eight years ago, some youngsters came round inviting adults to study secondary school and she registered, even giving them copies of her documents. She received a package of books and began studying, but the people never returned. She had the following to say about this experience.

> *Aprendí lo de la raíz cuadrada que era lo principal de matemáticas, que del otro de los pronombres elll todo eso (...) del Estado de México, así los límites, el Golfo de México, este, donde estaba, cuántos continentes eran todo eso pues ya me lo aprendí y resulta que llegan los tres meses y nada, no llega (...) ya no encontramos otra escuela abierta, en otra por mis hijos, también como tenía yo a la niña chiquita, pues, también para dejarla (...) estaba canijo.* [I learned about the square root, which was the main thing in mathematics, about pronouns and all that (...) about the state of Mexico, the boundaries, where the Gulf of Mexico was, how many continents there were and all that I learned and in the end, after three months, it all comes to naught (...) We didn't find another open school [a school offering a general education equivalency program] and besides, because of the kids, and too, since Belen was so little, well to leave her (...) it would have been tough].

Licha felt confident helping her children with homework while they were in primary school, but she foresaw difficulties for secondary school. Licha told me, "No sé nada de secundaria [I don't know anything about secondary]."

Her family did not completely understand her reasoning for continuing education. When she left the baby with her mother to do the paperwork, her father wanted to know, "*¿Para qué quieres estudiar más? Con que sepas leer y escribir ya está bien* [What do you want to study more for? Knowing how to read and write; that's enough]." Licha remembers telling him,

> *Por mis hijos que ya orita como vamos al, quien sabe, al rato, ni voy a poderles revisar las tareas porque no voy a saber ni qué carambas escriben*

> *y pues es lo que me pasa porque luego Jaime hace sus cuentas, que pone una "x", pone un número y luego ya un resultado y le digo –ajá y este ¿cómo lo sacastes o qué? – No, pues, que la "x" le menciona el valor de no sé que y pues según él me explica pero pues yo no le entiendo a veces ni que es lo que me está diciendo, le digo pero a lo mejor si hubiera yo estudiado secundaria pues si ya me daba- me recordaba a lo mejor lo que pregunta y sin en cambio luego ps' me quedo porque pues no sé ni lo que me está hablando* [Well, for now I'm fine for my kids, but who knows. Later on, I won't even be able to check their homework assignments because I won't know what the heck they're writing, and now, Jaime is doing his math and he puts an *x*, he puts a number and then a result, and I ask him, and how'd you get this and then he explains it to me, but sometimes I don't even understand what he's saying. Maybe if I had studied secondary, well I could probably remember something from what I'd studied, but instead, I'm stuck and I don't understand what he's talking about].

Licha has opinions on school policies. She thinks it is important to adhere to norms requiring attendance with complete uniform, short hair, good grooming, and punctuality. She is quite proud that Belen has never been sent home from school because of arriving late. Licha believes discipline is important, but also personalized attention. Quality is more important than quantity, she says.

Licha attends school meetings and functions when she has been informed of them in advance. The schools operate in large part with cooperation from the families, and a monetary donation is required of each family at the beginning of each school year intended for general maintenance and certain improvements of the school. Typically, there is a committee composed of parents to manage the money collected. The parents volunteer their time for this committee. During the 2003 – 2004 school year, Licha served as treasurer for the committee at what was then both Belen and Jesus' school, Alfonso Cano Elementary. The quota that year was $450 pesos (approximately $45 USD) per family, a figure that was decided upon by the committee after consulting the director and analyzing previous years' budgets and the year's foreseen needs. It was Licha's

responsibility to go to the local public education (SEP) offices to account for all the money collected and spent, and she sometimes had to attend meetings in the capital city. She also answered parents' questions on these matters, including an incident in which a board member claimed fraudulent expenditures.

We can see from Licha's attitudes and experiences that she is a woman who values formal schooling and assumes responsibility within the community. At my first meeting with Alfonso Cano parents, Licha was the first to openly accept home visits. The following is what I learned about her children's education and personal interests.

3.4.1.3.2. *La escuela: para aprender cosas y divertirme*

Ernesto and Licha's three children attended the municipality's DIF kindergarten and then the Alfonso Cano Elementary. Jaime, the eldest son, continued at the local technical secondary school, but he failed his second year there, and, according to his father, did not want to repeat the year at the same school because schoolmates would make fun of him. With 68 to a classroom at the technical secondary, Licha does not think the teachers can give all the attention the students need; group size and teacher attention were important to Licha and Ernesto when looking for another school. The school at which they finally chose to register Jaime, a 30 – 45-minute bike ride away, has an afternoon shift in which there are only 18 in a group. Still, in order to pass second grade this year, Jaime had to take three make-up exams over the summer, paying $30 pesos (approximately $3 USD) for each one. He studied on his own over the summer to prepare for them, and was able to start the third year of secondary this year. Last spring he convinced his parents to get him a bicycle, with the understanding that he does his best at

school. During my visits to the family home, I often found him tuning the bike up. Jaime says he might like to be a diesel mechanic in the future.

Jesus is studying his second year at, according to Licha, "*una escuela de lujo* [a luxury school]," the newest secondary school in the community, just down the road from their house. Jesus likes that his school is so close to home, however, in December 2005, his advisor told Licha that if Jesus failed one more class he would not be able to maintain his place in the school. Licha was also informed that Jesus had been going to classes without all his homework prepared and without school supplies, a serious omission in the eyes his mother and teacher. Like his brother, Jesus had to pass two make-up exams this summer in order to pass the first year of junior high. He attended summer session offered at the DIF to prepare for the exams and did well enough to be able to register for second grade this year. Jesus is more sociable than Jaime, and I often find him riding one of his grandfather's horses with other friends in town, or grooming the horses after riding.

Both boys take computer classes at their schools, but Jesus' classes are purely theoretical, that is, there are no computers to practice on, so, as of mid April, he opted to take afternoon classes twice a week, at twenty pesos (approximately $2 USD) for a two-hour class. Licha tells me how excited he was when after just five classes, he came home announcing "¡Ya hice una casa! ¡Yo la armé [I've made a house! I put it together]!" It is not the first time that one of the boys has taken an after-school class. When Jaime was in sixth grade, he won a partial scholarship to study computers at a private institute. He studied there for seven months, also taking English. Currently, both boys study English three hours per week as part of the required official secondary school curriculum.

Belen is now in fifth grade at Alfonso Cano Elementary School. She says she likes going to school, "*para aprender cosas y divertirme [*to learn things and have fun]." It seems this is the case. Near the end of last school year, her fourth-grade teacher, commented that she has grown socially with her classmates, who gave her emotional support when she was having difficulty dealing with her father's absence. He notes that she has also advanced scholastically. "*Se refleja en su participación en clase, en su trabajo dentro de clase, en sus tareas, ahí se refleja, vemos que ella ya empieza a cumplir, empieza a participar y antes no lo hacía* [This is reflected in her participation in class, in the work she does in class, and in her homework, we see her starting to achieve, starting to participate, and before, she didn't]."

Belen is inquisitive when something catches her interest and she wears a mischievous smile when planning to get what she wants. For example, the first time I went to their home with the camera, she kept asking questions until I showed her how I took the picture, changed lighting, focused in, managed the menu to look back at the pictures we took, and finally, erased the ones we didn't like. In the process she initiated several photos of her own composition. By the second visit, she assisted in taking all the photographs, and again composed a few herself. By the third visit with the camera, Belen was enthusiastically taking the photographs by herself.

All the youngsters help out with chores at home and the boys also help out with chores and fieldwork on their paternal grandparents' farm. Their newest interest is in fighting cocks. Licha says, "If it's time for Jaime to do homework, the next time I check in on him, he's asleep with his school books in front of him, but if you give him a magazine on raising fighting birds, he'll read that (my translation)!"

3.4.1.4. Health

In general, the four members I met of the Tenahua Tlatehui family are strong and healthy. In eight months, Belen has missed school for being sick only once, and then she was so sick that the doctor prescribed various intravenous-administered medicines. Licha has taken a First Aid course and, with experience in managing intravenous feeding, she cared for Belen herself. Licha went to the school to show the prescriptions to Belen's teacher, and so have the absences justified. Soon after, Licha was diagnosed with pneumonia. After receiving intravenous medication, she was sent home where she then treated herself.

Two school years ago, a psychologist at Alfonso Cano Elementary School diagnosed Belen as having an attention deficit. The psychologist would take Belen out of her regular classes for half an hour during the school day for therapy and Licha saw how much help it was for Belen. She was able to complete her homework assignments faster and, according to her teacher; she was able to concentrate for longer periods at school. When the service was discontinued, the psychologist gave Licha her business card and Licha took advantage of it. At the clinic, there were also psychiatrists, and Jaime also began receiving treatment after fainting at school. Licha was paying only ten pesos (approximately $1USD) per visit, but the medicine was costly and the trip was time-consuming, requiring two hours each way. While Ernesto and Licha were willing to pay for the medicine as long as they could afford it, it was the impracticality of the trip, which led Licha to seek alternatives. She eventually found a doctor at the local community health center to continue therapy, so now, Belen goes twice a week, missing only a half hour of class per day.

Belen does ¨*ejercicios de motriz y memoria, así como adivinanzas, sopa de letras y rompecabezas* [exercises to develop motor skills and memory, such as riddles, word puzzles, and picture puzzles]." They are working on developing Belen's concentration and memory. Licha says that Belen likes going to the classes but that it hasn't been easy for her. The psychologist has also guided Licha in developing ways to help Belen at home. Thus, Licha asks Belen questions about what she remembers from the day before. After a bicycle ride, for example, she asks about what they saw, so that Belen notices her environment. They also "work her memory" with reading. Both Licha and Ernesto give their children's health a high priority. There are other family matters, however, which they do not see eye to eye on.

3.4.1.5. Differences of opinions

According to Licha, she and Ernesto have their differences of opinions, especially concerning family life. She explains he did not spend time with his children and he did not lend a hand with family things like taking time to put up a basketball hoop.

In the telephone interview, Ernesto expressed that he and Licha approach disciplining differently. It seems Licha took a more active role in disciplining the children while Ernesto was more lax in his expectations.

According to Licha there were also differences of opinion in expectations for the children. She said Ernesto "doesn't understand why the kids need certain things; he grew up without them and so why can't they," whether it is a school trip to the pyramids or a students' day present? For Licha, she wants their children to have the things they did not necessarily have growing up. Overriding these differences, however, are their similar upbringings. For both, family and community involvement adds richness to their lives.

3.4.1.6. Extended family relationships and the community

3.4.1.6.1. *Entre todos sale todo.*

Despite disagreements in the past between Licha and her extended family, she generally speaks well of them.

> *Cuando hay un bautizo vienen y nos avisan. Vamos y lavamos todo el día antes. Luego vamos y molimos y echamos las tortillas y llevamos la carne enchilada y la envolvemos si se va a hacer mixiotes. O, (indicando a sus hijos), van y se matan un cochino. Entre todos sale todo*. [When there is a baptism, they come and let us know. We go and do all the washing the day before. Then we grind the corn and make tortillas and we get the seasoned meat and tie it up in bundles if we are making *mixiotes*. Or, (pointing to her sons), they go and kill a pig. Everything gets done with everyone doing his or her share.

Likewise, Licha's own family depends on cooperation from each member. Licha invited me to one religious celebration her family prepared– a mass, food, drink and music for approximately 200 people. As Mlade (2001) and Murillo (2005) have found in this community, religion is a social force in the Tenahua and the Tlatehui families, with both assuming responsibilities which require large investments in time, effort, and money, and which involve literacy practices.

3.4.1.6.2. *Derecho y privilegio*

The Tenahua Tlatehui family also participates in religion within their own home. Every spring the *barrio* organizes a pilgrimage to a religious destination in a neighboring state. Ernesto went on the pilgrimage four years ago, and Jaime decided to go on the pilgrimage himself this year with his new bicycle. As a result Licha said, it is their right and privilege to receive the image in their home People who go on the pilgrimage receive the venerated image in their homes at different times during the year. *Figure 3.7* shows Licha, Jesus and Belen with the sacred image in the background. The community

gathers wherever the image is to communally pray. When the image is at their home, Licha leads the prayers. Although there are prayer cards and booklets, she rarely uses them because she knows them by heart, as do her children. *Figure 3.8* shows a booklet of prayers of the kind they might have available for communal prayer. Belen also attends catechism classes, although she will not celebrate her first communion until her father returns from the U.S.

Figure 3.7. The Tenahua Tlatehui family with the venerated Señor de Tepalzingo.

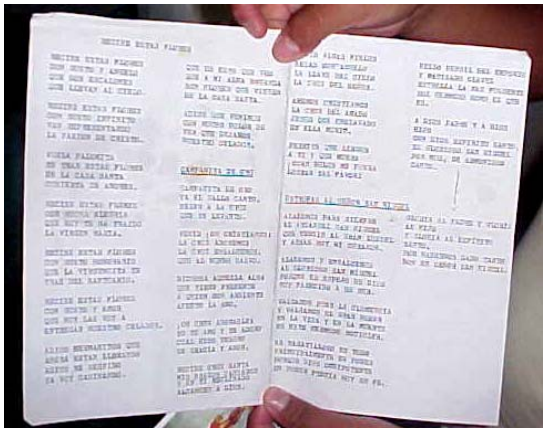

Figure 3.8. A communal prayer guide.

3.4.1.6.3. *La golosina*

Ernesto's family also live close enough to keep an eye on family order. According to Licha, Ernesto "*tiene el carácter cerrado y tiene la golosina de seguir tomando.* [He's got a serious disposition and the itch to keep drinking]." On one of those occasions, relates Licha, when Ernesto came home drunk and began raising a scandal, his parents came over, as they had done on other occasions to calm him down. As usual, it just made him more upset. Eventually, Ernesto's father called the police, who then took Ernesto away. Ernesto stayed in a detoxification center for three months. During that time, Licha earned enough to support the family by washing and sewing clothes for other people. When Ernesto returned and continued drinking, Licha gave him a choice of calming his

ways or going on his own way. According to her, that calmed him down, but later he decided to go to the United States.

3.4.1.7. Economy and work history

3.4.1.7.1 *El trabajo que caiga*

Licha tells me Ernesto is a welder. Before he went north, he was making cement roof blocks for a business in a nearby town, making between $900 and $1200 (approximately $90-120 USD) pesos per week. Before that, he was working in an automotive plant as an assembler, but lost that job in a lay off in 1995. Between jobs, Ernesto welded iron rods and made cement beams for roofs. Now, he is in Los Angeles where "*hace el trabajo que caiga* [He does the work that's available]." Mostly, he works construction, and Licha receives between $2600 and $2900 (approximately $260-290 USD) pesos per week. Ernesto says he would like to have his own business, "*depender de uno solo mismo, o sea, ya no tener patrón* [to depend on one's self, or, not to have a boss anymore]." He mentions setting up his own business for making roof beams when he returns to Mexico since he already has the basic equipment for it.

3.4.1.7. 2. *El día que no puede mandar dinero...*

Ernesto's wages have already given impetus to a family business. Licha says she followed Ernesto's advice on opening a grocery. She says Ernesto wanted her to have the business primarily as a fallback. Licha says, "*Pues, el día que no puede mandar dinero...* [Well, the day he can't send any money...]." She continues on, explaining their business savvy. *"Además, no hay tienda hasta aquí. Y ya la gente no tiene que ir más lejos.* [Besides, there's no other store this far out from town, so people don't have to go any further]."

Licha has been working with a lawyer to obtain a business permit. This lawyer is setting up a business cooperative which would facilitate the opening of businesses. One day she had the papers nearby and she waved them in the air but set them aside shaking her head. Supposedly, the cooperative makes the paperwork easier, faster and less expensive. Licha said she did not know what number they were working on but hers was #618. At that, she dismissed the issue. Another day Licha showed me a flier the lawyer had given her, seen in *Figure 3.9.* The flier is an invitation to a fund-raising event for the cooperative. Once I photographed it, she promptly tossed it in the garbage. She also mentioned paying dues but that she had been to the cooperative's office three times and had had no luck in finding the lawyer. My perception was that Licha is interested in registering the business through the cooperative because of the lower cost and because of the service the lawyer would provide, that is, reading the documents and assuring her that her interests are protected.

Figure 3.9 Public Invitation to Fundraising Event for Business Cooperative.

Licha told me that the money generated from the store's sales is reinvested in the store. She also buys food and household products, pays for school supplies, and buys shoes.

Ernesto and Licha both expressed concern that their children should be constructively occupied, but without the responsibilities of a formal job. The store

provides a reason to stay close to home, lessening the chances of them getting into trouble elsewhere. Jaime tends the store in the mornings when his mother runs errands, attends meetings, or does housekeeping, and Jesus and Belen tend the store in the afternoons when Licha is sewing or doing other activities.

3.4.1.8. Migration

3.4.1.8.1. Reasons behind Ernesto's migration

Ernesto is not the first member of the family to travel north. Licha's brother, Pablo, lives in the New York area with his wife's mother and siblings. Soon after leaving for New York, he sent for his wife, leaving their two children behind. Licha tells me that it took several trips by the children's maternal aunt and much paperwork to unite the children with their parents in New York. This was a huge disappointment for Licha's family because the brother who emigrated is the *xocoyote* of the family, that is, the youngest son. Licha explains that when the siblings were given a choice of plot to inherit, her youngest brother chose the home plot; with the understanding he would be living with his parents. Licha explains that it is important for grandparents to be able to interact daily with grandchildren. It is not the same as living close by. That her brother left for the U.S. was bad enough, but that he took his family with him was a gross family disappointment. Aware that this was a sensitive issue, I did not ask her to speculate about the future.

On Ernesto's side of the family, two brothers and an uncle currently reside in the U.S. Ernesto's uncle emigrated to the Los Angeles area about twenty years ago and one of Ernesto's brothers emigrated a few years ago. Ernesto, together with another brother, Santiago, left Cholula in October 2004.

3.4.1.8.2. *"Para salir un poco más adelante"*

When I asked Ernesto how he had made the decision to emigrate, he reflected on his hopes, "*Para salir un poco más adelante, para que no le faltara nada a mis niños.* [To get ahead a little, so that my kids wouldn't have to do without]." When I asked Licha about the decision to emigrate, she explained that since his brother and uncle were already there, he and his brother decided to go. She also mentioned school expenses, as described in "Reasons for migrating" in Chapter One.

There were no apparent discrepancies between what Licha and Ernesto independently gave as their goals to achieve through Ernesto's migration. In two or three years, they hope to be able to wall their plot of land, to build another house or a few rooms on the east side of the yard, to finish off the kitchen, and to have the business grow. Meanwhile, as Ernesto stressed, they hope to "to get ahead a little, so that my kids won't have to do without."

3.4.1.8.3. The leave-taking

Ernesto's leaving came as a surprise to Licha and the children. Licha tells me he would, in joking, sometimes threaten to go away if they didn't treat him well. One day, after work she was surprised when he went into town with his brother, and, when he came back, he told her to fix some supper and that the kids would be eating with them. This must not have been the typical evening event. She said Jaime even went in and told them he wasn't hungry, and then his dad put his arm around his shoulders, and led him to the table. Once around the table, he began by telling the boys to take care of their mother, to look after their sister, and to be good because he was going to the United States with his brother, Santiago. In her surprise, Licha rebelled, saying there was work here. He let

her know he would still be there for them, supporting them, but that right then, he needed her to get a dark pair of pants, a shirt, a cap, and a jacket, all of them dark, ready for him. The only dark jacket she could find was a little worn, but he told her that would be even better because if it got torn, it wouldn't matter.

That was on a Thursday night. At three o'clock Friday morning, just seven hours later, a taxi arrived to take Ernesto and his brother to the bus station in the capital. From there they went to the airport in Mexico City, where they caught a flight to Tijuana. In Tijuana, Ernesto's brother paid a *pollero,* to help them cross the border. By Sunday afternoon, he telephoned Licha's parents' home to let the family know he had arrived safely at his uncle's home in the Los Angeles area.

One of Ernesto's brothers lent him $2000 pesos (approximately $200 USD) to pay the *pollero*; he also received a loan at 7% monthly interest from a man in town to pay for airfare. This is approximately twice that of bank rates for loans. Ernesto left in October and it was May when Licha used one thousand pesos of the remittances to pay part of the loan; there were still $2500 left to pay. In this way, Ernesto and the family had taken on the risk of migration. What would be the payoff? In the following sections, I present the family since migration, taking a look at their working situations, the family's economic situation, and how roles have changed and been maintained in immediate and extended family relationships.

3.4.1.9. Present family life

3.4.1.9.1. *Sacando la familia adelante*

Arriving in Los Angeles in October, Ernesto says he went a month and a half with hardly any work. Heavy rains between December and January meant few constructions

for another month. Standing on the street corners, ¨*como lo que pasan en la television* [like they show on T.V.]," he says,

> They come by in trucks and ask 'who knows how to work with concrete?' Or, 'who knows bricklaying?' Little by little, they start to get to know you and how you work and they come looking for you and they let others know how you work. A job might last a week or sometimes two. A lot of migrants don't like working in construction [my translation].

These are kinds of jobs Ernesto does most in Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, Licha complied with her husband's wishes to set up the store. By phone, Ernesto inquired as to how the business was going. He said when he left they had renovated the space, but that they offered a very limited variety of goods and produce. I told him the shelves looked full, offering a wider variety of goods.

When I interviewed Ernesto, he was just short of fulfilling a year in the U.S. I asked how he felt about the goals he had set for himself and his family. He thought they had accomplished about thirty percent of their goals. As an example of being "*un poco más adelante* [a little bit further ahead]," he gave the example of registering the kids in school. Whereas, in 2004, he had trouble getting together the money to cover registration fees, in 2005, the family was able to pay for registration and to obtain the required school supplies including new school bags a week before school started.

For school, the youngsters don their respective uniforms, starting out their school days neat and clean. They carry new school bags, complete with new school supplies, and Jaime rides a new bike. During non-school hours, they wear clothes of no particular brand. Licha and Belen occasionally go to what is known as the cheapest place to buy clothes, that is, a large market in a community about thirty kilometers away. They have acquired no new fancy gadgets or appliances since Ernesto emigrated. The family has

recently considered investing in a computer for their own home although Belen would prefer a big screen television. If they do choose to invest in a computer, they would purchase it here in Mexico.

One week in May, nearly seven months after Ernesto left for the US, I asked Licha just how they were using the week's remittances. That week in particular, Ernesto had sent a larger sum than usual, $4328 pesos as compared to between $2600 and $2900, because he wanted to make a larger dent in the debt incurred for his airfare to Tijuana. $1000 was set aside to pay toward the loan. Licha also deposited in their savings accounts, mentioned in Chapter Two. She deposited less in Jaime's because they had had to buy shoes for him that week. Since he chose a pair that surpassed the $300 limit she had given him, she deducted it from his account. She says they opened the children's accounts in case they should decide to study a professional career. They also used the money that week to pay electricity (a bi-monthly bill), the Coca-Cola purchase for the store (usually approximately $1200), and $2000 for weekly expenses including fabric with which to make shirts – the children's shirts were showing wear – and Jesus' dancing boots. Licha related the expenses from memory.

At that time, Ernesto was sending the remittances to a bank, but more recently, they have tried a commercial money exchange business because the transaction is the same day rather than a few days later. More than money is involved in migration, however. In the following section, I present the family in respect to family roles and relationships since Ernesto's migration.

3.4.1.9.2. Roles and relationships

3.4.1.9.2.1. The father's absence

Ernesto's leaving implied several changes for the family. Because Ernesto imposed a policy of not spending time or money on sending letters, packages, or gifts in either direction. Belen had an especially difficult time dealing with her father's sudden absence. He had always taken her to school in the mornings on bicycle, and this was a bonding time for them. Only occasionally were there telephone calls, which they would receive at one of the grandparents' homes.

In December, a very fortunate transaction occurred – the offer of a free telephone and telephone line. The family liked the idea and the telephone was soon installed. They say they buy a phone card for $30 or $50 pesos that usually lasts three to four weeks. Once they had the telephone installed and the family was able to incorporate more regular calling into their life, Belen's concerns about her father's well being were assuaged. They keep their uncle's phone number taped to the phone, where they are able to leave messages for Ernesto. Calling from a public phone, he often times calls two or three days in a row. Recently, Ernesto has gotten his own cell phone.

Licha thinks it is funny that she and Ernesto have gotten along better since he left. Ernesto calls to give the remittance order number, and to confirm its arrival. They make decisions on permissions and investments over the phone. She sometimes passes cooking hints or recipes to Ernesto, and they often discuss the children's behavior, and then he will ask her to pass the phone to the boys. The boys also mention asking their father about their English homework.

3.4.1.9.2.2. *Ha de ser igual estando aquí, estando allá*

When I asked Ernesto about his role in the children's education since he left, he said,

> *Orita' ps' yo digo una cosa, ¿no? y puedo mandar y todo pero pos' más que nada, ps' no sé, allá está mi esposa pero ps' no sé si se lleven acabo pero ps' yo creo que sí, ha de ser igual estando aquí, estando allá ¡verda'! como somos una pareja pues yo creo que debe de seguir igual los pasos* [Right now, I can say one thing and can be in charge and everything, but, more than anything, my wife is there and I don't know if they carry it out, but I think they do. It must be the same whether I'm here or there, right? Because we are a couple, I think that the steps should be the same].

Licha brings up matters over the telephone to involve Ernesto in the family's daily activities. One of the principal changes Licha has seen since Ernesto emigrated is that she is freer to help the children with homework. Before, she would begin helping one of them when Ernesto would instruct her to let them be, to serve him supper instead, and *"¿no por eso van a la escuela para que allá les enseñen* [Isn't that why we send them to school, so that they teach them there]?" She says then it would be very late when she would review their homework, and if they had not understood something, "everybody was really too tired and it was too late to do anything about it." Now, she can tend to the children's needs as they arise, and this adds to the family's peaceful functioning. The other critical change, according to Licha, is that they are not subject to tensions related to Ernesto's heavy drinking.

During my visits, all three children openly expressed their affection for their mother, giving her hugs or quietly standing behind her with arms lovingly around her while she told the family history in her genuine, story-telling way. They sometimes interrupted with a comment, clarification, or question, but mostly listened. At other times, they did household activities and Licha alternately gave them or reminded them of their chores. On several occasions, she had the kids in charge of the store and they popped their heads around to ask the price of some product. Belen often had doubts about the names of the

different types of chilies and about whether she had correctly calculated the amount owed by the customer.

Both boys have expressed interest in migrating someday. Their father has told them that it is not a decision to be made lightly and that there are risks involved. Ernesto does not want them to consider it at this point. Both he and Licha want them to finish at least secondary school, and Licha thinks it would be fine if they wanted to study a profession at the university level.

3.4.1.9.2.3. *Déjalos que digan lo que quieran*

The Tenahua Tlatehui family continues daily interaction with the extended family and in community life. Licha offers both families moral support by assuming responsibilities that are part of communal religious events, especially food preparation. Now, however, she has to keep the family business in mind, too. If the business is closed, they cannot earn a profit, so she turns to her mother-in-law for support. For example, when Licha was sick, her mother-in-law tended the store and cooked the meals. Nevertheless, relationships with the extended family have not been problem-free.

According to Licha, her mother-in-law tried to convince Ernesto to send the remittances to her because she did not trust that Licha was using the money wisely. Ernesto also mentioned being pressured by the family. He said they question him on how they are spending their money. "*Hablo con mi mamá y me (...) dice no que ¿qué pasó? que yo no he construido, que quien sabe que, que a ver mi hermano ya está haciendo un cuartito y yo que ¿qué pienso hacer* [I talk with my mom and she says, well, what's going on, that I haven't built anything, that who knows what all, that my brother is already building a little room and what do I think I'll do?]"

He goes on to say what he told Licha.

> *Ps' déjalos que digan lo que quieran, que hable le digo pero que se ponga a pensar que nosotros ya tenemos dos en la secundaria y Belen- Belen en la primaria y mientras él apenas tiene uno en primaria ¿no? (...) le digo para qué vamos ... a querer correr, mientras váyamos [así pronuncia] no tenemos porque estarnos cotejando cada rato. Vera' le digo, ¿para qué vamos a querer volar tan rápido si la cosa es calmada (...) despacito (...) pero ps' ellos no saben nuestras metas (...) cada quien piensa diferente (...) siii así mero es* [Well, let them say what they want, let them talk I tell her but that she should remember we have two in secondary school and Belen, Belen in elementary and meanwhile he just has one in elementary, right? (...) I tell her, what do we want to run for? While we're at it, we don't have to be comparing all the time. You see, I tell her, what do we want to fly so fast for if the thing is calm (...) slow (...) but they don't know our goals (...) everybody thinks differently...yep, that's how it is].

The family seems to disapprove of how they spend the money in Mexico, and Ernesto mentions that people have started questioning how he spends the money in Los Angeles.

> *La gente de allá piensan que porque está uno acá que gana uno mucho dinero (...) ¿cómo ha de pensar que acá o no mas' se pone a trabajar uno y gana bastante dinero ¿verá? Pero ps' también (...) a veces como que ganas también a veces se gasta, ¿verá? (...) Como siempre yo le he dicho, pos' deja a la gente osea' que sea tu papá o sea tu mamá o sean los míos, déjalos si ellos hablan pus' déjalos. Como nada mas somos nosotros los dos y nuestros hijos los que vamos a- que tenemos un problema pos' nosotros somos los que tenemos que sacarlo porque ellos a lo mejor nos pueden ayudar económico, verda? Pero, pues, más que nada nosotros lo tenemos que resolver entre los dos* [People from there think because a person is working here you earn a lot of money (...) they must think that here either a person just works and earns quite a bit of money, right? But, well too, sometimes, as you make it you spend it too, right? (...) Like I've always told her, well, let the people, be it your dad or be it your mom or mine, let them talk. Since it's just us two and our kids who are going – that have a problem, it's us who have to figure it out because they can maybe help us economically, right? But, well, more than anything, it's us who have to solve it between ourselves].

Although Ernesto tells Licha not to worry about what his family says about their decisions on how they spend money, from his tone of voice and his doubtfulness, I suspect it is a concern for him. He asked me several times if I did not think he was right

in his way of thinking. This is perhaps reflective of Malkin's (1998) point that gossip and criticisms are particularly wearing on migrants' prestige in the community.

3.4.1.10. Conclusion Tenahua Tlatehui family

Ernesto's migration may be solving more than economic hard times. It also seems to give the family a respite from the tensions caused by alcoholism. Migration has also given the couple new, challenging situations to deal with, which makes for interesting telephone conversation. As Licha mentions, her relationship with Ernesto has improved since his migrating. Ernesto talks about his family pushing him to speed up the process of reaching his goals, but he says that he is comfortable with the progress he is making. He has his own calendar for his own reasons.

Licha is a responsible and an ambitious woman who is sure of herself. She is a savvy businesswoman and loving mother but also a strict disciplinarian. She is a caring daughter, sister- and daughter-in-law and a demanding wife. She is a mapmaker and an eloquent storyteller. Licha values formal education and Ernesto does not try to restrict her imposing these values on the children. She is also a gifted and persuasive speaker. Like the women participating in D'Aubeterre's (2000) study of a transnational migrant circuit in the same state, it seems Licha plays an active role in maintaining family solidarity and creatively involving Ernesto in taking part in obligations and in continued affection toward the children as well as creating an environment propitious to learning. Licha is there to answer her children's questions and when she does not have the answers, then to guide them to resources where they can find them.

When I first met Belen, it was just four days before her father left. She was quiet and serious and her desk was the nearest to the teacher's. It has been heartening to see

how she has overcome what was a difficult period for her. A few rows behind Belen, sat Roberta, a member of another transnational family, whose father had left to try his luck in Las Vegas four years before. In the following section, I present Roberta, her family, and their experiences as a transnational family.

3.4.2. Salazar Oaxaca Family

Figure 3.10. Salazar Oaxaca Family

3.4.2.1. Overall description

The Salazar Oaxaca family lives five blocks south of the town square. Cesar Salazar, 36 years of age, has lived in the Las Vegas, Nevada area for the past four and a half years. He keeps in close contact by telephone with his wife, Mariana, 32, and their four children Figo, 13, Oswaldo, 12, Roberta, 10, and Giovani, 8, seen in *Figure 3.10*. The two older boys attend secondary school and the two youngest attend Alfonso Cano Elementary School, a block from their home. Following the virilocal residence pattern described by Robichaux (2002), they have their own home, contiguous to and sharing a common patio with Cesar's father's and sister's homes. While Mariana occasionally picks up work at a local factory, she prefers to fulfill the obligations she has at home and

with the children, keeping family unity a high priority. The children enjoy their time together in the household. Mariana describes her family, as *muy hogareños,* that is, they like to stay at home.

I follow a somewhat different format in presenting the Salazar Oaxaca family because their experience with migration began years before I started collecting data, and also because the level of trust which I was able to gain was somewhat less, and so there is less data. Thus, rather than presenting different aspects of their lives in separate before- and after-migration sections, I begin with events surrounding the initial migration, and then continue with the different aspects of their lives before and after migration including family economy and work; roles, relationships and organization within the family; education; personal interests; and their relationship with the extended family and community.

3.4.2.2. Cesar's migration

3.4.2.2.1. The family background

Cesar is the fourth of eight siblings. With a sixth grade education, Cesar has followed the virilocal tradition (Robichaux, 1998), building an L-shaped home with five rooms on the family plot for himself, and his wife and four children. The living room leads directly to the street and connects to the main bedroom where the five sleep. The main bedroom leads onto the shared patio and one crosses the patio to reach the two other rooms, one of which leads to the large kitchen.

Cesar's wife, Mariana, is the fifth of six siblings. The Oaxaca family's migratory experience began nine years ago when one of Mariana's sisters went to live in Las Vegas. This sister has been back only once since leaving. When she returned, her plan was to

stay, but after four months she returned to Las Vegas. Mariana's youngest brother then went to Las Vegas and stayed for a year and a half.

During these initial experiences with migration, Cesar and Mariana were experiencing hard times. Cesar met the challenges with flexibility, or, as Floyd Tenery (2005) describes it, "the strategic choices that the household makes in procuring its subsistence (p.114)." Cesar had worked as a night watchman and then in a furniture factory. Later, his brother started a dairy business and Cesar took care of the cows. When that business did not make a profit, his brother sold the cows, leaving Cesar without employment. Thus, hard times pushed Cesar to journey north to Las Vegas nearly five years ago, following his wife's youngest brother. Last summer, Cesar's youngest brother also journeyed to Las Vegas. Mariana says this brother has been very lucky because he found two jobs right away and is making good money. Cesar's experience was quite different, as recalled in the following section.

3.4.2.2.2. The leave-taking

Mariana recalls that the decision to emigrate was sudden.

> *Fue [tomada] muy rápida porque él tenía en planes de irse hace, de la vez que se fue, como dos años antes dijo que se iba a ir a Estados Unidos, nunca se fue, dijo que no y ya, hasta que de repente, no sé, la situación, los mismos problemas, dijo- me voy, yyy pues platicamos mucho y llegamos al acuerdo de que sí pero se iba a ir supuestamente por poco tiempo nada más yyy se está alargando más, alargando más, y este, a lo mejor son otros 2 a 3 años más todavía* [was made very fast because he had had plans to go to the United States, two years earlier and then never went, he said no and that was that, until all of a sudden, I don't know, the situation, the same problems, he told me – I'm going, and well we talked a lot and we came to the agreement that yes, but he was going for supposedly a short time and it's been stretching out, stretching out, and it will probably be another 2 to 3 years yet].

Mariana says she has not asked Cesar the details of the crossing, but she knows he called the people her sister had suggested, and he left from here on bus. She does not remember where he went to meet with this person and she doesn't know how he crossed. She does know that other family members have gone with a *pollero* who receives money once he has *entregada la mercancía* [handed over the merchandise]. Her sister paid *al chaz-chaz* [cash on delivery] for Cesar's safe arrival. She says if they pay beforehand, there is too great of a risk they would be left after just crossing the border in the middle of nowhere. It took Cesar three months to find a job in Las Vegas, and then about six months to pay back the money Mariana's sister had lent him. In the four and a half years since he left, he has returned once. "*Le toca venir pronto* [He is due for a visit soon]."

3.4.2.2.3. Goals

Mariana said they did not have a set of concrete goals before Cesar's first leaving perhaps because they were skeptical he would even be able to cross the border. "*No sabíamos que iba a pasar y pues sí, de hecho, sí* [We didn't know if he would cross and well he did, actually, he did]." When I asked Mariana about goals since then, in general she spoke of the children's studies, their family's lifestyle, and finishing the house completely with "everything the family needs." She says those goals are still in place and they keep working towards them, but they get sidetracked because the children make them focus on other things.

> *Pues de repente no lo hacemos, ooo no nos enfocamos a eso, o nos enfocamos en otra cosa y nos salimos del, del camino, entonces de repente salen cosas que no están previstas y hay que solucionarlas también, yyy pues, se cambia todo, o se tiene uno que esperar otro poco más (. . .) si pero este va tardar todavía yo creo otros dos años* [So, we end up not doing the things we have planned, or we stop focusing [on a goal] and we focus on another and we get off track and suddenly things which haven't been planned come up and we have to solve those things too and well, everything

> changes, or we have to wait a little longer... yes, but it's going to be another two years, I think].

It seems she has discussed this with Cesar and they have agreed upon this point, that is, that it will be necessary for him to work for another two years in Las Vegas.

I also asked Mariana what she wanted for her children.

> *Que salgan adelante como seres humanos, que sean buenos y que progresen. Que trabajan, esfuerzen, y en el estudio. La educación es lo más importante. Una mamá quiere que sea por el lado bueno. Y que se une mucho la familia. También que pueden practicar una profesión que les guste. Entre mejor estén preparados, mejor* [That they succeed as human beings, that they are good and they progress. That they work, they try hard, and in their studies. Education is the most important of all. A mother wants it to be achieved with their cooperation, and that the family become really united. Also that they can practice a profession they like. The better prepared the better].

Like Licha, Mariana believes her children's studies will secure their future. In the next section, I discuss her and Cesar's experience with work.

3.4.2.3. Family Life

3.4.2.3.1. Economy and Work Situation: *Empezar desde abajo.*

In Las Vegas, Mariana says, Cesar "*empezó desde abajo.... Progresó* [he started at the bottom.... He moved up]." Working at a fast food sandwich chain, washing dishes, and then waiting tables, he moved up to kitchen *manager*, and now he is store *manager*. As Mariana spoke to me about her husband's work experience, she could not find the words in Spanish to say what her husband did, but explained he had been promoted to *manager,* pronounced with a Mexican accent. Mariana understood this meant that Cesar was in charge of the locale and that he was very happy with this new position.

When I first met Mariana, she was also working a paid job. In apple harvest season of 2004, she took on a temporary seasonal production job at a local fruit-processing business. They asked her back to work in the spring and summer, training her to work in

other areas of the plant. She worked from April to early October 2005, when she quit due to schedule changes. She decided it would be too difficult to keep the family and home running smoothly with the new work schedule. "*Entonces, les di mis gracias* [So, I gave them my thanks (literally) / I quit (semantically)]." In retrospect, Mariana thinks they placed more confidence in her than she did in herself.

Mariana says Cesar wonders what is going on because they used to be able to live with one quantity of money, and now they are spending more. She explains to him that before the kids were little and they could buy them cheaper shoes, but as they grow, they also acquire *gustos* [specific tastes], and they notice differences between one pair of pants and another, and they want the one which costs more. It seems that Mariana regards this as a natural part of children growing up.

3.4.2.3.2. Roles and Relationships

3.4.2.3.2.1. *Realmente le cambió todo*

Mariana says that Cesar comes from a family that believes men do not do housework, but Mariana says she was not educated that way. She believes men should also learn these things. As a result, the organization of the housework is one aspect of family life that has changed considerably since Cesar's emigration. Mariana spoke about how things were before Cesar's leaving.

> *Él era el que se iba a trabajar y uno aquí que la escuela, viendo la escuela, los niños, el quehacer de la casa, todo era aquí en la mañana; ahora no, porque como yo trabajo, él no está e de repente voy a la escuela muy de vez en cuando. Trabajo en la mañana; en la tarde tengo que venir a hacer las labores que supuestamente hacía yo en la mañana, ahorita en la tarde. Ooo por ejemplo los niños ya no salen tanto como antes porque antes con su papá salían a cada rato, si, a cada rato salía, se los llevaba al campo, a jugar fut, a jugar basket, a todos lados . Yyy ahora no porque salimos nada más cada fin de semana, salir no no a pasear sino aquí nada más a despejarnos un rato nada más pero sí ya han cambiado muchas cosas para*

> *ellos y para mí y para Cesar igual, él está allá pero realmente le cambió todo.* [Cesar would be the one to go out to work and I would be here with the school, looking after school matters, the kids, the housework, everything would be taken care of in the morning; not now, because, since I work, he's not here, and I very rarely go to the schools. I work in the mornings, in the afternoon I have to come and do the housework I used to do in the mornings, at this time in the afternoons. Or, for example, the kids don't go out as often as before, because before, they would go out really often with their father, they would, really often, he would take them out to the field, to play soccer, to play basketball, all over. And now, no, because we only get out on the weekends, and not to live it up either, rather, just for a change of scenery or some fresh air for a while. So, yes, many things have changed for the kids and for me and for Cesar too. He's there, and that really changes everything].

After Cesar left, Mariana began dividing up chores for the children. Besides picking up their rooms and making their beds, she has them sweep, wash dishes, and wash socks. To lighten the atmosphere, she sometimes sings a song from Barney "*limpien, limpien. Ponga todo en su lugar*.... [Clean up, clean up. Put everything in its place.]" If the children are doing homework and she is doing housework, she sometimes puts on music too. Her favorites seem to be the Doors and Queen. Another example of dividing up the chores is, since the kids like to eat *mole verde* [a green stew], she has one child wash the cilantro, another washes the meat, another peels the tomatoes, etc. Mariana reminds me that Cesar has also experienced changes because he lives with four men and they take turns with the different chores, but that he continues to believe that "*en su casa no debe ser así* [in his house it shouldn't be like that (that a man or boys should do housework)]." I have never heard the children grumble about responsibilities they have.

3.4.2.3.2.2. *El héroe de los niños*

Figure 3.11 The Salazar Oaxaca family sends greetings to their father, Cesar.

Rarely have I seen or heard the children squabble. Rather, they share excitement when they have something new and look to each other to help solve problems. Mariana says that Cesar is "*el héroe de los niños* [the kids' hero]," and for Roberta, "*Su papá es su adoración* [Her father is her adoration]." However, she says, Cesar communicates most with their oldest son. She says, she doesn't know whether it is good or not, but Cesar tells Figo, "*Soy su papá y su amigo* [I am your father and your friend]." Cesar insists this is how he wants it.

The number of telephone calls per week between Cesar and the family varies, but Mariana says anything between two and five times a week. Roberta says she and her brothers talk to their father over the telephone and he asks them about their grades and "*luego, si sacamos malas, nos regaña* [later, if they are too low, he scolds us]."

According to Roberta, she is also learning some English from her father. "*El primer día que nos habló por teléfono nos dijo que había aprendido palabras en inglés y yo le dije ¿me las puedes enseñar? y así le fui preguntado*. [The first day he called by phone, he told us he had learned some words in English and I asked him, can you teach me them? And that's how I started asking]." In Mexican public schools, English is not

taught until junior high, so Giovani and Roberta's main contact with English has been through their father.

The youngest children often told me their father was going to be coming soon. Giovani said his father had promised him a puppy; this was after their dog had been killed. Mariana told me Cesar tells the children those things but only *para darles ilusiones* [to occupy their minds with pretty ideas]. At one point however, even Mariana mentioned he might be coming. She said he wants her to go to Las Vegas with him, but that she really does not want to. She wants him to come back to Cholula and for them to be all together while the children are young. She says she will be willing to go with him to the States when the children are grown, but for now, she does not want to leave them.

3.4.2.3.3. Education and personal interests

Cesar completed sixth grade at what was then the only primary school in the community. Mariana's family moved from the capital city to this community when she was in the sixth grade and so she finished the last half of sixth grade at the same local primary school as Cesar. She went on to complete secondary school at what was then the only secondary school in the community. Their two eldest sons, Figo and Oswaldo, now study at this same secondary school. They both studied primary at the Alfonso Cano Elementary, just a block from their house, where Roberta and Giovani were studying at the time of this study.

Now that there is a choice of schools, Mariana says they decided on Alfonso Cano because it is the closest to their home, but also because they teach well. She then goes on to speak more frankly. Mariana believes that most any school teaches well. If the kids are intelligent, *van a brillar* [they'll shine] whatever school they attend. According to her,

a good education includes discipline, progress, teaching, learning, and constancy. She believes her children are doing average work.

At 13, Figo has already grown taller than his mother. He likes to read and write. He especially enjoys books on animals and fiction, but his favorite school subject is math because he likes numbers and problems and solving them. He says he sometimes makes mistakes in class, but sometimes, he is the best in the class.

Oswaldo, 12, does not have a favorite subject, and he reads and writes infrequently, according to him. His real enthusiasm is for soccer, which he loved to play at Alfonso Cano, and now at his secondary school. Oswaldo also loves watching professional matches on the television. His enthusiasm is contagious and his older and younger brothers go along with him. They know about the different teams and players, and that is how they chose their pseudonyms used in this study.

Roberta, 10 now, was in the fourth grade *Querida Abuelita* class at Alfonso Cano. Roberta loves to wear boots and skirts. She chose the pseudonyms for herself and for her mother from characters in a favorite afternoon television program. Like Figo, Roberta's favorite school subject is mathematics, and she thinks school is really fun. She tells me enthusiastically that, she has two friends who are also cousins who go to the same school. She likes to read because the stories are *bonitas, divertidas y tienen buenas imágenes* [pretty, fun, and they've got good pictures]. She also likes to write in order to improve her spelling and penmanship. She says she likes to study, but I noticed her attitude was less than enthusiastic the day she had to find roots for compound words.

Roberta's fourth-grade teacher, the same as Mary Carmen's and an ex-migrant himself, reported that Roberta was both academically and emotionally stable during all of

fourth grade. Since her father had been in the States for a few years, she had already grown accustomed to her father's absence. What may affect her most, in his opinion, is that her mother has to work outside the home. He suspects Roberta's father might not be able to send enough money to cover expenses here. He also mentions that Roberta's mother has to take on the role of both mother and father, covering each of her children's needs, and solving all the problems they might have during their growth and development. Roberta thinks her father takes a supportive role in her education by sending money to pay for the things they need at school.

Giovani, on the other hand, does not think school is very fun. Although spelling is his favorite class, he likes reading more than writing. He says the problem is that his teacher hardly ever lets them read; she just has them do writing. If he had to choose, he would choose to read books with pictures or drawings. He compares third grade unfavorably to second grade, when the teacher gave them time for reading and they were allowed to take storybooks home. He says there are books in his classroom, but they have not read them. Giovani has a good memory and can name the titles of books from second grade off the top of his head. He is able to repeat short stretches of speech he has heard others say, even from television. Mariana is concerned because she says Giovani used to enjoy school so much. She said he was doing addition and subtraction, and he was reading and writing in third grade of kindergarten.

During the family's free time, sometimes they ride their bikes, one of Giovani's favorite pastimes, to the city's sports field, and there, Mariana likes to run around the track as the kids ride their bikes and they like to play basketball on their patio where they have a hoop. At home, they like to watch movies and listen to music. Giovani's favorite

pastimes are to dance and sing. Figo proudly shows me their collection of mostly originally CD's. He says his father brought many of them from the U.S., all of them groups that sing in Spanish. They also take time to play together table games such as *Basta* and *Tourista* as well as made-up games that I explain in the next chapter.

I go into greater depth on education and homework in the Results. However, perhaps it is relevant to mention here how the kids responded to questions about their future aspirations. Giovani said he wants to be a dentist or an electrician, *quien pone los focos* [one who changes light bulbs]. Roberta said she wants to be a teacher, and when I asked her for what grades, she finally decided for kindergarten. Mariana rolled her eyes when she heard that and I asked her why. She said with four kids of her own she couldn't imagine working everyday with a classroom full of kids. Oswaldo said he wants to be a soccer player or an "architect," because "*me ha gustado poner modelos de la estructura de los coches* [I like putting models of car structures]." Mariana and I tried to discern exactly what he meant, and I suggested he might want to be a design engineer and Mariana suggested an auto mechanic. Figo said he might like to be an architect.

3.4.2.3.4. Extended family and community life

Although they share a patio with Cesar's parents and his sister, I was never introduced to any of Cesar's family. The children sometimes made reference to their father's side of the family. Roberta's best friends are her cousins. When their dog was killed, the children buried it with the help of their grandfather. When Mariana got home from work, they told her how it had happened and how they even said prayers for their pet at the burial site.

Mariana took out their collection of pictures that they keep in a cardboard box. Many of the photographs were taken during religious celebrations and related festivities. In one photograph, Giovani is dressed in a suit. He was asked to be one of the *chambelanes* [escorts] for his three-year-old cousin for her birthday party. We also found some photographs of Figo y Oswaldo, alongside some religious images. It was December when Cesar's brother asked Mariana if she and Cesar would be *padrinos* [sponsors] for a *fiesta* in the *barrio.* Mariana spoke with Cesar about it and they decided to accept the *cargo,* the religious obligation. According to Mariana, Cesar's brother's request was the *gancho para que viniera* [the hook to get him to come back] and, she was happy to say, it worked. She did not tell me much about his return except that he was heavier than when he had left the first time. She added that he lost weight when he was back though because he got so sick. The only other comment she made in reference to his return was about an image on their *altar.* She said he had salvaged it from the garbage in Las Vegas and had brought it back for their *altar.*

The family spoke much more often of Mariana's side of the family. On one occasion, I met Mariana's sister and her husband. Mariana told me how surprised they were that she had a visitor (me) at home. Mariana said she does not have friends who visit and that the family does not visit much either. Mariana did say her sister and brother-in-law were very interested in the project on which I was working however, and supportive of Mariana and the kids cooperating in this literacy research project.

Mariana told me her parents both come from a neighboring state to the south, but they made their home for their family originally in the capital, where they lived until Mariana was about 12. She said her father was given an offer to buy a plot of land in this

community, but in another *barrio*. She said at that time, her father already worked here and he liked the area. At that time, it was a quiet place with a lot of fields to play soccer which her father used to enjoy, and so her parents took the offer and paid the land "*poco a poquito entre los dos* [little by little between the two of them]." Mariana said her father has always worked in food service, and he has been working for years as a waiter at a well-established catering business. She said her mother loves cooking and she will even cook for others, whether it is for five people or fifty. Many times that I went to see them, they were not home, and later they told me they had been with their maternal grandparents. During summer vacation, the three youngest children also took turns staying at their maternal grandparents' home, helping out with chores.

On weekends, Mariana's family sometimes goes to swimming pools at a nearby town where the weather is warmer. They either go by car or truck with their paternal grandfather, or by car with Mariana's sister and her husband. Figo said his mother is starting to learn to drive. As Mariana mentioned, the weekend is nearly the only time they get out of the house – very different from when their father lived with them.

3.4.2.3.5. Attitudes toward migration

In the family interview, Figo and Mariana brought up the conflicting about migration. In their opinion, the United States is strong economically and technologically and there is a lot of tourism. They said it is the number one consumer in the world, being the number one client of Mexico, Thailand, China and Japan. The more people who go to the United States, the fewer people there are working the fields and producing for Mexico. Rather, Mariana said, "*están colaborando a su crecimiento en otro lado* [they are collaborating in the growth of the other side]." Furthermore, they are leaving their

families behind. They agreed there is work both here in Mexico and in the United States. Mariana recognizes that there are good aspects to migration, "*pero están descuidando en casa o en el país, digamos, lo que nos ayudaría por lo menos a crecer un poco* [but they are neglecting their own home or country which needs a little help to grow]."

3.4.2.4. Conclusion Salazar Oaxaca Family

Unlike the Tlatehui Tenahua family, the Salazar Oaxaca family has directly lived with migration for nearly five years. Before Cesar left, Mariana said, they had few furnishings in the house. Now, they have a three-piece living room set, a coffee table, a bookcase with books and a home entertainment center. They have a DVD player, two televisions and two stereo systems. Except for one stereo system, everything was bought here in Mexico. She said they also wear new shoes. "*Antes, aunque tenían hoyos, seguían usándolos*. [Before, even though they had holes, they kept wearing them]." These are all changes she attributes to the remittances her husband sends.

The family has adapted to Cesar's living abroad. Mariana remembers that at first Roberta was sensitive and would begin crying anytime she even heard the word *papá,* and she also remembers the boys saying it on purpose to make her cry. Since then, the siblings have become very supportive of each other. Mariana has assumed the role of decision-maker, imposing changes resulting in adaptations in the family's organization and daily functioning, and resulting in a harmonious working balance.

This concludes the description of the Salazar Oaxaca family, and leaves one family yet to introduce – the Nava Romero family. I follow the general organization which I used in presenting the Salazar Oaxaca family, beginning with an overall description,

following with the father's emigration, and concluding with a description of their life as they see it.

3.4.3. Nava Romero Family

Figure 3.12. The Nava Romero family.

3.4.3.1. Overall description

The Nava Romero family lives near the southwestern edge of the town limits. Fidel Nava, the father, 26 years of age, has resided in the New Jersey area, and more recently in Canada since February 2004, leaving behind his wife, Monica, and their six children (seen in *Figure 3.12*) at their home on Monica's family's home plot. Araceli, the oldest of six, was just six years old when her father left. She is now in third grade at the Alfonso Cano Elementary School.

Monica has work aplenty caring for the children and fulfilling domestic obligations while directing the building of the addition on their home. Although she sometimes appears tired, she exudes enthusiasm and seems to love the close proximity of her family of origin. She depends on Araceli for help with the care of the younger children, and Araceli happily and lovingly cooperates. On two occasions when I stopped to schedule visits, the children answered the door and ran to call their mother. She came with her

hands full of tortilla dough. It seems she is the person in charge of making the tortillas for not only her family but also the extended family with whom they interact closely, a transnational family full of *deep* Mexican traditions.

3.4.3.2. Fidel's migration

3.4.3.2.1. The family background

Monica Romero was born and raised, and has made a home on her family's home place with Fidel Nava, who has his origins in a nearby *barrio*. Monica says it was her mother who inherited the family's home plot. Monica comes from a family of four brothers and four sisters, four of whom have made their homes on this same home plot. One of Monica's brothers, who is single, has resided in the New Jersey area for four years, and a brother-in-law, married to Monica's sister, Beatriz, went there approximately three years ago. It was Fidel's second time to make the journey north; the first time, he stayed only two months, returning because of a family emergency.

When I asked Monica about the reasons behind Fidel's migration, she explained plainly and simply, "*Ya había poco trabajo y teníamos que meter a los niños a la escuela y ya no nos alcanzaba el dinero* [there was little work available and we had to put the children into school and we did not have enough money anymore]." She made no mention as to the influence of the family members already in the U.S., but she is a woman who expresses herself simply and succinctly, and, with her load of responsibilities, I did not feel justified in probing further.

3.4.3.2.2. The leave-taking

The opportunity did not arise to talk with Monica about Fidel's actual leaving, the preparation for it, the planning of it, or the payment for it. She only mentions that "*Ya no*

teníamos dinero para salir adelante [We didn't have any money anymore to get ahead with]." She did mention that their youngest child was born in November 2003 and that Fidel left just two months later, on February fifth, 2004.

I met Monica's sister, Beatriz, whose husband is in the New Jersey area, and she spoke about the danger of the journey with some sarcasm. "*Es bien bonito. Arriesgan su vida para pasar*. *Hay polleros abusados* [It's real nice. They risk their lives to go over. There are sly *polleros*]." Neither Monica nor Beatriz shared with me any details of the route or the means by which the men traveled.

3.4.3.2.3. Goals

> When I asked Monica about her and Fidel's goals, she said,
>
> *Pues, hacer nuestra casa porque, de hecho, no teníamos donde estar (. . .) [tenemos] dos piezas pero todavía nos falta el baño, sacar drenaje (...) hacer (...) otra pieza porque, pues, dormimos todos y estamos apretados y no cabemos y eso es lo que nosotros* queremos [Well, to make our house because actually, we didn't have a place to be (...)We have two rooms but we still lack a bathroom, to install drainage (...) to build (...) another room because we all sleep and we are too bunched together and we don't fit and that is what we want.

In subsequent visits, I came to realize how much the house was on her mind, as she was on the verge of starting to build the addition to their house. I did not ask her to estimate how close she considered they were to reaching their goals; rather, I mainly concentrated on the here and now. It was during the first visit with the family, when filling out the Family Social History form that I learned more about their past. In the following sections, I present the story that they shared with me.

3.4.3.3. Family Life

3.4.3.3.1. Economy and work situation

Before migrating, Fidel worked for a gas distributing company in the community. Driving a truck, he sold 20-kilo cylinders of gas. Monica said his income was dependent on sales. He would earn anywhere between six hundred and nine hundred pesos (approximately $60-90USD) per week. Going north, he first went to the New Jersey area where her brother and brother-in-law lived. Since then he moved on by himself. Now, he is working at a McDonald's, somewhere in Canada. She said that now he sends money every week, always to the same agency. On Mondays, she goes to collect the money. Monica said probably the biggest change for the family since Fidel's leaving is that "*ya tenemos un poco más para darles a nuestros hijos* [now we are able to give our children a little more than before]."

Monica's work is in the home and with her family. She administers the money Fidel sends carefully. There are no new furnishings in the home. They do have a stereo, as seen in *Figure 3.13*, and Araceli likes to put music on to listen to music, but they bought it about five years ago in the state capital. She is also frugal about using electricity. There are no fancy clothes in their wardrobe. Indeed, two weeks into the school year, the required sports uniforms were still pending.

Figure 3.13. Araceli and the stereo.

3.4.3.3.2. Roles and Relationships

The first visit took place in Monica's mother's front room, the closest to the street. It is a large, sparsely furnished room with simple wooden chairs, a refrigerator, an *altar*, and two long benches pushed under a large wooden table, all of it lined up against the wall. For visiting, we sat on a few chairs in the middle of the large room. When Araceli arrived, she greeted me with a kiss. Then her two eldest brothers, Manuel and José Juan, already present, stood up, introduced themselves and shook hands with me. Various cousins and the youngest children also came to greet me – each one personally. Monica is proud of her family of origin, and the family she and Fidel have formed. She explained the layout of her family plot. Along the west side of the plot, after this first front room, is her sister's room, then the kitchen, then her mother's room, then a brother's room. Then there is a granary and last is their house. Along the other side of the plot are the well and the animals and their shelters. They have two cows, two calves, a sheep, some pigs, chickens, turkeys and dogs.

On the next visit, the children led me across the dirt yard, where the turkeys, chickens and dogs roam freely, and past the stables. Monica's mother was washing clothes at the well. Clean clothes hung drying on a line in front of the Nava Romero house. Several relatives from the extended family were outside and they greeted me as I headed toward the one-story house, last on the lot. Since Monica and Fidel's house is at the corner of the lot, their two long, large rooms are built perpendicular to each other. More recently, since my visits, they have built the main structure of the second story of the house. Monica had been buying the materials little by little and so they put up the structure in a few weeks, but they have yet to put drainage in.

The large main room is sparsely furnished; the floors are cement and the walls are finished white. There is a sofa on the south wall and a small round table in the corner, where the recently acquired telephone sits. Along the west wall, there is an armchair, a small wood chair and a china cabinet with a stereo. Along the north wall, there are two double beds. On the east wall is the doorway to the kitchen where you find a twin-size bunk bed set, a stove, refrigerator and table and chairs. Monica says her brother's wife and their two children are staying with her and that they are a bit crowded. This is new since our first meeting because at that time her only brother in the U.S. was single. This brother is in New Jersey, but since when or for how long, she did not say.

Monica said they cannot call Fidel because he does not have a telephone. Instead, he calls them from a public phone every week. Monica mentions taking advantage of the telephone promotion mentioned in the community description. This acquisition brought positive changes for this transnational family. Before the telephone was installed, Monica explained, Fidel would call once every three or four weeks, either at her sister's or her sister-in-law's cell phones. Since April 2005, he has been able to call directly to their house, and so she feels much more comfortable talking longer. When possible, the kids take turns talking with their father too. The day I interviewed Araceli was the day before her birthday, and so she was looking forward to a call from her father the next day. The children told me excitedly that their father says he is coming home soon. I later asked Monica about this and she said from the discussions she and Fidel have had, "*tardará otros dos años tal vez* [it will be another two years perhaps]." She explained "*nomás dice eso a los niños* [he just tells that to the kids]," which is similar to what Mariana told me about Cesar's talk with the children.

Monica said she does not send letters and that she does not have Fidel's address to be able to send him anything. She is not even sure exactly where he is. The extended family, however, sends packages to Monica's brother who has lived there for over three years. According to Beatriz, he is on the payroll at the *marqueta* in New York. When I asked her what the *marqueta* was, she was not sure if it was a market or a supermarket or a warehouse, but she said that he has to move a lot of Coke bottles.

Monica stresses that Fidel's not being here has changed her children's daily life. As noted in the opening quote of this study, he was the one who played with the children, taught them, and took them to the park. His absence seems to have affected them greatly. Indeed, it was going to be Araceli's birthday, and the fair was in town those days. I asked if they might be going to the fair to celebrate the birthday, but Monica said she would not be taking them to the fair; besides not having money to go (it was the beginning of the school year and the purchase of the obligatory sports uniforms was still pending), Monica explained she does not go to town with the kids because she simply cannot handle them all. She says, "*Se cansa uno y luego otro y no se puede* [One child gets tired and then another and I just can't do it]."

3.4.3.3.3. Education and Personal Interests

Fidel finished primary school in the public school in the community and went on to secondary school in the neighboring town where he studied for two years. Monica studied first and second grade in a public school in a nearby town, then her parents sent her to study at the semi-private school, Centro Telpochcalli (mentioned earlier in this chapter in the description of the community and which has a sliding scale for tuition), for

two more years. Monica does not know why they made the change for her. She and Fidel, however, have consciously made the decisions for their children's schooling.

Fidel and Monica have chosen a nearby kindergarten for the younger children and Alfonso Cano Elementary for Araceli and her eldest brother, Manuel. Monica's nieces and nephews attend primary school in the neighboring town where Monica studied her first years of primary. In Monica's opinion, the teachers in the neighboring community school do not teach well, whereas the teachers at Alfonso Cano "*atienden a los estudiantes. No los deja ir par'abajo. Los saca adelante.* [They tend to the students. They do not let them slip (scholastically). They push them to succeed]." Furthermore, when parents pre-register the first grade children in February they choose which of the three available teachers they want their child to have. Monica chose Manuel's teacher because she believes that this teacher is more organized.

Monica is aware of the methods that the children are using to learn reading at school. She explains to me the *zapatero* [shoe bag] method. She explains they have rows of plastic pockets in which the letters are placed. Then, the teacher asks them to put together the different sounds – at first syllables, and then complete words, and the children take the corresponding letters out to form the syllables or words. She says this is quite different from the way she learned, which consisted of writing pages full of individual words or syllables.

Monica also feels indebted to Araceli's second grade teacher. She is grateful that Araceli's teacher knew how to help her. At one point, Araceli was in second place in her group and then, "*Bajé a tercer lugar, y luego no hubo lugares* [I went down to third place and then there were no more places]" Classrooms only give special recognition to the

students with the top three grades. Monica places the blame on the parents because "*a veces somos desobligados* [sometimes, we are irresponsible]."

Parents only have so many resources with which to help their children in their schoolwork. In this family, that changed after Fidel's leaving. According to Monica, Fidel was the one who helped the children with homework. "*Sabía más que yo porque él estudió la secundaria y yo no* [He knew more than me because he studied secondary and I didn't]." This is a source of frustration for Monica, as I explain in the next chapter.

Araceli enjoys studying at Alfonso Cano School "*porque tengo muchas amigas, porque está mi maestra que más quiero, porque aprendo, porque así puedo aprender y estudiar mucho, por eso* [Because I have lots of friends, the teacher I most love, because I learn, and because that's how I can learn and study a lot, that's why]."

Manuel was just starting first grade and he liked the idea of learning how to read and write, "*para que pueda yo escribir y para mandar cartas (...) a mi papá, [y] a mis tíos*. [So that I can write and send letters (...) to my father and uncles]." Although Monica does not write letters, perhaps his cousins do. They mentioned that Monica's family sends packages to her brother. Perhaps they also include letters in the package. Since some cousins were staying with them, perhaps he had seen them write letters.

When I first met Manuel, he had just graduated from kindergarten. His mother coaxed him to tell me a little about it. He said they camped out at his school. He slept with his classmates and there were a few teachers there. They also had a ceremony and he said he cried when it was time to say goodbye to his teacher. Araceli and their cousins mentioned they also cried when they said goodbye to their teachers at the end of the school year. The children are expressively sentimental.

When I asked them about family activities, they mentioned activities exclusively in the home. They mentioned that their mom makes *chicharrines,* fried wheat chips, and they eat them. Monica also tries new recipes she and Araceli find in magazines. They do the housework all together; they also celebrate birthdays together with the whole family. Monica, Araceli, and Fidel too when he was there, also read storybooks to the children. One of Manuel's pastimes is to collect business cards and other cards of similar size.

While Monica sat to talk to me, she rarely sat alone. The youngest slept in her arms; another child, standing on the back of the chair, gave her hugs from behind; another crawled up on her lap. The smaller ones, especially the youngest sister, also look to Araceli for comfort and guidance. Araceli played with Laura on her lap or as they shared a chair. One afternoon, there were eleven children in the house playing. Another afternoon, a couple of the boys and their cousins had a radio transformer and they were connecting it to a battery, giving themselves, and anyone else who wanted them, electric shocks. Monica good-naturedly told me they had taken a radio apart. Later, a hen strut in, jumped up on a table, tipped over an incense burner, and Monica calmly asked one of the kids to guide the hen out. I found the kids' play entertaining and Monica's quiet, relaxed style of mothering very comforting.

As with the other two families, we can see in *Figure 3.14,* the Nava Romero family has a space dedicated to *los santos* [the saints], as the children call it. On another wall hung a Styrofoam and glitter decoration, shown in *Figure 3.15,* which read, Welcome to my baptism - a keepsake of the day the three oldest boys were baptized. They said it had been hung in the yard on a tube, which held up a canvas tarp for the festivities.

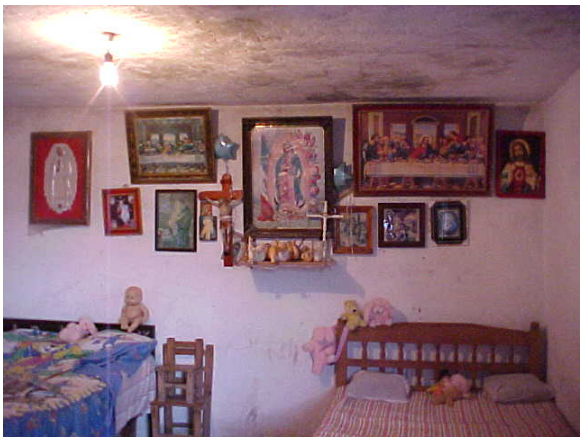

Figure 3.14. Los santos [The saints].

Figure 3.15. Bienvenidos a mi bautizo
[Welcome to my baptism]

The family history involves two powerful experiences with illness. The first time Fidel went to the U.S., he returned after only two months because Manuel had become ill. A few years earlier, Monica and Fidel's firstborn died at the age of nine months from a stomach infection. The family believes there was medical negligence on the doctor's part. Infant mortality is still high in Mexico, and so, the family takes it seriously when children get sick. It is likely the first experience affected Fidel's decision to return from his first journey north.

3.4.3.3.4. Extended family and community life

During the course of getting to know the Nava Romero family, they never spoke of Fidel's family. I was introduced, however, to Monica's parents and several nieces and nephews. Each time I was there, there were several people about the home plot. The youngest nieces and nephews mingle freely with each other, sharing toys. They celebrate baptisms and weddings together on the central patio. Araceli's cousins are preparing for first communion, and the three girls' eyes sparkle when they think about that forthcoming day, but Araceli will wait until her father returns for her own preparation. However, Monica takes prime responsibility in tending to her children's needs – washing, cooking, cleaning, attending school meetings and getting the children to Alfonso Cano for school, and the next two to the kindergarten an hour later, and then to pick them up, and on top of that, organizing the building of the second story, and making fresh tortillas. She and Araceli reserve Monday afternoons for collecting the remittances and stopping by the market.

3.4.3.4. Conclusion Nava Romero Family

Monica is a careful administrator of the family's financial resources. With two children in primary school and two in pre-school, the family was still gathering the means to complete the set of school-required uniforms. It is a careful balance between interests – fulfilling school requirements and building the home they want for their family. Monica is accomplishing this. Monica finds it comforting to have the telephone at their home in order to receive calls from Fidel.

More questions remain, perhaps than are answered with this family. I lack information on Fidel, Fidel's family, and on the family's relationship with the community. Perhaps it is because I did not ask the right questions. Perhaps the children's young ages makes a difference. Nevertheless, as a point of comparison, both in terms of children's age and in Monica's educational level, the literacy results may prove to be interesting. Before turning to the analysis of the literacy practices in the homes, I present a summary of the three families' differences and similarities.

3.4.4. Summary of Three Participating Families

These three families are part of new transnational migrant circuits. The three main receiving areas are Los Angeles, New York, and Las Vegas. In the Los Angeles area, we find the Tenahua men. Ernesto's uncle left approximately twenty years ago and now three of four brothers make a living near their uncle. In the New York area, we find Licha Tlatehui's brother and his wife and children, and four men from Monica Romero's family, although, Fidel has since moved to a new area. All of these men left within the past three years. Three of the Salazar and Oaxaca men have made Las Vegas their destination, meeting up with Mariana Oaxaca's sister who emigrated there nine years ago.

In the three cases, the migrants' initial choice of destination is where other family members live. Except for Fidel, the rest have stayed in close proximity to other family members in the area of residence. These data support Kochhar's (2005) findings that 80% of the migrants in the PHC survey had a relative other than a spouse or child in the US, and Levitt's (2001) affirmation that migration spreads through social networks. In all three cases, migration became a feasible choice for meeting the families' needs in part because of the resources offered by the extended families.

The organizing and financing of transportation and passage and the provision of food and shelter upon arrival certainly aided the migrants' decisions. Although I do not have the information about Fidel's journey, the other two men had considerable help from their family networks, not only in planning and carrying out the journey, but also in financing it. Ernesto received financing help both directly from his family and through connections in the community, as well as immediate help in finding lodging, clothing and food when he and his brother arrived at their destination. In Cesar's case, the choice of *pollero* and the payment for his services were arranged through family connections on the U. S. side of the border. These family and social networks are key to the pattern of migration (Kochhar, 2005).

Cesar emigrated longer ago, and he is the only one who emigrated without leaving a job. The fact that both Fidel and Ernesto had jobs, but that the income earned did not fulfill the basic needs of the family is a common phenomenon in Mexico (Kochhar, 2005) and one which leads to important questions on social and economic policy. Suro (2003) reported that the remittances serve to keep families from falling into poverty, and that

would seem the case for these families. Even though Fidel and Ernesto had jobs, their incomes were not enough to cover the needs of families of eight and five, respectively.

The goals of physical expansion of their homes and obtaining the essentials for the children to participate in school were common to the three families, but the timelines varied. The Nava Romero family began raising the addition twenty months after Fidel left. Cesar emigrated nearly five years ago, and, at the time of writing, the Salazar Oaxaca family had begun buying building materials. Indoor plumbing is another concern for the Nava Romero and the Tenahua Tlatehui families.

Malkin (1998) mentions the acquiring of electro-domestic appliances for the homes as part of the material culture particular to transnational families, but only the Salazar Oaxaca family displays these, and for the most part, they have been acquired in Mexico. This family has also been part of the transnational migrant circuit longer than the other families. Contrary to what was found by Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) and Malkin (1998), the Tenahua Tlatehui and the Nava Romero families do not move goods back and forth. The Salazar Oaxaca family sends packages but not consistently. In the three cases, it is the remittances that the families count on.

I see similarities between families in their preference for communicating by telephone, which allows information to move back and forth. This movement of information is discussed by Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) and Faulstich Orellana et al.'s (2001) however in these studies the information mainly moved through mail or delivery services. Furthermore, the frequency of calls made by the three migrants has increased since having telephones installed in their homes. Fidel calls the least often, calling once a week, while Ernesto and Cesar call up to five times a week.

These findings support statistics in the extraordinary number of calls made by migrants (Guarnizo, 2005). Only Licha and her children mentioned occasionally initiating calls to the migrant. The tendency for migrant-to-family calls is in part due to migrants not having a permanent telephone line, but the families expressed consensus that it was extremely expensive to call from Mexico to the U.S. The families told me the migrants bought telephone cards allowing for lengthy calls. Moreover, it appears the mothers utilize the telephone to nurture the father-child relationship, much like D'Aubeterre (2000) suggests when discussing women's creative and "subtle work oriented toward maintaining family solidarity and relations (p.82)."

Much of the couples' conversation over the telephone deals with decision-making. This has united Licha and Ernesto. Mariana and Cesar, however, have differing opinions on certain issues, especially those concerning gender and roles in the household. She worked outside the home, perhaps against Cesar's will. Well before his return to Mexico, she quit her job, perhaps in preparing for his arrival.

Religion played a significant role in relation to migration in the three families. With the Salazar Oaxaca family it was the main impetus for Cesar's first return visit. Both Belen's and Araceli's families have linked their first communions with their fathers' returns.

Licha and her children seem to be the most integrated with both sides of the family. The fact that both sides of the family are from the same *barrio* may account for this. Mariana keeps a respectful distance from her in-laws while allowing her children to foment the family's presence in the community. With Cesar's family living in the same *barrio,* the children have frequent contact with their cousins both at home and school.

Mariana's parents do not live far away and the family often spends time there. In the Nava Romero family, however, Fidel's family is from another *barrio* and the family did not speak about them. Daily interaction involves Monica's family.

In this chapter, I have situated the families socioculturally. I have described the community in which they live, their family histories, their customs, roles, interests, goals, and education. I have tried to relate how their experience with transnationalism has affected them in each of these areas. Understanding the families' social history allows us to situate their literacy practices in space and time. In the next chapter, I discuss the results of data collection concerning literacy practices of these three transnational families. I question the relationship between these literacy practices and the families' transnationalism. I question how migration affects literacy practices and how literacy practices affect migration at this time in these families in this community.

4. Results

4.1. Overview

In this chapter I present the results of the study of literacy practices of the three transnational families described in Chapter 3. I present the results by domain noting the salient features of each family, similarities and or differences between the families, and especially the practices' relation, if any, to migration. I do not mention nor analyze every literacy practice I heard about or observed, but rather, those, which I perceived as having the most relevance to the questions, I have posed in this study:

- What literacy practices can be found in the homes of transnational families who live in this Mexican community?
- What texts do these families use in these literacy practices and how do they use them?
- What texts do these families produce in these literacy practices and how do they produce them?
- What role do different family members play in these literacy practices?
- What purpose(s) do these literacy practices serve in the family?
- What purpose(s) do these literacy practices serve in the transnational migrant circuit?

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the practices, which the families told me about, and those I observed are only those that they allowed me to see and know about. Thus, certain literacy practices that do not fit into what participants consider reading and writing may have been missed. Much of the writing done in the Tenahua Tlatehui business, for example, they did not offer to show me. Rather, I asked to look at it, and they, a bit surprised, obliged me. As Farr (1991) mentioned, it took considerable time to

be able to see home literacy practices since they are so “inconspicuously interwoven” in daily life and “not foregrounded by participants themselves (p.12).” Guerra mentions transnational participants’ unwillingness to share personal writing with someone “who possessed significant differences in their eyes in terms of class and social status (p. 94).” Another possibility is that I did not ask questions that invited their elicitation. Again, Farr (1991) reminds us that families accommodate literacy materials so that they are “stored away, out of sight (p. 12).” Thus, it is likely that the literacy practices mentioned in this chapter are only a portion of those actually practiced by these participants.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that people’s lives do not naturally fall into segregated categories. Rather, our roles and activities as individuals, members of a family, and members of a community overlap and run together just as the literacy practices do. Farr (1994) observed, “many literacy activities serve multiple functions (p. 28).” Faulstich Orellana et al., (2003) also described the “overlap between functional domain categories ... [as] representing familial ties to complex social and institutional networks (p.20).” Furthermore, literacy practices are not static, but continue to change and take on different meanings. I hoped to diminish this overlap and these changes in meanings by categorizing literacy practices by domain rather than function. Categorizing is a useful, if fictional, analytical tool employed in qualitative science (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) to make scientific sense out of what participants consider common sense.

4.2 Results by Domain

The great majority of the literacy practices recorded for these transnational families fall within the educational domain, while familial-communicative, recreational and

commercial/financial cover the majority of the rest, with few observed in the religious domain. In the following sections, I present an analysis of each domain: commercial/financial, educational, familial-communicative, recreational, and religious, and their corresponding sub-domains.

4.2.1. Literacy Practices in the Commercial/Financial Domain

4.2.1.1. Literacy practices in the home sub-domain of the commercial/financial domain

The one literacy practice, which the three families share, is a financial one, directly related to the collecting of remittances sent from the US. The wife receives a call from her husband who dictates "*un número largo* [a long number]" – thirteen digits on the one I had an opportunity to analyze. She only needs to present this number and her voter's identification card, and to sign the receipt in order to collect the remittance. The transaction leaves her with cash and a receipt, as seen in *Figure 4.1*.

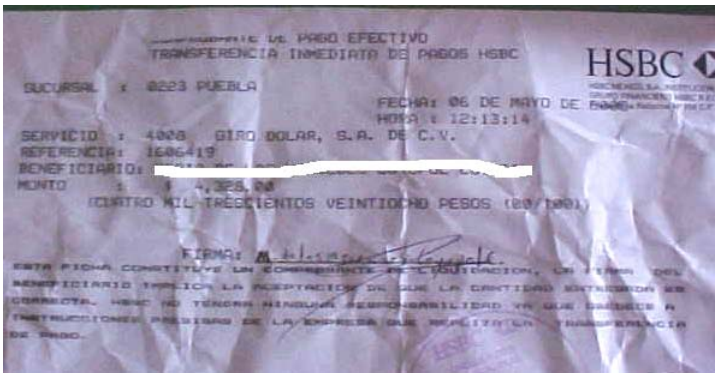

Figure 4.1. Remittance receipt

Literacy practices involved in shopping and paying bills are also included within this domain. Eight-year-old Giovani Salazar Oaxaca mentioned he reads the signs which say how much the food costs when he goes to market with his mother, but when I

followed up on this, giving examples of comparing prices or weight or quantity versus price, he said he does not do any calculations of any kind. Here, we see that while the signs are available to read, he has had no access to the different uses of them. It appears that he has not been invited to take part in making shopping decisions, and as a result, has not appropriated the possible literacy practices surrounding these texts.

Mariana, Giovani's mother, said she typically remembers things like payments in her head. She said she tries to keep things practical in her life and she does not write them down. This is the first example of many in this chapter in which I draw attention to the participants' general dependence on memory for various tasks or in recalling specifics.

Families shared with me only one literacy practice involved in shopping or paying bills for the household. Licha Tlatehui showed me the contract she received when she purchased a set of books consisting of an encyclopedia, four craft books and a four-volume interactive encyclopedia/board game. Paying for the set in installments, she keeps the contract for this transaction, seen below in *Figure 4.2,* and the payment receipts, which they give her at the bank when she pays each fortnight, one which is seen in *Figure 4.3.* The last time I observed the contract, I noticed a handwritten tally of payments she had made toward the encyclopedia set, and the gradually decreasing amount owed. It was not the first time Licha had invested in reference books in order to aid the children in their studies. Four years ago she bought a one-volume encyclopedia, which she also paid in installments. The more recent acquisition she acquired just two months after Ernesto's migration, when the Alfonso Cano Elementary School allowed an editorial to hold a book fair at the school. Licha may have chosen this book set over a

less extensive set because of the remittances easing the family's economy, although she did not say this.

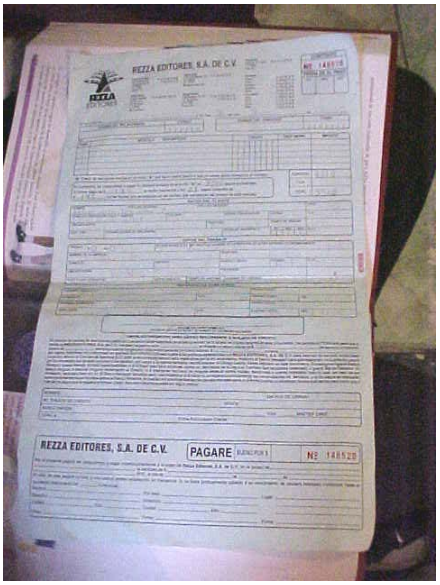

Figure 4.2. Contract for encyclopedia set.

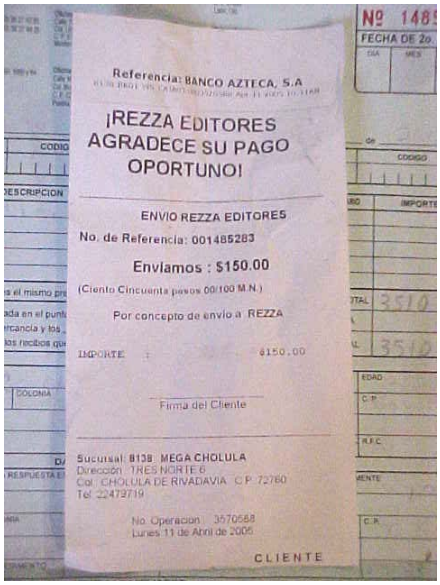

Figure 4.3. Payment receipt for encyclopedia set.

Paying in installments direct to the editorial is a common way of obtaining these resource books in this community. I have purchased resource books in this way for my children although at that time, the editorial sent a collector to receive the payments. In the course of the seven literacy inventories other families, including the Salazar Oaxaca family, showed me their encyclopedia sets purchased in this way as well. According to Mariana however, when she made her family's purchase three years ago, the sale was held in front of the school, while this year I observed that the school opened a room to the editorial for the sale to take place. Licha's was the only contract I observed, as she was still in the process of paying. Literacy practices involving the encyclopedias themselves, I discuss in the educational domain.

The last literacy practice that the three families shared in this domain was the display of wall calendars, already described in Chapter Two. While calendars are chosen

for their aesthetics, they also represent the families' commercial ties, since families only receive a calendar where they do business. Calendars also promote the business, since the business' name, logo, and address are made visible. All the calendars I observed at these homes were from local businesses.

Except for the dictating of the money order number, there seems to be little direct transnational influence on literacy practices in this domain. Although calendars are also a traditional business promotion/appreciation practice in the US, I did not see any American commercial/promotional literacy in the homes. The Nava Romero family did, however, have a calendar from a local cement company. That was the first clue I had that Monica had begun buying building material; thus, an indirectly related connection to remittances.

The findings presented above describe the commercial/financial literacy practices found in the three homes. I now present the literacy practices observed in the Tenahua Tlatehui family business.

4.2.1.1. Literacy practices in the business sub-domain of the commercial/financial domain

Figure 4.4. Belen and Licha tending the family business.

In Chapter 3, I described the brief history of the Tenahua Tlatehui family business, seen in *Figure 4.4.* Here I present the literacy practices involved in keeping the business running, that is, in the planning, purchasing, ordering, pricing and charging of goods.

In planning for a shopping trip, Licha explained that she generally writes a shopping list or has the children help write the list. According to Licha, they write down brand names, size, and quantity. Nevertheless, the day I actually observed a shopping list it did not contain such specifications, as can be seen in *Figure 4.5*. This occurred however, when Licha was sick and she had sent Jaime, 15 years old, to go on bike to buy a few things in her place. I cannot say if this is a typical list, but I am quite sure it was not specially produced for me.

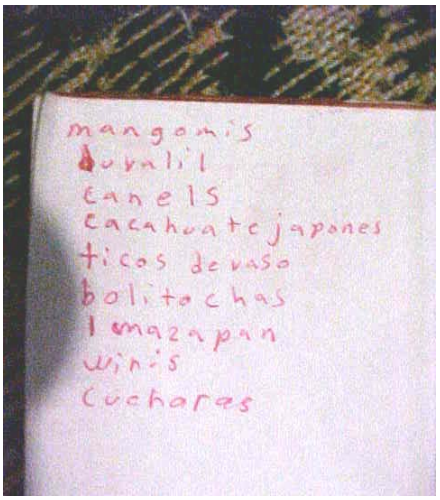

Figure 4.5 Store's shopping list

When purchasing for the store, Licha mentioned that when she buys wholesale, she reads the packaging to ensure the contents are those she wants and needs, but when she buys retail the packaging makes the contents obvious, that is, she does not need to read the labels. Other locally produced and commercial products are brought directly to the store by suppliers. The Kellogg's and the Coca Cola Company both supply the store with products. Also, a local milk company brings fresh milk and a baker brings fresh bread

daily. When I asked about formal contracts, she did not produce any and she gave the impression there were no written contracts. This is understandable, since the store is part of the informal economy.

Figure 4.6 Coca Cola orders.

With the Coca Cola Company, some products may be charged and others must be paid in cash, and they are two separate bills, as can be seen in *Figure 4.6.* The shorter order is what needs to be paid in cash; the longer order is what can be paid on credit.

There are times when Licha writes things down specifically for the benefit of anyone else who might be tending the store. For example, in *Figure 4.7* we can see a note she left by the Coca Cola order one day. She said if she were the only one tending the store, she would not need to write it down because she would remember it, but if someone else were there when the supplier came, she could not count on them remembering.

Figure 4.7. Reminders for a coke order.

Figure 4.8. Coca Cola price list.

Licha uses literacy to make tending the store as doubt-free as possible in other ways too. Whoever tends the store needs to charge accurately, taking the time to verify prices. For Coca Cola products, she keeps a list taped to the glass-pane countertop, as seen in *Figure 4.8*. Many prices she writes directly on the products with a marker. After shopping she reads the store receipt to compare if the prices have changed. By having the prices on each product, she feels more confident leaving the store in the hands of the children or her mother-in-law. One contradiction to the general practice of having written prices seemed to be with the fresh produce such as tomatoes, onions, and avocados. She shops for these weekly and their prices fluctuate; nevertheless, I did not find that she wrote a list of the prices. Rather, I heard the children ask her the price for a specific quantity each time and from memory she would calculate the sum.

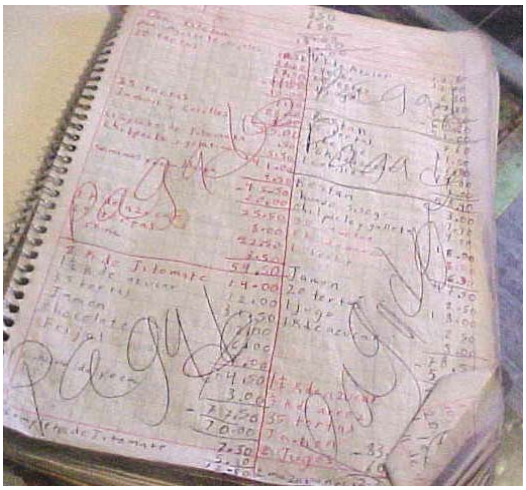

Figure 4.9. Accounts paid.

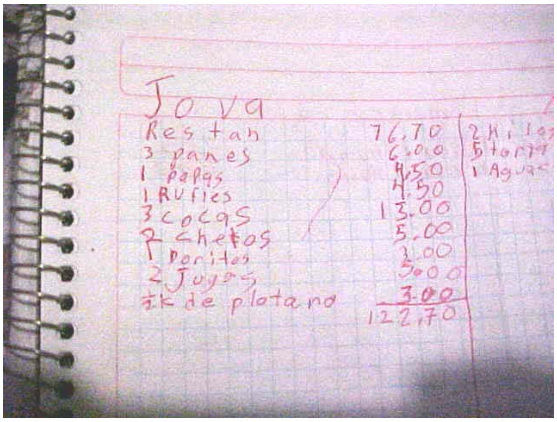

Figure 4.10 Account due.

In this community, many small stores hang a sign announcing that credit is not an option. To soften the news, they are often dubbed in humorous ways. However, the Tenahua Tlatehui's general store offers credit to their customers and many customers apparently enjoy the convenience. When a customer charges on his or her account, the storekeeper writes the product and the price under that person's name in a notebook specific for that purpose. *Figure 4.9* shows a page on which each account has been paid off. *Figure 4.10* shows a running account. I asked what *"Restan"* meant, which appears at the top of the list, and Belen showed me that was the balance carried over from the account on the previous page. Belen admitted sometimes being lazy about looking up a person's account to add new purchases. I heard Licha discuss most sales after Belen tended a customer, but especially when there was credit involved. Inevitably, Licha asked if she had written it down. The sales done for cash are not written in the booklet or registered in writing.

The Tenahua Tlatehui family also lends returnable bottles, which means the shoppers pay for the liquid, but borrow the full returnable bottles without exchanging them for empty ones. Supermarkets charge the customer for the bottle in this situation.

At this store, they keep track of who has borrowed bottles, as seen in *Figure 4.11*, by writing the client's name, a description of the bottle, and the date.

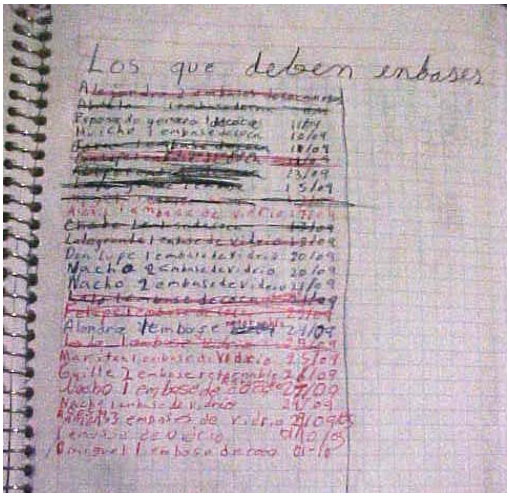

Figure 4.11. *Los que deben envases* [Those who owe returnable bottles].

One morning Jaime was tending a customer who had several bottles out and who wanted to take another. Licha called over, telling Jaime this shopper already had bottles out. Jaime mentioned he knew this customer had a few more from previous days too. He looked through the other pages to find the client's name on another list. Without necessarily confronting their customer (and neighbor), directly about the matter, their conversation let the customer know this was a matter of business and they were aware of his credit standing, no matter who tended the store. The consequences would most likely be that the client would have to either start paying for bottles or returning them.

Belen is learning to use the scale properly (It can be seen in *Figure 4.4*.). Belen and her mother told me about a time Belen thought she had measured 150 grams of ham, but they were only 50. The customer's surprise was not a pleasant one. The consequences of incorrectly measuring the product leads to bad business, either way it goes.

There is also an abundance of environmental print present in the Tenahua Tlatehui business. The plastic sack of sugar identifies its origins as Veracruz. The Coke posters always offer something new. Each can, bag and bottle has something written on it. How much of this print they read, I cannot say, but Licha mentioned reading it to make sure she was purchasing the size she wanted and needed.

The store is also a place to exhibit locally produced texts. *Figures 4.12* and *4.13* show a community-produced poster inviting people to participate in an annual pilgrimage. Their neighbor in charge of the pilgrimage, asked Licha for permission to hang it in the store. It was placed center-stage so to speak, perhaps reflecting the importance of the text to both her and her neighbor.

Figure 4.12. Store entry.

Figure 4.13. Pilgrimage poster.

Licha thinks knowing how to write is very important and she offered an example from her own experience tending the store. Licha said mothers sometimes send their children with a list, which the child passes her to read. She recalled examples of what seemed to her like *trabalenguas* [tongue twisters]. Just remembering them and trying to

say them out loud made her laugh. The most recent ones were *juachinango*, *jatomates*, and *chalitos*, which she figured meant *huachinango* [jalapeño chili], *jitomates* [tomatoes], and *chilitos* [little chilis]. She said, "*Uno que sabe leer bien, pues, le entiende qué es lo que quiere, perooo y si no, no va a saber ni que es lo que está pidiendo la señora* [The person who knows how to read well, well, understands what they want, but if you don't, you're not even going to know what it is the lady is asking for]." According to Licha, then, she has to read well in order to understand other people's writing, misspellings and all.

On a typical business day, the family members have many texts to read and write. Literacy is embedded in the process of shopping, pricing the products, and recording customers' charge accounts. Licha takes principal responsibility in the organization and running of the business, yet she also delegates responsibilities, overseeing that the others fulfill their responsibilities, often through conversation about texts. For the most part, it seems the three youngsters have appropriated the literacy practices needed for the smooth running of the store. With practice, Belen should be able to improve efficiency in these literacy practices.

The commercial literacy practices described above serve to keep the business running smoothly and efficiently, which in turn brings in money to the family. The store, as it takes on more business, also takes on more social significance in the community as a place to meet and to share and exchange information. One of Ernesto and Licha's initial goals of migrating is to have the store grow as a business. It is reasonable to assume that the sooner they can increase profits enough to cover household expenses, the sooner Ernesto will be able to return to his family, home, and community.

4.2.2. Literacy Practices in the Educational Domain

This section covers the educational domain, the largest collection of literacy practices in this study. I coded these practices within the educational domain and into four sub-domains that I present in four sections. First, many of the literacy practices I was able to observe are directly related to school assignments, thus, a section on school-assigned literacy practices. Second, there were also the independently motivated educational literacy practices, usually supportive of schooling, thus, a section on family-motivated literacy practices. Third, a small but entertaining sub-domain is that of classmate-motivated literacy practices. The last section of this domain deals with participants' administrative literacy practices concerning the organizational and business side of education. After I present the literacy practices of these four sub-domains, I discuss their specific relationship with the transnational migrant circuit.

4.2.2.1. Literacy practices in the school-assigned sub-domain of the educational domain

School-assigned literacy practices are those associated with fulfilling scholastic requirements imposed by the school. This is the sub-domain in which I was able to collect most examples, probably because the reading and writing done in these kinds of literacy practices are the kinds that people think of first when they think of reading and writing. This is consistent with Vance's (2005) study of home literacy in the same community. Because my initial access to the families was through the school, perhaps that is how they continued to think of me, that is, in relation to school. I took advantage of this fact and requested a home visit in order to observe homework. The Tenahua Tlatehui and the Salazar Oaxaca families invited me for a homework session, an

experience that provided wonderful data with which to triangulate other data already collected.

Several of the literacy practices I observed in these sessions included student-produced texts, which have been described in classroom settings. Here, we have the opportunity to see how these texts are produced in the home environment. I describe in detail only the most representative practices.

At times throughout the data collection, I heard the terms *síntesis*, *cuadro sinóptico* and other times *resúmen* but I did not understand the difference. 15-year-old Figo Salazar Oaxaca explained that in a *síntesis* [synthesis], they use their own words writing what they understood. The student may be asked to synthesize texts from different sources – school textbooks, encyclopedias, or stories. Besides the encyclopedias which Licha and Mariana had bought, Licha has bought several other books precisely in order to aid in this type of assignment, as seen in *Figures 4.14 and 4.15*. Licha said the kids come home expecting her to be able to think up stories, and perhaps she knows one, but "if they need more than one, it's better to have the collection."

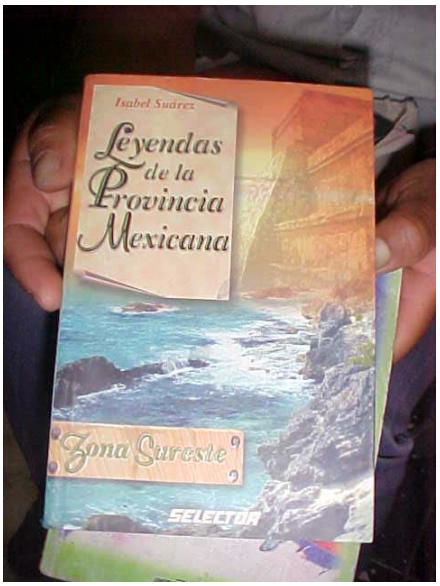

Figure 4.14. Collection of legends.

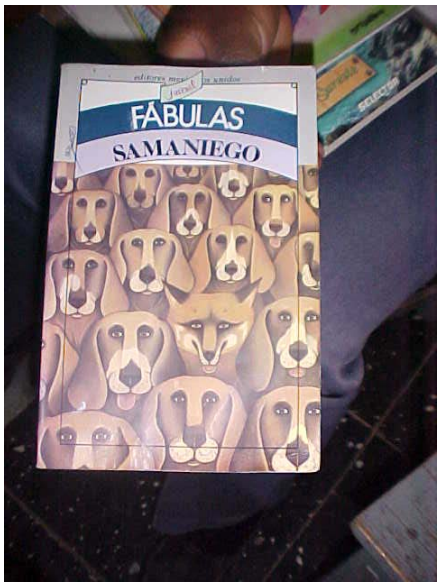

Figure 4.15. Collection of fables.

In a *resúmen,* Figo explained, they extract the principal ideas, writing the theme, the subtitles and the paragraphs' main ideas, and that a *cuadro sinóptico* is the same as a *resúmen* [summary]. The curriculum set up by the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) (1993) first mentions *resúmen* in the program for third grade primary, and each year thereafter. Paraphrasing and synthesis is not mentioned until sixth grade primary (SEP, 1993).

I observed Figo as he completed a *resúmen* for his chemistry class. As Figo read the theme through, he highlighted sentences and phrases and used his dictionary to look up a few words. He then copied what he had highlighted in the reading into his notebook, as seen in *Figure 4.16*. Of the two-page reading, he wrote a one-page handwritten *resumen* [summary]. 13-year-old Jesus Tenahua Tlatehui followed the same procedure and wrote a 2-page notebook summary from a 2-page reading in his chemistry book. A fragment of his summary can be seen in *Figure 4.17.* The figures he drew were very similar to figures shown in the textbook. The writing is not creative but intends to reinforce what they have learned at school.

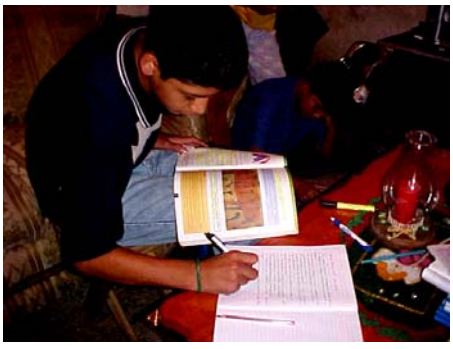

Figure 4.16. Figo writing a summary.

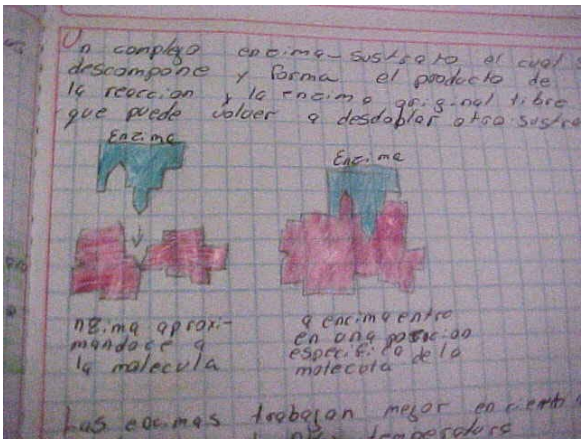

Figure 4.17. Jesus' chemistry summary, detail

The process I observed with Belen Tenahua Tlatehui, a fifth-grader, was quite a bit different. Her assignment was to summarize a 7-page history lesson from her school history book, *Civilizaciones del viejo mundo* [Civilizations of the Old World]. It began with Belen reading the theme and underlining what she considered the most important ideas. Her mother reviewed the text Belen had chosen and made modifications. Belen then sat at a table to copy the *resumen* into her notebook. With her nose about five inches from the book, she used black and red ink pens for writing and liquid paper for corrections. The red pen was used for writing capital letters and punctuation. Belen had an idea of how she wanted her summary to look when she was finished, and she had initiative to accomplish it. Teague (2004) , Ballesteros (2003), and Jiménez et al. (2003) mention that students in this community have incorporated in their literate *habitus* the use of black and red ink and a concern with the physical appearance for writing schoolwork.

Before Belen finished, I had other obligations to tend to, and I asked if I might return later. They said that would be fine. Two hours later, I found Belen in the bedroom with Licha, who was recovering from pneumonia. Belen was sitting on the end of the bed with her notebook on the dresser top, and Licha was holding the history book and dictating the *resumen*. They were on the section entitled *Las Técnicas* [The Techniques]. They worked together efficiently, limiting conversation and using few words. For example, I noted the following segments of discourse.

> Licha: *Un invento notable fue la rueda.* [A notable invention was the wheel].
> Belen: *¿invento* . . . [invention . . .]?
> Licha: Notable *fue la rueda* [was the wheel]. (…)*Produjo cambios* [Produced changes].
> Belen: *Produjo cambios. ¡Ya* [Produced changes. Ready]! (…)
> Licha: *Los carros jalados por animales de tiro* [The carts pulled by draft animals].

Belen: Los *carros jalados por animales de tiro, ¡ya* [The carts pulled by draft animals. Ready]!

Licha offered hints or reminders as to the placement of accents – "*agregándole estaño* [pausa] *acento en la ga (....) Los pueblos que vivían cerca del mar [pausa] acento en la segunda i (....) destrucción, con doble c y acento en la o* [adding tin (pause) accent on the *ga* (...)The towns that lived close to the sea (pause) accent on the second *i (....)* destruction, with double *c* and accent on the *o*];" the spelling of certain words – "*mejorando la dureza [pausa] dureza con zeta (....) C de gallina (....) s de sopa(....) b de burro* [improving the hardness (pause) *hardness* with *z* (....) *c* from *hen* (....) *s* from *soup* (....) *b* from *donkey*];" and the writing of accepted abbreviations – " *en el año mil antes de Cristo. . .¿Ya te acuerdas como escribir antes de Cristo* [in the year one thousand before Christ. Now do you remember how to write *Before Christ*]?" Licha also offered other remarks on punctuation, for example, "*Punto y aparte (....) Punto y seguido (....) Punto final* [Period and end of paragraph (....) Period and next sentence (....) Period and end of theme]." These oral reminders are much like the findings in Teague (2004). Teague's observations, however, were made in a school environment. Here, we find Licha, Belen's mother, guiding her daughter using virtually the same techniques in giving dictations as those used by teachers in the Teague (2004) study.

Likewise, Belen occasionally asked questions about similar points. "*¿Lujosos con j (....) Con doble r hierro (....) Hubo con v de vaca* [*Luxurious* with *j* (....) With double *r, iron* (....) *There was* with *v* from *cow*]?"

Furthermore, throughout the process, Belen asked several times, "*¿Ya acabamos? Que cuando equivoco dos veces seguidos es que ya tengo sueño* [Have we finished yet? When I make a mistake twice in a row it's because I'm sleepy]" Belen was getting tired

and this was affecting the appearance of the finished work. In all, Belen's summary of pages 31 to 37 of her history book took 7 ½ pages of her 6" X 8.5" notebook.

7 ½ pages of writing is a lot for a student like Belen, who receives therapy in order to develop her memory and attention span. She was tired by the end of the homework session, but she had finished. Her mother helped her through it, eliminating the need for Belen to focus her eyes on one paper and then the other. In her constant tone and rhythm, Licha read the summary for Belen - Belen relying on her memory and the tips Licha gave her for spellings and punctuation. Perhaps jumping the visual step made it easier for Belen to write faster. Belen seemed much more motivated working with Licha than by herself copying the summary. *Figure 4.18* shows the text from which Belen created the summary, a fragment, which is shown in *Figure 4.19.*

Figure 4.18. History lesson in the 5th grade SEP book; fragment.

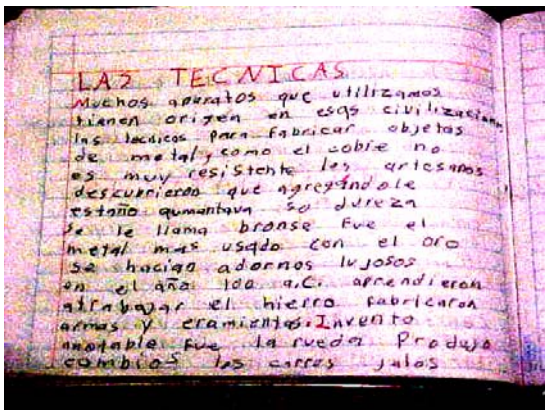

Figure 4.19. Belen's summary, fragment.

The process is one first of semantics and then of syntax. Belen and Licha underlined key words, leaving out those that add meaning. For example, the first complete sentence of the text book reads "*Muchos de los aparatos simples y de los materiales que todavía utilizamos tienen su origin en esas viejas civilizaciones* [Many of the simple instruments and materials which we still utilize have their origin in those old

civilizations]." The summarized version reads "*Muchos aparatos que utilizamos tienen origen en esas civilizaciones* [Many instruments that we utilize have origin in those civilizations]." Licha explained that sometimes Belen takes out words and then they make no sense when she reads them out, so she likes to check over Belen's work. Sometimes, she told me, you have to add a few words in order to have the summary make sense. It seems Belen is developing the skills, which Figo, Jesus, and Licha have already appropriated. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to analyze the boys' summaries to see whether there was actually synthesis of ideas as Licha accomplished or whether they copied the main and supporting ideas of paragraphs in complete sentences as they appeared in the text.

Lists are another common assignment. I observed Roberta, by then, a fifth-grader, as she produced two lists of words that could be used in compound words. She went to the bookcase behind her and took out a second-grade Spanish SEP book, but she did not find any helpful words. She took out a first-grade book and did not find any either. She leafed through her dictionary. She expressed some impatience with this exercise and her three brothers occasionally offered ideas for her list. Writing in a 6" x 8.5" notebook, and pacing with her notebook in hand, when she thought of, found, or was offered a compound word, she wrote down only the word for the first half of the compound word. Once she reached the bottom of the page, she sat to write a list of the second half of the words.

Licha mentioned writing a list of Nahuatl-based words for the children's homework, and as I mention in Chapter 3, this is a typical assignment, assigned at least once a year throughout the primary school. Licha said they would call on an aunt to help out on these

assignments, but since this relative died, they have to *romper el coco* [crack their heads] to think of enough words for the list. Another time, Belen had to write a list of words which ended in *–oj* and the only one Licha could think of was *reloj* [clock]. In order to solve this *rompecabeza* [puzzle, although literally, head cracker or head breaker], Licha and Belen went to an Internet café. Besides paying for her time on the machine, about $15 pesos (approximately $1.50 USD) for an hour, Licha paid the attendant another $10 – $15 pesos to search for the words since she did not know how to use the computer. Licha said there were about ten words in total for the list, and she did not understand most of them; however, her daughter was able to take the completed assignment to school. They had also had their first direct interaction with the Internet.

The two mothers also report that in secondary school the children sometimes have to do *investigación* [research] and that the boys either use the encyclopedias at home or go to the cyber-cafés to access information over the internet. I did not see them work on these assignments, but Licha related that when the boys consult the encyclopedias at home to write a summary and do not understand the ideas in the text, they then consult her. Licha described how she invites them to imagine what the text means. First, they read it out loud. According to her, she may not fully understand the text either, but she can certainly guess at what it might mean. She offers a rendition of what the text means to her or what it could mean, and then she coaxes them to do the same. She then motivates them to write a mix of the two ideas. Although Licha has not studied secondary school, she has a lot of common sense and experience with the world, which she uses as knowledge. The youngsters know what they have been studying at school,

and perhaps they make connections there, too. In this way, Licha gives herself and the children the time and space required to co-construct meaning from a text.

As I mention earlier, when the children cannot find the information in the books they have, they go to the Internet café to access information on the web. Sometimes going to the Internet shop is not always a second or a last resort, but rather, it is a different, and perhaps more fun way, to complete an assignment. Other times it is in order to find the most recent information. The cyber café has the added benefit of being able to copy, paste, and print the text. In both families, it is the boys who initiate going to the cyber-cafés, and both mothers appear to accept this.

According to Licha, however, Ernesto would rather have his sons at home doing their homework than having them going elsewhere and paying money to access the resources they need to do their homework.

> *Su papá dice pus' si de eso que vas a pagar allá pues paga el servicio de Internet o de lo que se ocupe, dice investiga cómo es o cómo se paga eso y ps' mejor allá que lo ocupen ellos, le digo ps' estaríaaa bien pero me dice perate' no mas' me compongo y ya te mando pa' que les compres la computadora y ya puedan hacer su tarea allá* [Their father says, well, if they are going to be paying for the Internet service or whatever they are using, he says to investigate how it is or how it is paid and well, better there (at home) that they have it, he says, it would be fine but he says wait a bit while I get on my feet and I'll send you (money) so that you can buy the computer and they can do their homework there (at home)].

The older boys in both families like the idea of getting a computer for home (Belen would rather have a big screen T.V.). Based on the homework needs described above, they would probably also want a printer and an Internet connection. In this community, home access to an Internet connection can be costly. Luke (2003) contends that certain literacy forms are class-based, and I would classify digital literacy as an example although the Mexican public school system has tried to mitigate the digital divide by

incorporating computer classes in the curriculum at the secondary level and allowing controlled access to the hardware and software. Certainly, home access to a computer would improve the youngsters' appropriation of digital literacies.

In the Nava Romero family, eight-year-old Araceli is the eldest child. My home visits showed me no reference texts to aid in school assignments. Her mother, Monica described one occasion when Araceli received a low grade on a homework assignment in second grade. Monica was perplexed about why she should have gotten such a low grade; she thought the assignment was well done. Araceli then showed her how the words were supposed to be written. Monica said it is very disheartening that her daughter should get a low grade because she was not able to spell correctly. A dictionary might have solved Araceli's spelling doubt, but she had asked her mother and Monica thought she knew the answer.

Araceli is now in third grade, and a dictionary was on the school supply list for this school year. I wonder whether her school experiences offer enough opportunities for appropriation of literacy practices incorporating the use of a dictionary to occur (Rockwell, 1992; Farr, 1994; and Kalman, 2003), or perhaps, whether her school experiences *in combination with* her mother's limited literacy will be sufficient motivation.

In this section, I have presented several examples of school-assigned, participant-produced texts. The supportive atmosphere in these households is conducive to less experienced readers and writers accessing knowledge of more experienced readers and writers allowing for texts and meanings to be socially constructed.

4.2.2.2. Literacy practices in the family-motivated sub-domain of the educational domain.

Some home literacy practices observed within the educational domain are more informal than school-assigned literacy practices; they may be spontaneous, and either self-directed or directed by another member within the family household or in the community. Often, their purpose is to accomplish school-directed activities more effectively. In this section, I present a sampling of the educational, family-motivated literacy practices involving both public and private resources used to support educational literacy practices.

In the Nava Romero home, it is not within Monica's practice to throw out schoolbooks. She saved one of Araceli's books from kindergarten, seen in *Figure 4.20*, because there were still unused pages. She said she has the younger children complete the exercises. Another book, shown in *Figure 4.21*, Monica salvaged when she saw her sister ready to throw some books out, "*Se los pedí regalada* [I asked if she would give them to me]."

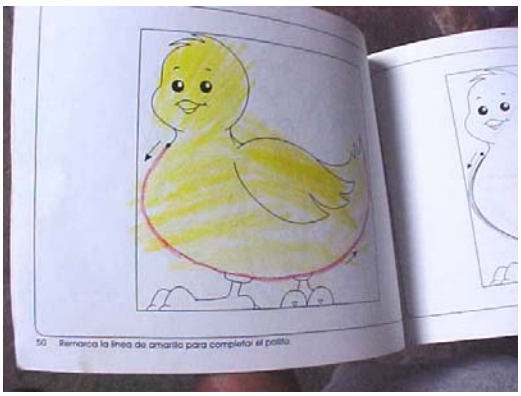

Figure 4.20. *C* for *gallina* [hen]?

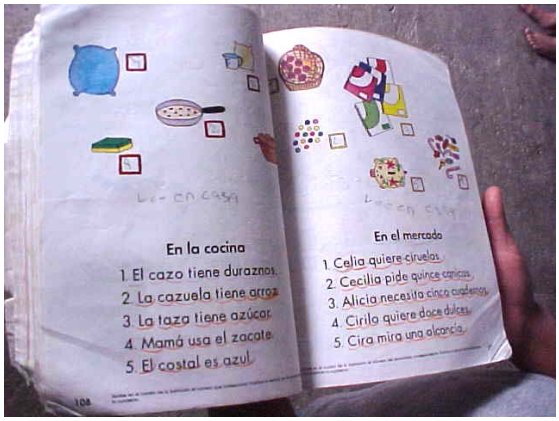

Figure 4.21. Multi-task exercise.

Figure 4.20 shows the same drawing on facing pages. Magdalena says the picture on the left is for the child to draw with one solid line, while on the facing page, the child

is to draw the line back and forth several times – "*trazo simple y trazo repetido*." In *Figure 4.21,* we can see the multiple tasks done for each page – separating syllables and matching sentences with images.

The Salazar Oaxaca children mentioned another school-associated literacy practice. They had taken turns staying with their grandmother during the last days of summer vacation. They told me their grandmother invented mathematics exercises for them. She would write them down, and they would have to solve them so they would get back in shape a bit before going back to school.

During the school year, the two youngest were also getting free tutoring; a social service sponsored by the local private university and offered just around the corner from their home. Children from any school can go there to get tutoring. It has been a place for Roberta and Giovani to meet new friends and to get together with cousins and other Alfonso Cano schoolmates. With Cesar in the US and Mariana working in the mornings and doing housework in the afternoons, the option of having the youngest children constructively and socially occupied outside and yet nearby the home suited Mariana perfectly. Students from the local private university in this community provide the tutoring service. Although the tutoring does not provide any new materials, they have more opportunities to interact with people other than their teachers, and family. Perhaps these interactions will bring new understanding to literacy practices.

Another literacy practice, which the four Salazar Oaxaca children mentioned, was going to the public library once or twice a month. They go more for fun than for studying though the younger kids like to read storybooks and the older ones like to look at the books about animals and other themes.

In the Tenahua Tlatehui family both boys have taken afternoon or weekend English and computer classes in the past. Jaime seems to have luck in winning school raffles in which the prize having reduced or free registration or tuition to weekend English, computer, or tutoring classes at private businesses or schools. Licha told me he had won twice. Jesus continues to take computer classes twice a week through the DIF community family service.

Jaime and Jesus have also begun to look to their father as a resource for questions they come up with in English class. Jaime told me his teacher does not always explain well and she does not always answer the questions he has, or sometimes she just tells him to look it up in a dictionary. "But," he told me, "it is not always as simple as all that [my translation]." There are expressions that are not explained in the dictionary, so he asks his father about these things. They are not necessarily in time to use for a homework assignment, but, with his interest piqued, he likes to find the answers to his questions. Jaime said his father can usually tell him what something means and more than that, his pronunciation is different from what Jaime or his teacher uses, so he can learn a different pronunciation. Jaime seems quite pleased with this situation.

Licha mentioned that before Ernesto migrated, she saw him studying the book, *Aprende Inglés Sin Maestro* [Learn English without a Teacher], by Isabel Baker, which she had bought a few years before. I asked Ernesto over the phone about English classes. He knew about them and also made the impression he had attended them, but because of his work, he found it impossible to arrive on time for class. The policy dictated that after three late entries, the student was no longer eligible to participate in the course. Ernesto also mentioned that he lives and works in circles, which do not require English. Both

availability and access to English seems limited for Ernesto under the circumstances, and as a result, one could question the extent of his appropriation of the English language. Nevertheless, Jaime is confident of his father's English proficiency and implies it may even be better than his teacher's.

Figo and Oswaldo were much quieter about their English development, but Giovani and Roberta were enthusiastic as I mention in the family description in Chapter 3. They often greeted and said good-bye to me in English. Since they have not yet begun formal classes in English, they find few opportunities to interact with others in meaningful situations in order to apply what they might learn from their father.

When the Tenahua Tlatehui boys had to prepare for make-up exams because they had failed exams the first time round, they had the freedom to choose how to prepare for them. Jaime opted to study on his own while Jesus decided to attend tutoring sessions at the DIF. Both of them were successful in their endeavors, passing their exams and passing to the next grade. Before discussing in greater depth the purposes these practices serve in the family and the transnational migrant circuit, I present two more sub-domains. First, I discuss a literacy practice, which is traditional in this and surrounding communities, motivated by the children themselves.

4.2.2.3. Literacy practices in the classmate-motivated sub-domain of the educational domain.

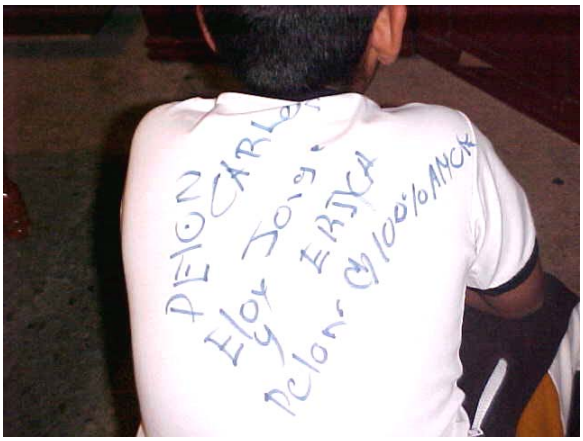

Figure 4.22. School shirt signed by classmates

With the Salazar Oaxaca family, I observed a literacy practice, which is typical in the local educational environment, although it has more to do with identity than with schooling. Oswaldo was in the sixth grade at Alfonso Cano Elementary School. Near the end of the school year, with only a week left of school, I found him wearing a school uniform shirt signed by his classmates, as seen in *Figure 4.22.* After graduating from Alfonso Cano Elementary School, he would not need his uniform any longer. As a mother of two in the neighboring community, I have seen that it is a custom in local schools for classmates to embellish their classmates' school shirts with their names, signatures and/or a message. The uniform gives the youth an identity and a place within a larger social group. The writing distinguishes the wearer as a member of the oldest, most experienced group of students within that school. At the end of previous grades, it was possible to wear the shirt again if it still fit the following year, or to hand it down to a sibling, but, in the final year, many students reserve at least one shirt for the ceremonial signing. This practice serves no purpose within the family or the transnational migrant circuit; rather, it is done to celebrate reaching a significant point in a young person's life.

The last type of literacy practice documented in this domain lies within the administration of education. In order for schools to run efficiently school and families need to work cooperatively and many times, literacy practices are embedded in these activities.

4.2.2.4. Literacy practices in the administrative sub-domain of the educational domain.

During my visits with the Tenahua Tlatehui family, Licha related with great eloquence her family's history. I briefly mention three events, which included literacy practices within the educational domain dealing with administration. I also describe one literacy practice from the Nava Romero family, and two from the Salazar Oaxaca family.

The first literacy event exemplifies the power of the written word and concerns a group-composed and group-signed letter in which Licha and other parents at Alfonso Cano Elementary School complained about the assignation of a certain teacher to their children's home room the following year. I do not know the process by which it was written, but the petition was successful because their children were assigned a different teacher. From my knowledge of the community, it is typically quite difficult to organize such an activity. Precisely for this reason, I include it here. Parents choose their children's schools and this literacy event, I believe, exemplifies the level of cooperation and interest parents take in the administration of the school.

The second literacy practice is that of Licha's position as treasurer in the parent-school association for a school year. Fulfilling this role involved numerous writing tasks including writing reports, but this happened before the time of the study.

The third literacy event occurred as a result of Belen being ill. Licha went to Belen's school, taking the medical prescriptions with her. By showing them to Belen's

teacher, Belen's absences were justified, and thus not counted as absences. If parents are concerned about their children's absences, taking a medical prescription justifies the absences and they are not recorded on the student's school record.

In none of these situations was reading or writing the main focus for Licha, but rather, her children's school and schooling. Nevertheless, they exemplify the power reading and writing can wield. Furthermore, the Tenahua Tlatehui children are witness to their mother's interest, sense of responsibility and power. In the first example, Jesus' sixth grade homeroom teacher was changed and, according to his mother, he had a successful sixth grade year. Much of a child's school experience relates to the homeroom teacher. In the second example, being treasurer was a yearlong activity and one, which affected the household because, according to Licha, they would arrive home and oftentimes she would barely have gotten anything prepared for dinner. She hinted that it might have been a source of conflict with Ernesto. The third practice, of justifying absences with medical prescriptions, might have made less impact on the children; nevertheless, Belen was able to see how important it was for Licha. In the three examples, the children would have been able to observe their mother being a responsible, participating member of the school community, a role which often involves reading and writing.

Another activity in which parents have the responsibility to participate is that of parent-teacher meetings. Attending group school meetings is a source of stress for Monica. She told me that at these meetings, the teacher sometimes says,

> *anote esto y esto y esto- y se queda ahí uno –¿cómo lo voy a escribir si no lo sé escribir?.... o por decir en el kinder, dejan tareas, yyy luego dice, la maestra dice –voy a repetir una sola vez, por favor apunten, - y apunta uno y dice y ¿cómo lo voy a escribir o con qué letra empieza? (...) y ahí son los*

> *errores y se da uno cuenta de queee, ahorita dice uno –si yo hubiera seguido estudiando, supiera otras cosas* [write down this and this and this- and a person sits there – how am I going to write if I don't know how to write it... or for example at the kindergarten, they leave homework assignments, and then the teacher says, – I'm going to repeat this only once, please write it down – and you write, and you ask yourself, how am I going to write it, or which letter does it begin with? (...) and those are the mistakes and you notice thaaat, you tell yourself – if I had continued studying I would know other things].

Monica feared not being able to fulfill some responsibility as a result of her limited literacy. In this excerpt she expressed dissatisfaction with the speed of her writing and her limited knowledge of orthography. She did not elaborate on how she had handled the situation. She did not say if Fidel used to attend those meetings, or if she had always attended them by herself.

In the Salazar Oaxaca family, eight-year-old Giovani's opinion is that reading is very important to learn since, as an adult you have to read important papers. I asked him what important papers his mother has to read and he easily responded *la lista de útiles* [the school supplies list]. A typical literacy practice for the community, the school provides the family with a list of school supplies that the family must provide at the beginning of the school year. Some of the supplies are turned in to the teacher and the teacher regulates their usage. Others are for the students to keep and use as required. Indications must be followed closely. For example, it is typical for each notebook to be covered with a particular kind of paper with the name and course subject on a sticker and then covered with plastic as well. This is done for administrative and social reasons. The families spend considerable time and money on completing these lists, which may also include specifications on uniforms and dress code. The families must complete these lists in order to attend school, that is, to participate in this particular social group. In the

following section I turn to a discussion of how the literacy practices within the educational domain serve the family and the transnational migrant circuit.

4.2.2.5. Educational literacy practices, family, and transnationalism

The literacy practices in the educational domain help the families meet their goals of learning and doing well in school. All three families mentioned school success as part of the goals of migrating. In the following excerpt Licha explained how having the children learn to read and write was part of the "inheritance" she and Ernesto could give the children.

> *Les digo a mis hijos, siii (...) en esta vida tu papá y yo no les dejamos casas, terrenos, todos esas comodidades, pues, aunque sea, les vamos a dejar su estudio para que salgan rápido, le digo, porqueee uno, el que está bien preparado tiene mejor futuro para el mañana, y ora' con tantos problemas que vemos, queee el que no está preparado, no encuentra trabajo (...), porque no tiene papeles ni estudiooo, lo que era, y le cierran las puertas* [I tell my kids, if (...) in this, life your pa and I don't leave you houses, land, all those conveniences, well, we are at least going to leave you your studies so that you can get ahead fast, I say, because a person, the one who is well prepared has a better future, and now, with all the problems we see, the one who isn't prepared, doesn't find work (...), because he doesn't have papers nor studies, and the doors close on him].

Licha makes a connection between schooling and work opportunities. When she mentions, "all the problems we see," she may be making reference to unemployment and poor wages, suggesting these as reasons to better prepare her children. Licha feels confident that formal education will improve her children's futures. This is very similar to Mariana's thoughts on the value of education.

As Mariana said, "*Entre mejor estén preparados, mejor* [The better prepared, the better]." The youngsters in secondary school have computer classes in school and English, but, indeed, these youngsters do seem to want more. For these families, at this time, owning a computer has entered into the realm of the possible, or at least, of the

imaginable – perhaps a new goal. They are also interested in learning more English. Digital literacy and English are two assets for a person looking for work in the modern economy. The transnational aspect of their families allows venues for acquiring this knowledge. In this society, even with the addition of these classes in school, English and computers remain class-based literacy forms (Luke, 2003). Digital literacy is indirectly connected to transnationalism through the remittances. It gives them freedom to say, "I want to go to the cyber-café" and then to be able to do it. If their family did not have enough food in order to eat that evening or to buy the notebooks they need, they would not have that luxury. English is directly related to transnationalism through the migrant who has privileged knowledge of the subject (Malkin 1998). They have a personal, privileged connection with English, if they choose to take advantage of it. To use Licha's metaphor optimistically, a solid education and these marketable skills *open doors* in the workplace. Realistically, it is not always so.

4.2.3. Literacy Practices in the Familial-Communicative Domain

Literacy practices within the familial-communicative domain are those associated with personal communication rather than business, education, legalities, or religion. The families present differences in their practices within this domain, and there are exceptions and inconsistencies. Because of these differences, I present the literacy practices concerning communication by family, with a final summary and conclusion responding to the questions of this study concerning the purpose these practices serve in the families and the transnational migrant circuit.

The mail service in Mexico is expensive and often inefficient. Perhaps that is why the first major statement Licha made about reading, writing and migration, is that Ernesto had instructed the family specifically "*que no manden cartas ni nada. Que no gasten en cartas* [not to send letters or anything. Not to spend money on letters]." In general, they have continued that policy. The kind of personal communication I found was oral, that is, by telephone. Even in relation to friends and other family, I observed no literacy used explicitly for personal communication in the Tenahua Tlatehui family.

An exception arose when I offered to send a package from within the US. Although I had given short notice and Licha's mother was hospitalized that day, they got together a small package for me to take. Licha and Ernesto had spoken on the phone, and he requested they send a video he had already seen, but that his brother had not seen yet. It was a video of Belen as the *madrina*, [literally, *godmother*], for a festival celebrating the Virgin. Since I would be traveling by airplane and going through checkpoints in the airports, I had asked Licha not to wrap the contents in a package. She showed me the videocassette, a one-page handwritten note for Ernesto, and a few religious prayer cards. She also gave me a paper with the name, address, and telephone number of Santiago, her brother-in-law, and Ernesto's complete name. At the post office in the US, I checked on the address, because the city was not indicated, but, with the information of the zip code and the help of a postal service worker, I was able to post the package, and through a telephone call to Santiago, I was able to verify he had received it.

Jesus mentioned another exception of familial communication. I asked him if he had noticed any changes in his father since his migration and he told me his father had longer hair now than when he lived here in Mexico. Jesus had seen his father in a video.

Although they did not explain the situation, it seems likely that although the Tenahua Tlatehui family has the general rule not to send letters or packages, others in the Tenahua family do communicate through videos, and perhaps letters. The same is also true for the Nava Romero family.

Monica informed me they do not write or send letters or packages to Fidel because they do not have a mailing address for him. In the in-depth interview, however, Araceli mentioned writing letters to her father and sending them together with candy and photographs, particularly of the dance she participated in at school this past June. She said they send the packages through a *casa de envío*. Monica had mentioned that her family, that is her parents and siblings, sometimes send packages to her brother; so perhaps Monica and the children had included a package within a package in case Fidel was able to visit his brother-in-law or his brother-in-law was able to send it on to him.

While other studies have stressed the importance of the flow of information through letters (Levitt, 2001; Guerra, 1998; Malkin, 1998), these two families seem not to depend on the exchange of information through writing. Ernesto pronounced his no-package policy early after migrating, perhaps before he had found a place to live more permanently. Fidel had reportedly moved away from the New York area at some point. Perhaps these migrants cannot count on stable housing contracts.

Meanwhile, the Salazar Oaxaca family appears to prepare and send packages to Cesar with great enthusiasm even though Mariana mentions that they do not write as often as they used to. In other words, it seems that the longer Cesar is there, the less frequently they write. I only saw a few postcards with scenes from Las Vegas that Cesar had sent the family. They had short notes written on the back as had the postcard seen in

Figures 4.23 and 4.24 had, but they had no address or postage. They told me Cesar had sent them inside a package or an envelope. The few that I saw, they kept in their box of photographs.

Figure 4.23. Giovani with a post-card of a casino which his father sent from Las Vegas.

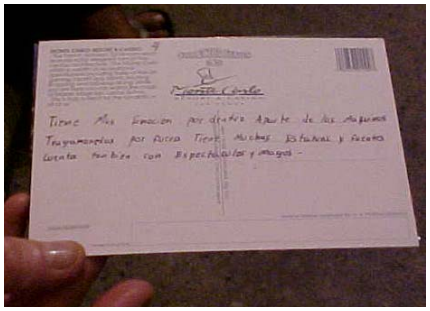

Figure 4.24 Postcard from Cesar. "*Tiene mas emoción por dentro. Aparte de las máquina tragamonedas, por fuera tiene* (....) [It's more exciting inside. Besides the slot machines, outside it has (...)."

The family also sends Cesar letters and packages with pictures. Roberta writes her father letters and closes each one up making her own envelopes (*see Figure 4.25*) and when her mother sends a package, she puts them all in at once. Roberta told me she uses different types of paper – sometimes unlined, lined, or square-ruled, graph paper. She uses "*pluma ... plumones, a veces, dibujo- hago dibujitos* [pen ... markers, sometimes, I draw – I make little drawings]." She writes them in her room on her bed or "*me vengo aquí en mi mesita y me siento en el banquito* [I come here to my little table and I sit on my little stool]."

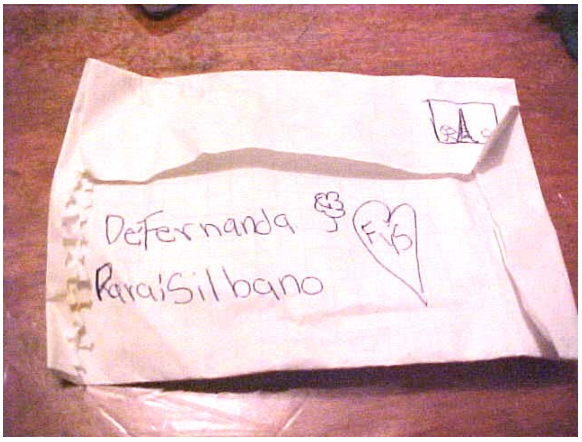

Figure 4.25. Letter for Roberta's father, stuffed in homemade envelope; it will be put in a larger package and sent.

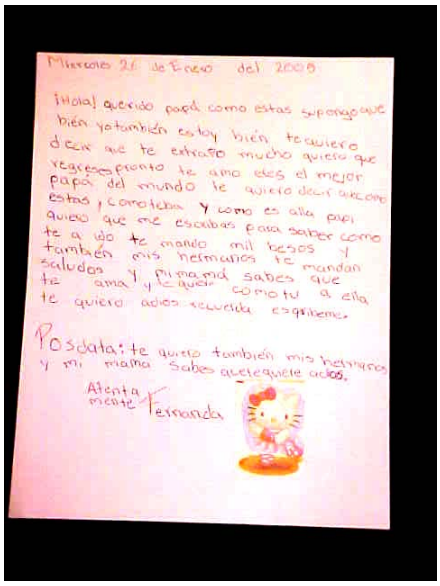

Figure 4.26. ¡Hola! Querido papá cómo estás [Hi! Dear pa how are you]

In discussing what she writes about when she writes her father, she told me she asks him "*cómo le ha ido, que si está bien... que lo quiero mucho y que lo extraño* [how it's been going for him, if he's been well ... that I love him a lot and that I miss him]." In effect, in the letter she wrote in the *Querida Abuelita* exercise, seen in *Figure 4.26*, she wrote (being faithful to accents, capitalization, punctuation (all marked in red), and spelling):

> *¡Hola! querido papá como estas supongo que bién yo también estoy bién te quiero decir que te extraño mucho quiero que regreses pronto te amo eres el mejor papá del mundo te quiero decir que como estas, como te ba y como es alla papi quiero que me escribas para saber como te a ido te mando mil besos y también mis hermano te mandan saludos y mi mamá sabes que te ama y te quiere como tu a ella te quiero adios recuerda esqribeme. Posdata: te quiero también mis hermanos y mi mama sabes que te quiere adios. Atentamente Roberta* [Hi! Dear pa, how are you? I suppose, fine. I'm also fine. I want to tell you that I miss you a lot. I want you to come back soon. I love you. You are the best pa in the world. I want to tell you how are you, how is it going and what is it like there. Papi, I want you to write to know how it's been going for you. I send you a thousand kisses and my brothers send you greetings too and my ma. Know that she loves like you do her. I love you. Good-bye. Remember to write me. P.S. I love you and my

> brothers do too and my ma. Know that she loves you. Good-bye. Sincerely yours, Roberta]

Throughout the letter she affirms her love and admiration for her father and also the love her brothers and mother have for him. She expresses her wish for him to return soon and that she misses him. She also inquires as to his well being and what it is like where he lives. I believe the *Querida Abuelita* exercise may have influenced this last question, a suspicion that was supported in a later conversation.

I already knew that the family and Cesar speak several times a week by telephone. So, I wondered how writing might differ from talking on the phone. Guerra (1998) spent years with members ofa transnational migrant circuit before he was given insight into the actual contents of letters. Levitt (2001) mentions news about health, infidelity, visas, and community events as information that is shared through writing in transnational communities.

In discussing the differences between writing and calling, Roberta said, "*por teléfono puedo decir te quiero; puedo hacer preguntas y me contesta sí o no. Escribir, puedo preguntarlo aunque no esté aquí. No tiene que estar aquí* [by telephone, I can say I love him; I can ask him questions and he answers me yes or no. Writing, I can ask him even if he's not here. He doesn't have to be here]." Oswaldo, the middle son, said, "*por teléfono, uno va a saber que está bien mientras por carta, no sabe uno* [by telephone, one's going to know that he's fine, while by letter, one doesn't know]."

Giovani, the youngest, described to me how he expresses affection in writing. "*Por teléfono te contesta y por carta, hay un lugar de expresar cuanto lo quiero (...)[Le digo] que lo quiero mucho, que estoy bien y que lo cuide la Virgencita ... se lo mandé y mi*

mamá lo- los pone y se van para allá y los lee [By telephone, he answers you and by letter, there's a place to express how much I love him (...) [I tell him] that I love him a lot, that I'm fine and may the dear Virgin take care of him ... I sent it to him and my mom she, she sends them and they go there and he reads them]." The children mentioned asking their father questions about life "*allá*" when they spoke on the phone, never mentioning "Las Vegas."

Giovani incorporates a religious aspect to express his sentimentality for his father in writing. For these three children, letter writing seems to serve as a vehicle for expressing emotion. They apparently include no news of the extended family or community.

Mariana also spoke about how she coordinates the mailing.

> *Mando todas juntas y luego, este - mamá, le hice esto a mi papá, - sí, lo voy a guardar, este, cuando, en cuanto tenga yo algo, fotos, no sé, algo, este, mandamos todo, yyy de repente hasta un dibujo quie- quieren que mande yo, entonces lo que es, vamos a juntar un poquito más de cosas y mandar todas, y así* [I send them all together and then, 'Ma, I made this for my pa.' 'Yes, I am going to put it away until I have some photos or something; we'll send it all,' and then even a drawing they want me to send, and so, what we do is get a few more things together for him and we send it all together like that].

It appears that they each prepare correspondence separately for Cesar and then they pool it for sending. The letters are strictly personal, one-to-one.

Araceli also mentioned writing letters to her teachers and to her friends because "*a veces me acuerdo de ellos, de sus consejos* [sometimes I think of them and their advice]." She said she writes "*que los quiero, que los extraño, que cuándo me pueden ver* [that I love them, that I miss them, that, when can they see me]." She said she writes letters "*el dia que estoy triste, el día que los extraño, el dia que no los veo* [the day I feel sad, the day I miss them, the day I can't see them]." She says this writing is quite different from the writing she does at school because she can write about her feelings and, besides,

"*ellos ya me dicen que están bien* [they tell me that they're fine]." Like the Salazar Oaxaca children, Araceli's letter writing fulfills an emotional purpose.

In the transnational migrant circuit, letter writing and package sending seem to serve an affective purpose for people on both sides of the border, strengthening affective ties between members of the family. The messages the migrants receive also include news of the family's religious participation in the barrio, for example, the video of Belen as *madrina*. This reminds the migrant who they are socially in the community, where they come from and what is important in life according to this Mexican community's values. Perhaps, as Malkin (1998) suggests, "While Mexico becomes the site of 'life,' The United States is a space for work (p.2)."

This concludes the section on literacy practices in the familial-communicative domain for these three transnational families. In the following section, I present the literacy practices embedded in the activities of these families which I categorize under recreational, the other private domain.

4.2.4. Literacy Practices in the Recreational Domain

The fourth domain I deal with in this paper covers the literacy practices I encountered which fall into the private (versus the public) realm. Literacy practices in this domain are those associated with activities done for fun, relaxation or entertainment. In this domain, I was told about or observed a variety of ways of having fun and relaxing, many in which reading and writing were embedded, especially for the Salazar Oaxaca and the Nava Romero families, the two families whose fathers had previously been the main providers of fun and exercise. In this section, I present examples of literacy

practices from these households connected with movies, music, storybooks, magazines, other books, poetry, and other writing.

The Salazar Oaxaca family often watches movies in English, reading the subtitles in Spanish. They enjoy American-made movies. The other two families do not have video or DVD players or cable or satellite television in their homes. The national and local television typically televises programs in Spanish only, so there are no subtitles used in television viewing.

The Salazar Oaxaca family also plays games such as *Basta* [Stop!], *Quién Lee Mejor* [Who Reads Better] and *Turista* [Tourist]. Figo explained to me in detail how they play the first two games. His explanation for *Basta* was that each person has a notebook. One person says the alphabet to him/herself and another person says "*basta."* At that moment, the person silently saying the alphabet says the letter, which she/he had last named. Then, everybody has to write down a name, a last name, a city, a thing and an animal all of which start with that letter. You receive 100 points for each item and if more than one person wrote the same word, you have to divide the value (100) between the people who wrote that word. The game is a variation of what Vance (2005) reports. It is a common game with families, with each household having their own rules.

For *Quién Lee Mejor,* the siblings choose a book and their mother chooses the lesson or page, then the siblings take turns reading aloud and Mariana decides who reads best. The game *Turista* is a commercially produced board game similar to other board games in which you sometimes have to pick up cards and follow the instructions. None of the three games seem to have any connection to migration.

Meanwhile, the Tenahua Tlatehui family acquired an interactive encyclopedia-based, question-answer board game shortly after Ernesto's migration. During the literacy inventory I found writing on several pages of that set – answers to the questions written in. Licha says she has each read from one of the books for half an hour and then they play the game. As mentioned above, it seems likely the acquisition was made as a result of a stable income sufficient to ensure the long-term commitment of biweekly payments. The combined income from remittances and the store most likely gave Licha the freedom to opt for this collection in particular, one that included a game such as this one.

Literacy is also embedded in the families' music appreciation. Figo was proud to show me that the majority of compact discs in their family collection were originals. Illegal sales of unauthorized copies of CDs are common in the community. As shown in *Figure 4.27*, a case approximately ten centimeters thick holds the CDs and original covers which display the names of all the songs, most of which are in Spanish. Figo said his father brought nearly all of them from the US. At the Nava Romero home, I asked Araceli if she ever listened to CDs on their stereo. Araceli showed me how she locates her favorite songs on the jackets and puts them on the stereo by herself after getting permission. Her favorites are shown in *Figure 4.28*. All of the music selections in her collection were also in Spanish.

Figure 4.27. Salazar Oaxaca CD collection.

Figure 4.28. Part of the Nava Romero CD collection.

All three families expressed enjoyment in reading storybooks. The Nava Romero family said they sometimes read storybooks together on weekends and that Fidel used to read to them too. Araceli told me she reads *"cuando me pone mi mamá y a veces yo les leo un cuento a mis hermanitos porque luego no se duermen, (...) [leo] porque me dicen mis hermanos, porque me gusta leer los libros y porque me pone mi mamá* [When my mother tells me to and sometimes I read a story to my little brothers and sisters because they don't fall asleep (...) [I read] because my brothers and sisters tell me to, because I like to read books and because my ma makes me]." It seems either Araceli's mother or her siblings often ask her to read the books to the little ones, sometimes to entertain and sometimes to calm them at bedtime.

The Nava Romero family showed me a few storybooks. One of the books they had brought home from the kindergarten for the weekend because the kindergarten was trying to get the parents to read to their children. It was made with very good quality paper and pages that folded out to discover more of the story. Another book was a commercially produced book sold with an accompanying cassette. They went to their cousins' house to retrieve this book. Alma told me her cousins also have another book about "*cabritos y el*

lobo y otros [the kid goats and the wolf and others]." Farr (1994) and Kalman (2004) mention the custom of freely lending books among the members of the extended families. This family also shares this practice.

In the Salazar Oaxaca family, the children have not brought home any storybooks from their schools, but they go to the town library to read. Roberta mentioned reading storybooks there, and Figo mentioned books about animals and fiction. Roberta showed me her favorite book from home, which her aunt gave her, seen in *Figure 4.28*. It is a collection of small stories, and her favorite story is about a pig. The story is read by substituting words for certain symbols or drawings.

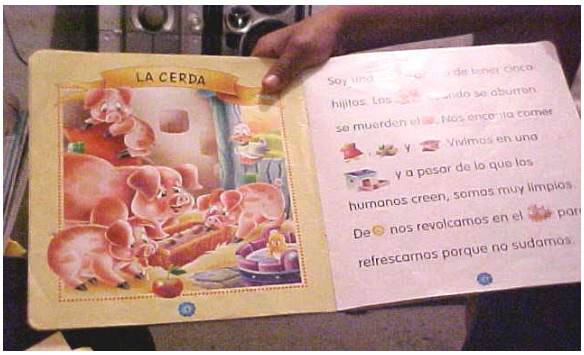

Figure 4.28. Roberta's favorite story.

In the Tenahua Tlatehui family, Licha also mentioned that Belen reads storybooks, and that she sometimes borrows books from her cousins, but Belen never showed me any or mentioned reading them. At another time, Licha commented, "*De hecho, casi, o sea, no somos muy afectos a la lectura* [Actually, we're not really much for reading]." The one text Licha knew that her sons found entertaining was a magazine their grandfather had given them about fighting cocks. She said the boys talk to her excitedly about what they have read, especially intrigued with the idea of winning a lot of money in fights and making up to three thousand pesos for the sale of a single gamecock.

Mariana also mentioned paging through magazines and books, but that "*no lo leo como se debe* [I don't read it like you should]." She explained, she looks at the index, and if there is something which interests her, "*me pego* [I stick with it]."

Monica said she sometimes reads after the children are asleep. It is her opinion that she does not read very much or very well, a fact that she attributes to having studied only until the third grade. Still, from underneath the mattress, a safe place from children's hands, Monica took out a magazine and a booklet, both on baby care. She received both of them at the clinic when she gave birth to one of her children. She said they contain very interesting articles. From under the mattress, she also took out *El Libro del Buen Amor* [The Book of Good Love], which her sister was lending her. These texts provide interesting reading for Monica.

Monica also showed me cooking magazines. She said she likes to look at the ideas for food preparation. Monica explained she does not read the recipe herself. Rather, she and Araceli look through the magazine together and they pick out one, which they think looks delicious to make for a meal. Then, she has Araceli read her the ingredients aloud. Araceli gave me a demonstration of one they had done together with the recipe shown in *Figure 4. 29*. With a little bit of trouble, Araceli read the ingredients section without reading the quantities. Part of the trouble may have been that a few of the ingredients were given in Castilian Spanish rather than Mexican Spanish, for example, *lenguado*, a kind of fish not found in Mexico, *calabacín* instead of *calabazita*, and *judías tiernas* instead of *ejotes*.. Araceli mentioned she does not need to read the segment on the preparation instructions because her mother usually knows how to make it, and then they go to buy the ingredients they need. This is an example of *language brokering*, as

described by Kalman (1999). Monica relies on Araceli to read the ingredients because "she does not read."

Figure 4.29. Pescado con Salsa de Jeréz [Fish in Sherry Sauce].

Licha mentioned that she sets aside articles from magazines or newspapers, which she thinks, might be interesting and later asks the children to read to her when her hands and eyes are busy with housework or sewing. This is another example of language brokering. The families have other magazines in the home, which they read for enjoyment. None of these texts, however, are produced in the U.S. or include any English, or seem to have any connection to transnationalism.

In the interview with Ernesto, he mentioned he sometimes buys magazines or books. They come with the English above and the Spanish below, but he reads in Spanish. He sometimes passes the time with a question-answer type of reading. "*Vienen a veces los libros esos que viene con una pregunta, una respuesta pues, ahí mas o menos le busco, y ahí mas o menos me entretengo también, o sea, buscando la pregunta, y, y ya me pongo a contestarlas* [Sometimes the books come with a question, an answer, then more or less I

look for the answer, and there I am passing the time, or really, looking for the question, and, and then I set down to answer them]." I was not able to discern more about this practice or about his reading habits before migrating.

Writing was also mentioned in a few leisure activities, besides in the games mentioned above. Monica mentioned the children sometimes play school, and then, they draw or write letters or messages. In the in-depth interview, Araceli mentioned writing poetry. When I inquired further into her poetry writing, she explained that she chooses the poem from a book of poems by reading them, and if she judges one as pretty, she copies it onto a paper. Although she didn't have one copied, she had a cousin bring her the book, which was at her cousin's house, to show me – *Poemas con Sol y Son: Poesía de América Latina para Niños* [Poems with Sun and Sound: Poetry from Latin America for Children] (2002). It comes from the public education reserve of books meant for promoting reading for pleasure (*Programa Nacional de Lectura; los Libros de Rincón).* Thus, for Araceli, *writing* poetry is copying a poem onto a paper. She read one for me that she said she had read many times, called *El Zumbador*, by Lidia Vecens. She read this one fluently but did not feel prepared enough to read another aloud. Since *zumbador* is a word, which I was not familiar with, and because poems are intentionally left for interpretation, I ask Araceli what a *zumbador* is, and she informed me it is the song of a bird. Through Araceli's enthusiasm, it is clear she takes genuine pleasure in this poetry activity. Because she is interpreting the poem and doing what she enjoys with it, I would say Araceli has appropriated this literacy practice. She did not give any indication of where or how she might have gotten the idea to initiate this practice.

Monica said she does not have time to write. Mariana told me that when she cannot sleep, she sometimes writes down the words to songs, or she writes questions to herself and answers them.

A last example of writing for recreation Giovani showed me when I asked him about the last time he had written in his Spanish notebook. He turned to a page quite apart from his schoolwork. In the middle of a page, all by itself, he had written, "*Espelusnante objeto espantoso* [Creepy awful object]." It was not part of a school exercise; he had written this of his own volition. Mentioning it to his mother, she said he picks up on words and expressions he hears others say and then he uses them spontaneously later. I suspect he has a capacity for memory that may not be sufficiently challenged at school, thus, leading to his lack of enthusiasm with school, as I described in Chapter Three.

The examples of reading and writing that are carried out in the recreational domain are thus many and varied. With their fathers not home, the families may find they have more time for these kinds of home-based activities, rather than more outings or sports-related activities. The extra responsibilities that these women assume in their husbands' absence may allow them less time to participate in these leisure activities, leaving the children to play by themselves, without the adult present, or, as in Araceli's case, having the eldest sibling assume the role of the adult and reading to her siblings at story time. Also interesting to note is Mariana's assumption that reading *should* be done in a certain way, for example, reading a book cover to cover, so she does not count what she does as reading. The last domain I present is that of the public and private religious domain.

4.2.5. Literacy Practices in the Religious Domain

Literacy practices found within the religious domain include those associated with teaching or practicing religious faith, either publicly or privately. Belen was the only participant taking catechism during the study and she enthusiastically about showed me her catechism notebook. In this section, I show a few examples of Belen's writing and another literacy practice I found in the Salazar Oaxaca home and which is typical in the community.

While many religious texts could be seen in the homes, I did not observe the family members reading or writing religious texts while I was there. As Licha mentioned, she and the children know most prayers by heart. However, there is much more to religion than reciting prayers and, as Murillo (2005) points out, reading and writing are also embedded in these practices. Although the Tenahua Tlatehui and the Nava Romero families invited me to join them for religious gatherings, I did not accept, except for one meal at the Tlatehui home place after a religious celebration. In this respect, I limited the study to the literacy practices within the confines of the home.

The care that I saw Belen take with her history notes and notebook was different from the care I saw in her catechism work. First of all, the appearance of the catechism notebook was less formal. The cardboard cover was covered with pink gift-wrapping paper and Mattel "Barbie" stickers and it had separated from its pages. She teased her mother about the division of responsibility, as though it were Licha's fault Belen's notebook was falling apart. "*Te dije que debes forrar mi libreta* [I told you that you should cover my notebook!" Licha just smiled without saying anything.

Belen also believes that what she does in catechism is different from schoolwork because the subject is different. She showed me several pages, many which were dictation exercises. She was able to repeat many ideas from the notes, and she could explain or defend some of them, but not all. She was less clear about the main ideas in the more personalized activity shown in *Figure 4.31* and which Belen explains here.

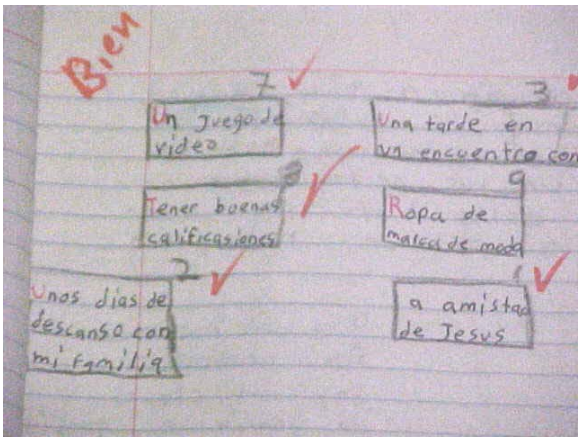

Figure 4.31. Preference exercise.

Tere: *¿y este por qué tiene cajitas alrededor de las palabras?*.[and why does this have boxes around the words?]

Belen: ... *aquí tenemos que poner el número sobre de este, así…* [Se trata] *sobre las cosas buenas y sobre las cosas malas … amistad de Jesús, unos días... de descanso con mi familia... un encuentro con Jesús, mi amigo, [cinco] un trabajo en equipo bien hecho… [seis] poder ayudar a mi amigo… [siete] un juego de video…[ocho] tener buenas calificaciones, nueve, ropa de marca de moda* [Here we have to put the number on this like this… It's about the good things and the bad things… friendship with Jesus, some days...on break with my family... a meeting with Jesus, my friend, a team job well done…[five] to be able to help a friend ….[six] [seven] a video game, [eight] have good grades, nine, designer clothes].

Tere: *¿y alguna vez tuuu maestro en la escuela te ha pedido algún trabajo así?* [And has your teacher at school ever asked you to do some work like this?]

Belen: no...

Tere: ...*hoy en día ¿los pondrías en el mismo orden?* [Today, would you put them in the same order?]

Belen: *no sé* [I don't know.].

In this assignment, she had to put the given experiences in order of her preference, but in this conversation she oversimplifies the subject of the exercise by explaining it is

about “the good things and the bad things.” Social activities with family or friends, she rates much more important than good grades which she rates next to last. She also says she has never been asked to do an exercise like this in school.

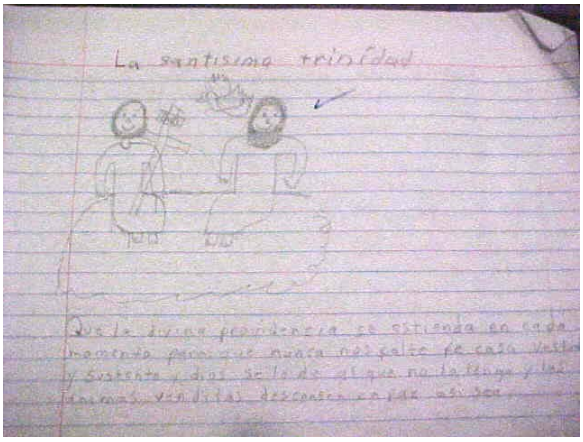

Figure 4.32. La Santísima Trinidad [The Holy Trinity].

Another catechism assignment was to find and copy a prayer to *La Santísima Trinidad* [the Holy Trinity] and to draw a picture for it. *Figure 4.32* shows her results. She did not have to memorize the prayer, and they did not compare the prayers in the next class, but she remembers that not everyone had the same prayer. For another assignment, Belen said she had to cut letters and words out and paste them together forming “*la primera estrofa del Credo* [the first lines of the Creed]”, as can be seen in *Figures 4.33* and 4.*34.* Because she had forgotten about this catechism assignment, she prepared it together with her mother in order to finish faster. For other assignments she told me she has had to look up some theme, and then she uses a book called *Complemento de la Biblia,* [Complement to the Bible], a hard cover, cloth-bound book. When she does not understand what she reads, she asks her mom for help. Then she has to write a *resumen* [summary].

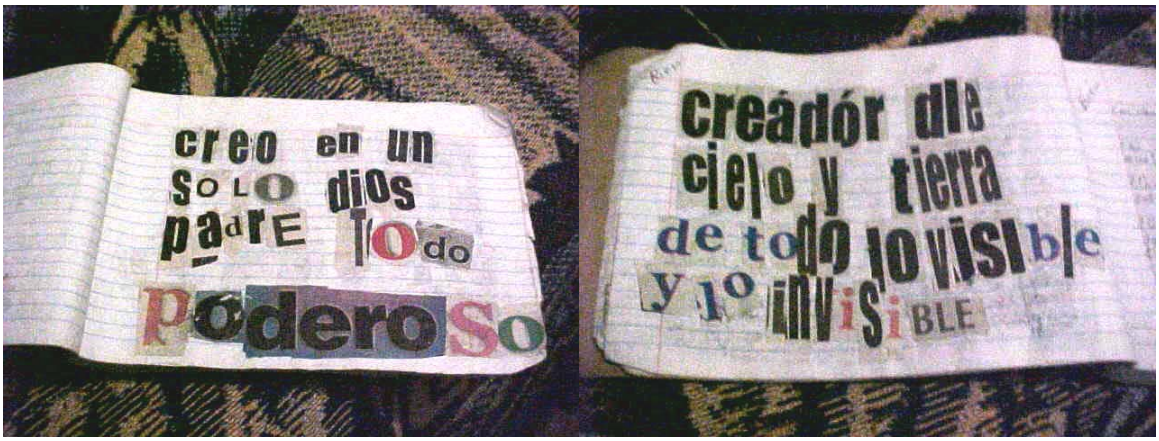

Figure 4.33. El Credo [The Creed] part one. *Figure 4.34. El Credo* [The Creed] part two.

Many of these assignments and written activities done in Belen's catechism classes are similar task-wise to assignments and written activities in Belen's educational domain. Like Belen's literacy practices in the educational domain, there is an emphasis, and perhaps even a dependence on accomplishing the task cooperatively in the religious domain. Belen treats them differently, however. It seems she is more genuinely enthusiastic toward the subjects dealt with in catechism than her school subjects, and she deals with the writing she does in catechism more informally, for example, by not noting the date of her work on pages and by using pencil rather than ink to write.

In this community, catechism is given in preparation for specific religious events. Belen began preparing for her first communion after her father gave her permission. He agreed as long as she would wait for his return to celebrate the event. Thus, Belen's literacy practices in the religious domain are indirectly related to her father's migration.

Catechism is part of the teaching of religious faith. In the practice of religious faith, the traditions are many in this community. In the home of the Salazar Oaxaca family, they collect and display keepsakes from family religious celebrations such as, baptisms, weddings, and three-year celebrations. A tradition similar to the 'ritual exchange'

described by Mlade (2001), all the keepsakes indicate the date of the celebration and a name or, at the very least, the initials of the celebrated individual(s). They are made with a variety of materials, and the more unique the presentation, the better to remember the significant event. One is given to each guest or family at the celebration, depending on the economic or time investment in making the keepsake. The keepsake in *Figure 4.35*, a decorative corked bottle of oil, actually functioned as the wedding invitation for Mariana's sister's wedding. *Figure 4.36* shows a talavera (a ceramic style typical of the area) bell from the same wedding. The initials of the couple and the date of the celebration are glazed onto the inside of the bell, a pricey investment. *Figure 4.37* shows a candle, also from the same wedding, a less expensive keepsake. *Figure 4.38* shows the same candle with the names of the couple and date of the celebration indicated on a paper glued to the underside. These were all made by members of Mariana's family.

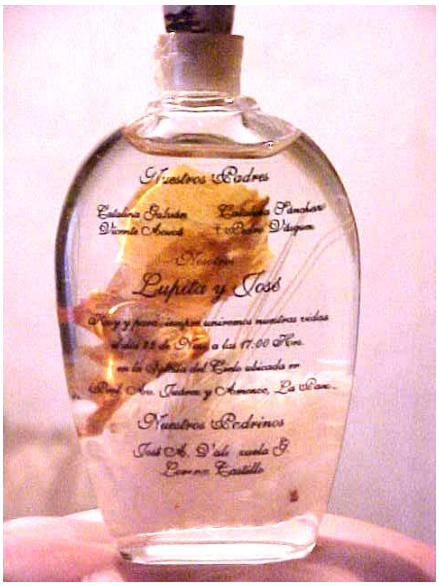

Figure 4.35. Wedding invitation

Figure 4.36. Glazed bell.

Figure 4.37. Keepsake candle.

Figure 4.38. Keepsake candle, underside.

4.2.6. Summary of Results of Literacy Practices

The literacy practices found in the homes of these transnational families are diverse and abundant especially in the recreational domain for the Nava Romero and the Salazar Oaxaca families, in the educational domain in the Salazar Oaxaca and the Tenahua Tlatehui families, and in the business subdomain of the commercial domain in the Tenahua Tlatehui family. The literacy practices are less diverse and abundant for the three families in the home sub-domain of the financial domain and the familial-communicative and the religious domains. They involve texts, which are commercially produced and sold, given to them, or borrowed. They also involve texts, which they themselves produce. The Mesoamerican family structure, as described by Robichaux (2002) and found in these families, affects the movement of these texts. Like Kalman (2004) and Farr (1994) found, texts are openly borrowed and lent among members of the extended family living in homes contiguous to these transnational homes.

The participants talked about writing for personal communication, for leisure, and for participation in the administrative educational domain, but most of these kinds of texts they did not actually show me. For example, the only letter they shared with me, one that Roberta brought out, was already folded and sealed. In the *Querida Abuelita* exercise, however, Roberta wrote a letter to her father, which gives a fair example of what might be in a typical letter. Nevertheless, I have no reason to doubt the texts' existence. In some cases they did not show them to me because for the moment, they did not have any, but others, I believe, because they are of a personal nature. In fact, I suspect that some texts were so personal, that they did not even mention them, for example, an address or telephone book. It also may be the case that they did not see some of these as valuable examples of writing, for example, writing lyrics to songs. They seemed to be more willing to share with me the commercial texts in their homes, although the Tenahua Tlatehui family allowed me to see the texts they produced in the family business. Many of these texts in the familial-communicative and recreational domains were individually produced.

Meanwhile, the families showed me many participant-produced, school-assigned texts. The texts I present in this chapter are school-assigned and produced at home, in contrast to those presented by Ballesteros (2003) and Teague (2004), which dealt with student-produced texts in the school. Participation in courses such as catechism also implies forms of writing, many of which are similar to school-assigned texts. The typical assignment of summarizing, common at both the primary and secondary levels consists of various alternating phases of reading and writing. Lists and summaries are not specifically mentioned in the school-produced texts in Teague (2004) or Ballesteros

(2003). Vance (2005) mentions home, participant-produced lists used in the familial-communicative domain, e.g. “List of chores (p. 131)” and in the home commercial/financial domain, e.g. shopping lists, whereas in this study, uses of lists were only found in relation to the Tenahua Tlatehui family business. The participants mentioned depending more on their memory than on lists. Texts produced in the educational school-assigned and business/commercial business texts were often co-constructed with the amount of involvement depending much on the participants’ confidence and ability with the texts.

The supportive atmosphere of the homes allowed for the social construction of texts and meanings, and for participation in language brokering, as Kalman (1999) refers to it. The children asked each other and their mothers for help, and help was freely given. Both Monica and Licha mentioned asking the children to read things for them. In Monica’s case, she asked Araceli to broker for her since her literacy is limited, and in Licha’s case, she mentioned asking the youngsters to read for her because her hands and eyes were busy with housework or business.

The literacy practices I report here serve to further the children’s education. Licha may not realize it, but the role she plays in supporting her children, may also be strengthening her own knowledge and skill with literacy as well. The practices also serve to bring the family together, physically, and sentimentally. The games are a source of shared entertainment. The letters serve as vehicles of sentimental expression. The business literacy practices serve to keep the business running smoothly which gives the family another source of income. The business literacy practices also serve to have the children learn about responsibility toward the family.

The family unity resulting from these literacy practices, then may serve to attract the migrant back home. If they relate these family experiences to their fathers and husbands, it may induce in these migrants' feelings of wanting to be included in their children's expression of "we."

With this study's research questions having been answered, in Chapter 5, I bring the focus back to larger questions involved in literacy and migration. What significance might these case studies have in the broader picture, that is, in the questions of literacy and migration? I present how the data fit well with certain propositions and how they seem to contradict others. I discuss how these data might be interpreted and converted into recommendations informing language professionals and language policy.

5. Discussion

5.1. Overview

With the results presented in Chapter Four, in Chapter Five I first offer a discussion of the findings as they fit into questions related to literacy and migration. Second, I present my thoughts on the limitations of this study. As this was a sociocultural study, I found the need to develop socioculturally relevant methods for data collection; thus, in the third section of this chapter, I discuss the instruments developed *in situ*. I then offer a discussion on the implications these findings may have for educational practices, educational policies, and future research.

5.2. Discussion of the Findings.

As a guide in this discussion, I return to the assumptions made at the beginning of this study and presented in Chapter One. One assumption I made was based on the fact that these migrants were also fathers of school-aged children. As long as the transnational migrants in this study continue to play parental roles, I assumed the transnational experience should have an impact on the literacy attitudes and practices of children of transnational families. Results suggest migration does make an impact on children's attitudes and practices toward literacy.

While the initial impact takes a toll emotionally and scholastically on the children, the presence of a supportive network including family, friends, classmates and teachers, can help the children to overcome the initial shock of the separation from the migrants, in these cases, their fathers. In exchange for the migrant's "sacrifice," parents expect the children to do well in school, and the children accept this responsibility, once they pass

the initial trauma of separation. In the three families, I observed a genuine interest on the part of the children in doing well in school.

Perhaps the drama of the father figure leaving, surviving risks, and “making it” in the US, creates a bond in the family, because the family members seem to exude an air of concern and consideration toward each other while having fun and working hard. The atmosphere lends itself to school-supportive literacy practices in which members socially construct texts and arrive at socially constructed meanings of texts.

The older children and one of the mothers have begun to incorporate digital literacy into their practices. This may or may not have a connection to transnationalism. So far, they have not begun to use it as a means of communication or entertainment but only as a source of information for school assignments. Perhaps the most realistic connection to transnationalism is the economic security in which they find themselves as a result of remittances, allowing them the option of buying time at the cyber cafés.

The transnational experience may be the motor behind a piqued interest in English for several of the children. The younger children, eight and ten years old, inquisitively ask their father to teach them English over the phone. They find it fun, and it probably serves as a bonding for the father-child relationship. The older children, 12 and 15 years old, who talk with their fathers over the phone about English, have questions, which go beyond what their schoolteachers offer them. The act of these older children looking to their fathers for knowledge may also strengthen bonds in the father-child relationship, providing the fathers with an opportunity to give their children something more than money.

In these families, the roles fathers played in the lives of the children before the migration made the impact on literacy practices either positive, which was the case for the Tenahua Tlatehui and the Salazar Oaxaca children, or negative, which was generally the case for the Nava Romero children. If the migrant played a restricting role in literacy practices relating to homework before his departure, as did Ernesto Tenahua, his migration then made a positive impact, allowing the family space and time to develop literacy practices which are helpful in school work. When the migrant played a large role in the children's daily leisure activities, generally, the effect was also positive, as was the case for the Salazar Oaxaca family. The family sought substitutes to the types of leisure activities they once enjoyed with their father. These substitutes were often inexpensive, close to home, and embedded with literacy. This was also the case for the Nava Romero family. Fidel had played an important role in the family's leisure activities. After migration, in part, the children looked to their eldest sister, Araceli, for storybook reading, and she assumed the role of reader. This family, however, had not yet found a way to fill Fidel's role as provider of knowledge, and this had a negative impact on the Nava Romero family in terms of school-assigned literacy practices.

I also assumed that homes experiencing transnational migration would incorporate literacy practices particular to the experience of transnational migration and that these can be used as resources for relating to novel literacy practices. This was not found to be the case for these three families. I observed few literacy practices particular to migration. No commercially produced texts originating in the U.S. or Canada were found and the participants wrote few letters. Guerra (1998) notes that the installation of a telephone changed the frequency of letter writing in the transnational migrant community of his

study, and yet, he found the art of personal letter writing had not disappeared because of the expense and the continuing unavailability of private telephones. Since then, however, the cost of calling from the United States to Mexico has been reduced considerably (Domínguez Ríos, 2005) and, as we see in this study, the incorporation of a telephone in the home increased the frequency and the length of calls.

The letters that were documented during this study were used to maintain personal relations. They were not written to discuss economic conditions, to exchange goods and gifts, or to communicate news as was found by Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001), Faulstich Orellana et al. (2001), Guerra (1998), and Malkin (1998). Rather, the three families in this study appear to stay in communication with the migrant on these matters solely through the use of the telephone. In this study, telephone calls serve to inform the migrant of happenings in the family and community. They also offered the migrant a medium to continue his parental role, giving advice, admonition, and affection. Furthermore, they offered the couple a medium to negotiate financial, social, and family concerns. On this point, communication between the couples might even have improved since migration. Licha and Ernesto, who were having disagreements before migration, now discuss and agree upon many family matters. Mariana relates having differences of opinions with Cesar, and discussing them over the phone. She admits they do not always come to an agreement. I suspect the distance has allowed Mariana to voice her opinions. This may be quite different from when Cesar was physically in the household.

I also assumed that analysis of literacy practices specific to transnationalism might shed light on the roles of different family members in the migration process, as well as on the role of literacy in the migration process itself. With the telephone having apparently

overtaken the role print literacy once played, I offer here a bit of analysis of telephone use in the migration process of these families. These conclusions come from conversations I held with the participants of this study.

As Levitt (2001) and Portes et al. (1999) suggest, the telephone is a time- and space- reducing technology. New migrants are able to promptly call their families announcing their safe arrival. Their frequent calls assuage the fears that arise from their fathers' and husbands' unsettled circumstances. Once the migrant is settled, calls allow the migrant to continue in a decision-making role within the family, making an impact even on daily events. Furthermore, communication via telephone allows the family to discuss and solve problems as they arise.

One of the purposes of this study was to help reach a better understanding between the local and the global (Street, 2005; Guarnizo, 2005; Portes et al., 1998) in order to inform educators on literacy practices in the homes in Mexico, a need mentioned by Teague et al. (2006) and Kalman (2003). The *deep* Mexican *(*Bonfil Batalla, 1987/1996*)* profile of the community in which this study takes place is especially pertinent in understanding the literacy practices in these transnational families. Murillo (2005) has cited families in this community reaffirming their *deep* Mexican identity in their literacy practices. For example, planning and organizing traditional, religious festivities and pilgrimages, an integral part of *México Profundo*, involves bookkeeping and communication with the community through written announcements, like the poster hung in the Tenahua Tlatehui family store. Transnationals need to take extra care in affirming their *deep* Mexican identity if they wish to maintain their status in the community.

Malkin (1998) suggests migrants' status has to be continually negotiated with the community. In this study, religion plays a significant role in these transnational migrant circuits. Mlade (2001) suggests religious cargos are a vehicle for achieving this. It would seem that through Cesar's accepting a religious cargo and his return, he was able to fulfill community obligations, both religious and social, and with this gain status and prestige in the community. If this is true, then status and prestige might also be sought by providing children with religious preparation. Both Belen and Araceli await their fathers' return to celebrate their first communions. We find literacy practices embedded in the preparation for this celebration.

At another level, alcoholism may have been a cause for some loss of status for Ernesto in the community before his migration, since for a time; he was not able to provide for his family. As Malkin (1998) points out, "work and providing is the moral discourse of men... [and] migration is one of the practices through which masculinity is constructed (p.2)," and, I might add, in Ernesto's case, *re*-constructed. Migration has allowed Ernesto to once again provide for his family. His family, in turn, actively participates in the community, with Jaime beginning to accept new responsibilities, which also earns prestige for the family.

With Mariana and Cesar's differences of opinions in gender roles, I sensed changes in the family rhythm are bound to occur with his return, even if it is for a visit. Malkin (1998) suggests,

> The reality of the migrant life subjects them [migrants] to a female role in many of its practices and social interactions. A feminization that occurs...as they are obliged to adopt several practices that are usually associated with the construction of femininity (p.4).

It may be that upon return, migrants exaggerate the differences in gender roles in order to compensate for a self-perceived resulting loss of masculinity. If this happens, changes in household routines and responsibilities will make the children aware of alternatives that exist and more conscious of choices.

The Mesoamerican family structure as described by Robichaux (2002) influences the daily interactions found in these three families. The interaction that the families share depends largely on proximity and in part on the mother's relationship with her in-laws, especially in the absence of her husband. Following the traditional virilocal pattern may add to the families' status in the community. Ernesto and Licha have the advantage of being from the same *barrio* and following the virilocal custom. In the Salazar Oaxaca family, although they have followed the virilocal pattern, Mariana is not from the same *barrio* and her family does not have their origins in the community. According to Mlade (2001), the community will not expect Mariana to carry out Cesar's obligations, although, according to Malkin (1998) she is the keeper of his status in his absence. Furthermore, since it is through Mariana's family that Cesar has made the connection to migrate, the community may be especially critical toward Mariana. As such, it seems Mariana stays on the margins of community life while her children take more initiative. It may be easier for Fidel and Monica to negotiate status in her *barrio*, the *barrio* in which they live, than in Fidel's *barrio* of origin. Through the extended families' proximity to these transnational families, I observed values of *México Profundo* in the families' generosity in cooperative learning and in their sharing of texts.

Living in a community in the throes of accelerated globalization, these families do not count on agriculture as a means of living, although (except for Mariana) that is how

their families of origin made their living. The families' concern with education may, in part, be due to recognizing their need to compete in a globalized economy.

Orality is a larger part of folk Mesoamerican tradition than print literacy. Guerra (1998) cites memory and story telling as highly prized in the transnational *Mexicano* culture. Indeed, in this study I documented few family-produced texts used as memory aids. For Mariana, writing *tal dinero para tal fecha* [so much money for such and such a day], would be an exception because she normally remembers those things in her head. Similarly, the texts produced and used in the Tenahua Tlatehui family store may serve as memory aids, but mainly they allow various people to participate in the running of the business – quite a different function. These findings suggest that the literacy practice of letter-writing served a function in the transnational migrant circuits in the past – that of keeping in touch with family members in order to maintain personal and community relations and to solve practical matters – but that telephones fit the needs of these transnational migrant circuits much more naturally, that is, *traditionally*, in the full sense of the word. Before I consider the implications these findings may have in school practices and language policies, I present the limitations particular of this study.

5.3. Limitations of the Study.

In this section, I present a discussion of methodological limitations I see in this study concerning participant profile and data collection as well as two personal limitations. The first limitation concerns the point at which these families find themselves in the migration cycle. All three families are part of relatively new transnational migrant circuits. Had they been part of a more established transnational

migrant circuit, we might see a greater presence of commercially produced texts from the U.S. or Canada or of texts concerning life and culture of the U.S. or Canada. Moreover, we might find families who are still dependent on letter writing or those who have incorporated electronic communication into the migrant circuit. As Levitt (2001) and Portes et al. (1999) suggest, space- and time-compressing technology are a necessary pre-condition to the proliferation of transnational practices. I discuss this further in the implications for future research.

Another methodological limitation to this study, but one concerning data collection, and also mentioned by Vance (2005), is that the texts which the families brought to my attention and included in the literacy inventory, for the most part, were texts which they valued or which fit their idea of what reading and writing is. I tried to overcome this by opening up the literacy inventory with the calendar and by inviting the children to show me "anything that had writing on." As a result, I believe they found and shared with me many examples, which they might not otherwise have thought of as texts for reading or writing. I also asked to see the account books in the Tenahua Tlatehui's store – they did not think of showing me those texts as examples of reading and writing. For the most part, the participants were not necessarily motivated enough to take out examples of their own writing. For example, I spoke to Mariana Oaxaca about my concern that I did not have examples of her reading and writing. She then related to me several situations in which she reads and writes, but still she did not bring out any to show me. This brings me to another methodological limitation concerning data collection.

As Vance (2005) found, many of the literacy practices mentioned in this study were described to me rather than observed as they actually occur between the participants.

During the literacy inventory, Monica Romero had her children show me how they use some of the texts, for example, choosing a recipe and reading the ingredients, and this provided rich data. Mariana and Licha each agreed to an observation of a homework session and these visits also provided rich data. I do not presume that the families do their homework or carry out these literacy practices in these ways everyday or each time, but the children's interactions gave me clues as to how they handle certain literacy events cooperatively and how they co-construct meaning socio-culturally. Considering the time available to carry out this study, and the mothers' heavy workloads, it was not possible to join families as a regular observer of naturally unfolding literacy practices embedded in daily activities. I tried to compensate for this through triangulation of data.

A final methodological limitation is one of context. Given my interest in home and family literacy practices, I purposely constrained data collection primarily to the home. However, considering the powerful influence extended family and community have on individuals and families in this research community, a more complete view of non-school-based literacy practices would have included participants' literacy practices carried out with the extended family and within the community. I refer to the limitations of context and data collection once again in the section dealing with implications for future research.

Two limitations to this study are of a more personal nature. The first is the result of my being a member of the neighboring community. In many ways, of course, this was an asset, in that I was able to chat about past or occurring events and to foresee certain upcoming events. The limitations arose when I found myself assuming I knew the reasons why participants did things or how they did them, and thus, not asking enough

questions. Sometimes, the opportunity to clarify a point had passed. Other times, I asked questions during subsequent visits. If the questions concerned texts, which I had photographed, it was helpful to take along a contact copy of the reduced images.

Another personal limitation in this study was my fear for these families' futures, that is, of the migrant not returning. While attending an international conference on migration I heard several comments that migrants establish new families in the U.S. while still having families in their homeland. In reviewing my data, I realized I had avoided questions concerning, for example, plans for the future, especially in terms of work. I wondered how the migrant saw his future or what he imagined for his life when he returned, especially work-wise. I could not envision them willingly returning to the salaries they had been making here before leaving. Realizing this, I was glad to have the opportunity to interview Ernesto, who envisions himself and his family running their own businesses from their home place. I did not have this luxury with the other migrants. Because parents' goals can influence the home environment and the goals children form for themselves, I consider not having this information may have limited my ability to understand the families' underlying ideologies toward literacy practices

5.4. Discussion Concerning Instruments Created *In Situ*

Methodologically, it should be worthwhile to review the instruments developed *in situ* and to analyze their effectiveness and efficiency for collecting different types of data. Part of qualitative research data methodology draws on previously tried and used methods and instruments and part on adapting methods and instruments or creating new,

socioculturally relevant methods and instruments (Spindler & Spindler (1987). Three such instruments were developed in the course of this study.

The first of these was the Teacher / Migration Questionnaire (Appendix B) which asked classroom teachers to identify the names of the students who have relatives living abroad. I learned that ten of thirteen classrooms had children with at least one migrant parent, and that all of the classrooms had children whose counted emigrants among their relatives. While some classrooms appeared to have only five students with some connection to transnationalism, others appeared to have up to 22 students who had some connection to transnationalism. The teachers also wrote the last names of the children, and so I was able to cross reference siblings and those who were apparently cousins. While some children are too young to know whether an uncle is in the US or a distant city in Mexico, my interest was not to obtain an exact number, but rather a general profile of each group in order to choose three with which to work.

The second question aimed to collect data on national migration. The teachers obtained this information from the children's birth certificates, which they had in their possession at the time, recording only the names of those born in other states. I learned that only six students (of 529) had been born in other states of Mexico.

The third question dealt with the teachers' attitudes and willingness to work with me. I learned that six of the thirteen teachers had no interest in participating in the study, since they left that section of the questionnaire blank. The process of collecting the surveys furthered my perceptions on this point. Initially they were handed out and another person within the school collected several. Since not all of them were ready, I was then given permission to request them directly from the teachers in their classrooms.

Thus, I was able to match names with faces and dispositions. This later served as useful information when families spoke of their experiences with different teachers. The data I gathered with this instrument allowed me to choose transnational migration rather than national migration as the focus of this study and to select three classrooms with which to work. It was a helpful instrument, which might be used to estimate the extent of transnationalism at any school.

The *Querida Abuelita* classroom exercise (Appendix C) proved to be effective in eliciting more precise data on the closeness with which these children experience transnationalism. It proved to be a literacy event, which allowed the children to think about the subject of migration and then for them to express their views on it. *Querida Abuelita* was an insightful exercise and from it we learned there is perhaps as much national, trans-state migration going on in this community as transnational migration, with the national destinations of Mexico City and Cancun, being most frequently mentioned. It also reinforced the fact that migration is a phenomenon in flux. Three months had passed since collecting the information from the teacher/migration questionnaire and in that period one child's father had returned, and another child's father had gone. I might also mention the fact that, while children were open about communicating their experiences with transnationalism in this literacy exercise, some adults were more reticent about discussing it. In one family interview, a mother denied her family's transnationalism – she insisted her husband was only in Mexico City. I was able to triangulate the information with other data in order to deduce that in effect, this wife's husband was living and working abroad. The apparent reticence to disclose participation in transnational migrant circuits did not surprise me since I recognize the

precariousness of a migrant's position. This exercise also sensitized me to the emotional toll migration effects on children. Furthermore, it gave me an understanding of the support, which the fellow students and teachers of this school community offer to these children.

The activity was also effective for getting to know the students and for them to get to know me. It also served to have something in common to draw on during my first home visit. The letters and drawings the children produced had much to say in and by themselves. While the preparation was time-consuming, I believe it was an excellent vehicle to approach and draw young students' interest into the theme of migration.

I found the literacy inventory to be an efficient tool for organizing and collecting data. The L/E (*lectura/escritura* [reading/writing]) distinction gave a quick, easy way to overview the practices in generalities. It was also helpful especially in quickly distinguishing between different uses of texts, for example, in noting the mere presence of a text versus the reading or the writing of a text. I did not use the frequency/period column but twice, and that was in recording the remittance receipt. There is a space to record the date of the initial literacy inventory. Dating any later additions or comments proved to be helpful in tracking details with fieldnotes. Out of respect to the families, I did not begin to fill out the literacy inventory until the second visit because ethically, they should be willing participants and have full knowledge of what was being asked of them. I also found the space for "purpose" and "additional comments" helpful. The underlying idea of the literacy inventory motivated several ideas for implications in school classrooms, which I discuss in the next section.

In summary, I found these three instruments developed *in situ* to be efficient and effective in collecting data in the school and home contexts for which they were developed. I propose them as a contribution to the already existing methodological instruments used for collecting data in qualitative studies.

5.5. Implications for School Practices and Policies.

The *Querida Abuelita* classroom exercise, described in Chapter 2, was based on the Vygotskyan theory (1978) of "spontaneous concept development" and a Vygotskyan framework (1988) that assumes that transmission and acquisition of cultural knowledge, such as literacy, takes place interpersonally before it is internalized on an intrapersonal level (Kendrick & McKay, 2002). Similar to Kendrick & McKay's (2002) study, the *Querida Abuelita* classroom exercise proved to be a literacy event, which allowed children to think about and express their views on the subject of migration. While preparation of these materials took considerable time, I believe it is an excellent vehicle to introduce and draw young students' interest in topics of relevance to transnational children's lives and which teachers might use as the basis for initiating children's literacy tasks. Topics might include cultural traditions or linguistic diversity.[1] One of the time-consuming stages was the preparation of the book in a format, which could be appreciated by a whole classroom simultaneously. As I mention above, the interpersonal sharing of cultural ideas resulting from group reading and discussion is what is needed before children can be expected to internalize the information. "Big Book" or digitals of

[1] Another book, which could be used, is *La Llaman América / America is her Name*, written by Luis J. Rodríguez (1997) and illustrated by Carlos Vázquez. In Smith's (2003) review of this book he succinctly relates how this book deals with "migration, the importance of the family, unemployment and economic security, alcoholism and violence in the streets (my translation, p. 137,)." These are also socioculturally relevant subjects, which teachers might use as a base for children's literacy tasks.

these books would allow teachers to skip the costly and time-consuming preparation of a faithful big book copy.

It is the task of the teacher today to provide students with meaningful, culturally relevant literacy tasks, since it is by relating subject matter to what the students know, do and value, that learning takes place (CREDE, in González et al., 2005). This is the base for what has been termed teaching with *funds of knowledge* (Greenberg, 1989; Vélez Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992 as cited in González et al, 1993). However, one of the drawbacks mentioned in literature about teaching with *funds of knowledge* is the time-consuming nature of collecting data on the knowledge that exists in the students' households (González et al., 2005). One response has been to publish case studies that have brought new understandings to larger numbers of interested practitioners. I suggest that another option might be for the students themselves to collect the information, perhaps as homework, and to share it with the teacher. During my second home visit, in the course of conducting the literacy inventory, children enthusiastically located sources of print in their homes. They were proud to show me their favorite storybooks, their families' collections of encyclopedias, sacred images, clothes with messages, music collections, and family keepsakes. To jot these items down in the form of a list in order to share it with classmates and teacher would be an added challenge. Teachers could benefit from knowing what kinds of texts exist in students' homes, and teachers could then expand on the use of this list by asking children to choose a text from their list and to explain, perhaps in writing, who uses the text, and what they use it for, perhaps where they use it and when. The children would thus be writing about the world they know and informing the teacher on their families' own *funds of linguistic knowledge* (Smith, 2001).

List making is one genre I observed in school assignments for young children, but it is doubtful that they are later used in class as a source of cultural information (Castillo Rojas, 2004; Ballesteros, 2003). Asking students to write a list of, for example, "skills their family members can do," or "tools their family members use in their work" would be culturally relevant and meaningful. Work-related vocabulary can be very specialized, and so this kind of list building would challenge writers to elaborate their vocabulary. A second step could be to examine the spelling of the words in their lists. If the vocabulary involves words which do not appear in the dictionary, as it may well not, for example in the case where there are borrowings from an indigenous language, then, the students can compare ideas and decide on one spelling or agree to acceptable variations of spellings. A third step might be to compose a theme on the relationship between related words, perhaps describing a process. For example, Belen might write, "I place the onions on the scale and slide the weight over until the balance lines up with the middle mark." Sharing this information in class would enrich classmates' knowledge and appreciation of the community in which they live. Carried out in this way, list making could be a first step for teachers interested in incorporating available *funds of knowledge*. Furthermore, these kinds of writing assignments involve the students in producing contextualized writing that is meaningful to them, which is a stated aim of the SEP 1993 program (Castillo Rojas, 2004). If teachers present writing tasks involving subjects that students know and care about learning should take place (CREDE, in González et al., 2005).

With guidance from teachers, older students might be able to develop literacy inventories, similar to the one used in this study, and carry them out in their homes, with their extended families, and in the community. Preparing an inventory involves having

the objectives clearly in mind, finding the vocabulary to express these ideas clearly, and defining the words being used. Then, the ideas need to be organized and put into a format that allows the data to be easily recordable. Preparation of inventories could be done in class and data collection as homework. Analysis of the data gathered would be an important part of the project and, of course, a discussion on what the results mean to the children, that is, what they think the results mean in relation to their families and their community could prove to be enlightening for the teacher. Teachers could possibly use this as a base for action research

Teachers might also look to resources offered by families participating in transnational migrant circuits. Knowledge of other places could be helpful in geography, natural science, or history classes. Map literacy could be made more meaningful if explicitly related to the lives of people the students know. In Mexico, geography of the continent is typically taught in fifth- or sixth-grade. A map could be used as an inventory tool asking students to interview their extended families and write on the map the names or relationships of people who have lived in different places, finding those places on the map. The students might learn about their extended families and geography while the teacher would learn about the students' families. I had the youngest children in this study do this exercise, and later learned they had not studied the continent yet, but perhaps the experience will serve them in the future.

Print literacy is also used in the running of a business as we have seen in the Tenahua Tlatehui family shop where lists were used to record names, merchandise, dates, etc. Older children might be able to visit different family-run stores and businesses to take note of the various ways store and shopkeepers record their business transactions.

To observe and understand how business transactions are handled; to find the words to describe and explain them is quite another. Teague (2004) suggests teachers should provide writing activities, which are related to "professional contexts in which learners might one day find themselves (p.141)." Much of the economic growth in this community can be attributed to family-motivated entrepreneurial business endeavors. A writing activity involving the community's already existing businesses opens the door for children to imagine themselves in these same activities or to imagine themselves developing new enterprises in the community. Classroom analysis of workplace literacies would allow a time and space for students to begin to evaluate their own professional future in relation to their community. These are some ideas for teachers to consider for classroom instruction and homework.

I continue with other considerations for teachers concerning communication with transnational families. School policies need to promote family-teacher communication, especially in respect to transnational families. The first months after a parent migrates are especially trying for children. As mentioned earlier, the parent-child separation takes a toll emotionally and scholastically on the child. It is important for families to let the teachers know about disruptions in the family in order for the teachers to provide support for them as they did at Alfonso Cano Elementary School. Teachers should allow students a period for adjustment, if possible, by offering the students extra attention. I observed, and teachers and parents commented on, the ease with which children cry at the mention of their fathers soon after the migration occurs. Teachers may need to sensitize classmates to this situation and create an environment in which students can play a supportive role in their classmates' adjustment to the new family order.

The three teachers I worked with at Alfonso Cano Elementary School already had a good understanding of the issues facing transnational families. By understanding the roles once filled by the migrant, a teacher might be able to foresee and diminish the possible negative effects foresee effects on the family. Since the parent who is left behind is often overburdened with new responsibilities, the teacher should not add to the parent's workload. Rather, the teacher might work more closely with the student helping the student to achieve his or her potential. The child may also have added responsibilities at home and the teacher should not automatically suggest outside courses or tutoring for the student, since young students need to be accompanied to and from these activities. Directors of schools with transnational populations should prepare their teachers for these circumstances and allow policies which are flexible enough to accommodate transition periods. Furthermore, if the student body is in secondary school or higher, the director might also prepare teachers to discuss the risks involved in crossing borders and living in a country without a visa.

Carrying out the literacy inventory and finding examples of language brokering (as described by Kalman, 2004) in the homes gave me ideas that could be shared in a parents' workshop. Through this study, I found parents concerned with how to help their children when they saw a drop in their children's enthusiasm toward school or a drop in their children's grades. Content could follow the basic ideas of availability, access and appropriation as related by Kalman (2003), Farr (1994) and Rockwell (1992). For example:

1. Introduce the idea that not all reading and writing appears in books and in beautifully shaped letters. Using visual aids, show the parents examples of print found in the home and community environment.
2. Boost the parents' self-confidence as readers by:

   a. Exemplifying how much one can know from context and experience, the sum of their knowledge.
   b. Exemplifying how reading is interpretation and one can "imagine" the meanings
3. Present parents with easy ways to get children reading through tasks in the home
   a. Ask their children to read to them texts that are meaningful or genuinely interesting to the parent or texts which the parent believes might interest the child. They could then comment on the content, much as we do when we listen to the radio.
   b. Browse through a magazine with illustrated recipes, and choose one that sounds as appetizing ask the child to read the ingredients. Together, decide as to the feasibility of making such a dish.
   c. Asking the child to read the captions of the pictures of a magazine article.
   d. Writing a list of the names of all the pets they have had.
   e. Looking at the calendar to see when the next vacation is or what day of the week the next birthday falls.
4. Invite parents to share their ideas
5. Explain the bases of the sociocultural theory of learning to read and write:
   a. Inviting the children to read and write
   b. Achieving it together

Parents should leave the workshop motivated they have many opportunities within their reach to guide and motivate their children to do meaningful reading and writing.

5.6. Implications for Research

The findings of this study lead to new questions. In this section, I present several questions followed by suggestions of how future research could attempt to respond to them.

As reported in section 5.3 on limitations, many data were reported rather than observed. Also, participants tended to share only the texts they value. How might we overcome these limitations? An obvious solution is to spend more time with the participants; literacy practices are embedded in naturally occurring events. Another suggestion is to ask the participants to collect samples of their writing themselves. The

novelty of digitally photographing home texts seemed to motivate participants to bring out more examples. Giving the participants disposable cameras might motivate them to document texts they might otherwise not consider examples of "writing." By leaving a video camera with them, they could video tape themselves when they are reading or writing together.

Payant (2005) collected data by asking her participant to keep a literacy logbook, while Faulstich Orellana et al. (2003) asked their participants to keep literacy journals in order to mitigate the observation time factor. Researchers could ask participants to record the date, where they were, whom they were with, what text they read or wrote, a description of the event, and how they felt about it. In these ways, researchers could collect literacy practices, which are not directly observed and gain insight into participants' points of view. Furthermore, participants might record literacy practices, which they would otherwise not have thought of. Whereas, realistically, it might be doubtful that the mothers of these families would appreciate such a writing chore, the younger participants might enjoy it, if only for a day or two for the youngest participants, or a week with adolescent participants.

One of the domains in which I encountered many literacy practices was the business sub-domain of the commercial-financial domain – those embedded in the running of the general store. What literacy practices might be found in transnational families involved in other workplace literacies? Workplace literacy practices may be brought into the homes and affect the types of literacy practices with which children come into contact. This leads me to ask the following questions.

What literacy practices do members of these transnational migrant circuits carry out in their lives in the U.S. and Canada? As Levitt (2001) reminds us, much of a migrant's life in the receiving community revolves around work. How do these literacy practices affect transnational families? A study based on social networking would be valuable in studying transnational migrant circuits and would ultimately lead to a multi-site study. Transnationalism concerns not only place but also time, as the following questions imply.

This study of incipient transnationalism raises the question of what differences there might be in the role literacy plays in an incipient versus a longer-established transnational migrant circuit. Might literacy practices be more varied in these families, perhaps involving more U.S.-produced literature, more guidance in English, digital literacy used for communication? A study involving the members of a longer established transnational migrant circuit could analyze the role they have given to digital literacies in their lives.

The time factor also raises the following question. Does literacy play a role in the proliferation of transnational migrant circuits? The results of this study suggest that the role is minimal. A comparative study involving incipient and longer established transnational migrant circuits might yield an answer to this question more rapidly than a single or longitudinal study.

Time is also a factor in children's literacy development. How does transnationalism affect children's literacy development? A longitudinal study following these families might give us some answers to this question. We might be able to identify the short-term and long-term effects of transnationalism on literacy development of children. By continuing to follow the families of this study, we might find answers to the following questions. Will the transnational experience affect their literacy practices over

time? The two oldest boys in each family have interests in digital literacy. Will this play a role in their transnational experiences? The two eldest boys also have differing views on migration. Jaime is interested in migrating while Figo believes there are not enough men remaining in Mexico to do the work that Mexico needs done. Will these attitudes deepen or change in relation to their transnational experience, and how will they affect these young men's choices in education and work in the future? The next two boys, Jesus and Oswaldo, are also about the same age, and the two girls, Belen and Roberta, are classmates, while the two youngest children, Araceli and Giovani, are also the same age and in the same grade at school. With these combinations, it could make for a very interesting study, perhaps comparing and contrasting literacy practices in relation to age. The two youngest boys expressed enthusiasm in writing to their fathers while the older boys did not comment on letter writing. Will the younger boys' enthusiasm continue? These are all questions, which could be addressed through a longitudinal study.

Researchers, in the meantime, can continue asking relevant questions and documenting their findings in order to understand the forces underlying the changes in our increasingly globalized world.

5.7. Concluding Remarks

Shortly after I began this study, I heard a teacher refer to a transnational child as "*pobrecito* [poor one]." I had not realized until then that this comment closely reflected my own thoughts about of these children. Later, I came upon D'Aubeterre's discussion of her choice of the term *transnational migrant circuit* as one that:

> recognizes the actors as taking active roles in the reconstruction of their life conditions.... In diverse areas of social life, the actors carry out a set of

> practices which are shaped from historic conditions and which in turn contribute to modifications in these areas through negotiation of differing and not always compatible interests (my translation, 2000, p. 65).

This perspective allowed me to see how each member of each family made choices along the way. As a result, my respect and admiration for members of transnational migrant circuits grew and I stopped pitying them.

As I pointed out in Chapter 1, Portes, et al, (1999) remind us that although transnational activities evolve in reaction to government and commercial policies, it is the individual who actually initiates and conducts them. In the case of the transnational families participating in this study, the initial impulse to migrate was economic. National and international institutions, public and private, need to develop economic, social and political policies which are more just and humane and which seek to develop work opportunities which use the human and natural resources available, and which offer just and humane salaries and benefits in return. An economy dependent on remittances sent by migrants who risk their lives to cross a border, like the economy we find in Mexico, is not just and it is not humane. These parents would rather not see their sons and daughters taking these risks in the future. They would rather have them making a fair living here in their community of origin.

Most importantly, this study has shown how these three families responsibly and creatively uses the resources they have to create opportunities for a brighter future. Meanwhile, transnational children anxiously wait for the day they can be reunited as a family. In Belen's letter from the *Querida Abuelita* exercise (seen in *Figure 2.3),* she signed off with these words for her father. "*Espero que encuentres muy bien entonces y mis tíos también se encuentren bien y me despido de ti y espero que vuelvas pronto* [I

hope you are very well and my uncles are also well and I say good bye to you and I hope you come back soon].” The brightest future still holds a family united in space and not only time.

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El siguiente cuestionario forma parte de un proyecto de investigación para el cual solicitamos su colaboración.
Instrucciones: Lea cuidadosamente y responda las siguientes preguntas:

Fecha*:* _____
Edad: _____
Sexo: _____
Lugar de nacimiento: _____

¿Dónde vive actualmente? _____
¿En qué año de primaria va su hijo/a? _____
¿Es su primer año (como familia) en esta escuela? SÍ NO
Si NO, ¿cuántos años han estado aquí como familia? _____

1. ¿A qué se dedica?
2. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su casa?
3. ¿Tiene acceso a los siguientes servicios **en su casa**? Marque con una cruz:
   Agua _____ Electricidad _____ Otros _____
   Teléfono _____ Internet _____
   Gas _____ Auto _____

4. La casa donde vive es: (marque con una cruz)
   Propia _____ Rentada _____

5. Señale con una cruz los niveles escolares que ha cursado:

Primaria _____	Carrera Técnica _____	Posgrado (especifique) ___
Secundaria _____	Escuela Normal _____	_____
Preparatoria _____	Universidad _____	_____

6. ¿Tiene conocimientos de otra (s) lengua (s) diferente (s) del español? ¿Cuál (es)?
   _____ _____

7. En su opinión, su manejo de esa (s) lengua (s) es: (selecciona con una cruz)

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Básico _____	Básico _____
Intermedio _____	Intermedio _____
Avanzado _____	Avanzado _____
Casi nativo _____	Casi nativo _____
Nativo _____	Nativo _____

8. ¿Dónde o con quién la (s) utiliza? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Nadie _____	Nadie _____
Casa _____	Casa _____
Trabajo _____	Trabajo _____
Amigos _____	Amigos _____
Familiares _____	Familiares _____
Tienda _____	Tienda _____
Vecinos _____	Vecinos _____
Otros _____	Otros _____

9. ¿Con qué frecuencia la (s) usa? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Nunca _____	Nunca _____
Raramente _____	Raramente_____
De vez en cuando_____	De vez en cuando_____
A menudo_____	A menudo_____
Todos los días_____	Todos los días _____

10. ¿Cuáles de las siguientes habilidades tiene en esta (s) lengua (s)? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Leer_____	Leer_____
Hablar _____	Hablar_____
Escribir_____	Escribir_____
Escuchar _____	Escuchar _____

11. ¿Qué lee en esta (s) lengua (s)? Marque con una cruz:

Segunda Lengua	*Tercera Lengua*
Revistas_____	Revistas_____
Periódicos_____	Periódicos_____
Libros _____	Libros _____
Páginas de internet_____	Páginas de internet_____
Manuales técnicos_____	Manuales técnicos_____
Propaganda_____	Propaganda_____
Otros _____	Otros _____

12. ¿Dónde y cómo aprendió esa (s) lengua (s)?

13. ¿Qué tan importante es para usted que su hijo sea bilingüe? Explique sus motivos:

14. ¿Tiene parientes en el extranjero?_____ ¿Dónde? _____

15. ¿Ha visitado otro país? _____ ¿Cuál? _____ ¿Por cuánto tiempo? _____

16. ¿Ve televisión en inglés?_____ ¿Con qué frecuencia? Indique con una cruz:

Nunca _____
Raramente _____
De vez en cuando _____
A menudo _____
Con mucha frecuencia ____
Todos los días _____

17. ¿Escucha música en inglés?

18. ¿Por qué eligió esta escuela para su hijo (a)?

19. En su opinión, ¿Qué características tiene para usted una buena educación?

ENCUESTA MAESTROS - MIGRACION
ESCUELA ABRAHAM SANCHEZ LOPEZ

NOMBRE DE MAESTRO(A): _____
GRUPO: _____

1. ¿Cuántos estudiantes en su grupo tienen parientes cercanos (padres, hermanos, tios, abuelos, etc.) viviendo o que han vivido en el extranjero?

Nombres de sus estudiantes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. ¿Cuántos estudiantes en su grupo vienen de otras partes de México?

Nombres de sus estudiantes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. A usted, como maestro(a), ¿le interesaría participar en un estudio sobre la influencia de la migración nacional y transnacional en el desarrollo de la lectura y escritura, y porqué?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

¡Muchas gracias! Patrick Smith y Teresa Sullivan, Departamento de Lenguas, UDLA-P

COSOLEM
Lesson Plan sobre migración para Segundo

Material: Meza Keane, Sofía. (1997). Querida Abuelita. Rigby de Reed Elsevier, Inc., Crystal Lake, IL.

Objetivos:
1. Identificar a los niños que tienen a familiares en el extranjero.
2. Que los niños con familiares en el extranjero compartan sus ideas acerca de lo que esto significa para ellos.
3. Identificar cuales son los niños que se ven más afectados por este hecho, sea emocionalmente, económicamente, o socialmente. Algunos rasgos visibles en el transcurso de la clase que podrían representar un impacto son –
   Emocional: Expresiones de tristeza, sea de llorar o callarse; de alegría, sea de platicar con entusiasmo de un ser querido en particular
   Económico: Que habla de los beneficios materiales de trabajar en el extranjero; que muestra útiles escolares que traen logotipos de lugares o rasgos culturales del extranjero;
   Social: Que habla de actividades que involucran comunicación con el emigrado; que habla de vivir en otra casa o con la familia extendida a raíz de que se fue el emigrado; que muestra conocimientos extensivos de lo que implica emigrar

Plan de clase:
Mira aquí. Estas son cartas de amistades y familiares que me escriben ya que me fui a vivir lejos de mi familia. ¿Cómo creen que **me hace sentir recibir** estas cartas? Así es. Me encanta recibir noticias de ellos. ¿**De qué** creen que **escriben**? De como están y de que hacen. De como está todo por allí. Y así me acuerdo como están las cosas. Y ¿cómo cree que a veces me siento acerca de estar lejos de ellos? Si, es cierto, a veces extraño a mi familia y mi tierra. ¿Por ejemplo? Las personas, los lugares. Como se ven las cosas y como huelen y suenan las cosas. Hacer cosas juntas, ¿como qué? Así es. A convivir con ellos en los cumpleaños, en las fiestas, hasta en el trabajo.

Ustedes son de aquí, de Cholula. **Y, ¿sus familiares son de aquí también? ¿Hay algunos que son de aquí y que se han ido a vivir a otra parte ha vivir, aunque sea por un rato? ¿Quienes son? ¿Se mantienen en contacto? ¿Cómo se mantienen en contacto? ¿Quiénes de ustedes escriben cartas? ¿A quién? Y ¿cómo les hace sentir recibir sus cartas o dibujos?** Apuesto que sí!

portada de <u>Querida abuelita</u>.
Aquí tengo un libro. ¿Me pueden decir el título del libro? Y ¿quién lo escribió? Entonces a ella, le decimos la autora. Aquí dice *ilustraciones*. ¿Qué significa eso? ¿Les gustan los libros con ilustraciones? ¿Porqué? ¿Que nos dice esta ilustración de la portada? ¿De qué creen que se trata este libro? De hecho, se trata del niño que se llama Marco que escribe cartas a ¿quién creen? Su abuelita. Y, ¿porqué?

Porque ha dejado su pueblo para vivir en otro lugar. Las personas que se cambian su lugar de vivir, así de un estado a otro o de un país a otro se les dice **emigrantes.** **¿Quiénes de ustedes conocen a algún emigrante? ¿Quién es?**

p. 2 & 3
Aquí tienes dos dibujos. ¿Cuál creen que es de Marco antes, y cual es el de Marco ahora? ¿Antes dónde vivía? ¿Ahora, dónde vive? ¿Cuáles son las diferencias más notables entre vivir en su rancho y vivir en la ciudad? (mascotas?) **¿Conocen alguien que se ha ido a vivir en otro país? ¿Les han compartido sus experiencias? ¿Qué cosas son las más diferentes que te ha contado?** ¿Quieren saber las experiencias de Marco? El, ¿a quién escribe de estas nuevas experiencias? **¿A quién escribirían si fuesen a vivir lejos? ¿Ustedes reciben cartas de alguien que se ha ido a vivir lejos? ¿Quiénes les escriben?/¿De quién son? ¿Cómo les hace sentir recibir las cartas? ¿A veces meten cosas adentro de las cartas como dibujos o postales?**

pp. 4, 5
Leer el primer párrafo de la carta.
¿Cómo viajó a San José? ¿Dónde creen que está San José?
Leer el segundo párrafo de la carta.
¿Cuál fue lo bonito de su llegada a San José?
Tercer párrafo.
¿Cuál es la cosa que más extraña? El ruido de los animales del rancho. Claro, y su abuelita! **A la gente que conocen que han emigrado, ¿qué cosas extrañan?**

pp. 10, 11
Mira aquí. ¿De qué escribe Marco? Claro, cumplió años. ¿Saben cuántos años cumplió? Contamos las velas. Y ¿qué creen que recibió de su cumpleaños? ¿De qué color es? ¿Porqué creen que les regaló un peluche precisamente de una vaca blanca? Claro, para recordar bien su vaca blanca del rancho. ¿Leemos la carta para saber los detalles?
Leer primer párrafo de la carta.
¿Qué cuenta de nuevo entonces a su abuelita? ¿Qué es lo que prefiere del rancho?
Leer segundo párrafo de la carta.
¿Qué es lo que extraña más? Si, escuchar los cuentos de su abuelita en las noches. ¿En sus familias cuentan cuentos? ¿Leen cuentos? *(Esto para determinar si hacen esta actividad no-escolar de lecto-escritura en la casa, o individualmente o en familia.)*

pp. 12, 13
Aquí, ¿qué tenemos? ¿Cuál de las escuelas es la del rancho? ¿Cual es la de su nueva escuela? ¿Cómo son diferentes? La del campo es más chico y no tiene canchas. Aquí, ¿qué se ve? Una bandera ¿de dónde? Entonces, ¿dónde está la ciudad de San José? Sí! En los Estados Unidos. **¿Quiénes de ustedes tienen familiares o amistades que fueron a vivir a los Estados Unidos?**

pp. 18, 19
Escuchen esta carta.
Leer párrafo 1.

¿Cuál es su nueva noticia? ¿Cómo lo hace sentir? Entonces, claro que queremos compartir algo así con los seres queridos, ¿verdad? Marco comparte su alegría por medio de esta carta. **¿De qué cosas escriben o cuentan ustedes a la gente que han emigrado?**
Leer párrafo 2 y la mitad de 3.
Aquí, cuenta de los acontecimientos de como llegó a conocer a su nuevo amigo, Alex. Se acuerdan cuando conociste por primer vez a un amigo? ¿De qué más está alegre?
Leer lo que resta de 3.
¿De dónde en México es Marco? Y ¿dónde está Yucatán? ¿Cómo se despide de su abuelita en la carta? ¿Y en las otras cartas?

pp. 20, 21
¿Cómo se entretiene Marco en la ciudad? ¿Cómo se entretenía en el rancho? Leemos la carta.
Leer párrafo 1.
¿De qué se trata este primer párrafo? Claro, está recordando todo del rancho y le hace preguntas a su abuelita.
Leer párrafo 2.
¿Qué tiene de diferente vivir en la ciudad? ¿Ustedes tienen mascotas? ¿Cómo sentirían dejarlos? ¿A quién dejarían que los cuidara? ¿Alguna vez cuidaste algún animal porque se fue un amigo o familiar?
Leer párrafo 3.
Aquí, ¿cómo se despide?
Si tú has estado en otro lado o algún familiar ¿Qué hacen de diferente de lo que hacían aquí?

pp. 22, 23
Esta es la última carta del libro ¿Qué ven aquí? ¿De qué se puede tratar esta carta? Leemos la carta. . . . Entonces, ¿qué noticia tiene Marco para su abuelita? ¿Alguna vez regresó a visitar algún pariente? **¿Les avisaron con anticipación que venían? ¿Cómo les avisaron? ¿Cómo se sentían / te sentías?**

p. 24
¿Cómo se sentía la abuelita de Marco al leer esta carta?
¿Qué les parecen las cartas de Marco? ¿Se animan a escribir cartas o mandar dibujos a la gente, tu amigo o familiar, que se ha ido a vivir lejos?

Quiero que ahora ustedes me preparen una carta o dibujo que pudieran mandar a un pariente o algún amigo o amiga de su familia. Alguien que está viviendo lejos de aquí. Y si no tienen a nadie lejos, pueden escribir o dibujar para el pariente de alguien más, o bien, tengo un amigo que se llama Enrique y se fue a trabajar en Nueva Jersey. Es de Cholula y tiene a sus tres hijos aquí. Le pueden escribir a él. Siempre está pensando en Cholula y le gusta enterarse de todo lo referente a Cholula y de sus paisanos.

Cuando recolecto los dibujos o cartas, tener a la mano, lista de estudiantes, apuntar a quien está dirigido y, si lo saben, en donde vive.

Universidad de las Américas Puebla

Departamento de Lenguas

Escuela de Artes y Humanidades

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6 de septiembre de 2004

Muy apreciado(a) _____

Durante el pasado año escolar la Escuela Adolfo López Mateos ha participado con un proyecto de investigación relacionado con la lectura y escritura de los niños. Este estudio está siendo llevado a cabo por profesores de la Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, con el apoyo del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT)

El objetivo del estudio es entender los procesos, las actitudes y las prácticas, tanto escolares como familiares, que contribuyen a la formación de los niños como lectores y escritores. En el año escolar 2003-2004 algunos estudiantes fueron observados en su aprendizaje de la lectura y escritura en el salón de clase, siempre con la aprobación de la Dirección de la escuela y sus maestros. En este año escolar el estudio se enfocará más en el entorno familiar del niño por medio de visitas al hogar y entrevistas con los padres de familia y los niños. Por lo tanto, los investigadores Patrick Smith y Teresa Sullivan estaremos visitando sus casas para hablar con ustedes sobre las prácticas de lectura y escritura de sus hijos.

Tanto el Director de la escuela como los investigadores estamos más que dispuestos a aclarar cualquier duda o pregunta con respecto a la realización de este estudio.

De antemano agradecemos su amable participación.

Atentamente,

ESTADO LIBRE Y SOBERANO DE PUEBLA
SECRETARIA DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA
DIRECCIÓN DE EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA
ESC. PRIM. EDO. MAT.
"PROFR. ABRAHAM SÁNCHEZ LÓPEZ"
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SAN ANDRÉS CHOLULA

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Departamento de Lenguas
Universidad de las Américas, Puebla
San Andrés Cholula
229 31 17

Proyecto "*La construcción social de lectores y escritores en México: Estudio etnográfico del uso de la lengua escrita en escuelas primarias y su entorno comunitario.*"

COSOLEM

Nombre del niño _____

Nombre de padre/madre/tutor del niño _____

Dirección del hogar _____

Colonia_____

Se encuentra entre _____ y _____

¿La casa es de 1 o 2 pisos? _____

Color o marca distintiva de la casa _____

Teléfono _____

Días y horas más prácticas para visitarlos y / o llamarles. _

_____

ڤSí, me interesa participar en el proyecto.
ڤQuiero saber más antes de decidir si participo en el proyecto.
ڤPrefiero no participar en el proyecto.

Ficha Sociofamiliar

Nombre completo del niño de caso estudio: _____
Dirección: _____

Investigador: _____
Fecha: _____

Teléfono: _____
Correo electrónico: _____

Nombres de familiares	*Fecha y lugar de nacimiento*	*Nivel de escolaridad*	*Escuelas asistidas*	*Actividades económicas*	*Actividades familiares*	*Usos de la lectura y la escritura*
Padre/Tutor						
Madre/Tutor						
Hermanos						

Nombres de familiares	*Fecha y lugar de nacimiento*	*Nivel de escolaridad*	*Escuelas asistidas*	*Actividades económicas*	*Actividades familiares*	*Usos de la lectura y la escritura*
Otros miembros del hogar						

Lenguas indígenas

Transnacionalidad

Observaciones

Inventario de lectoescritura		Uso	Uso			Miembro de familia:
date:		Observado	Comentado	frecuencia		
	presencia	L/E	L/E	# / periodo	propósito	Comentarios
Agenda						
Anuncio						
Boleto de rifa o lotería						
Boleto, evento cultural						
Boleto, transporte						
Calendario						
Calendario Galván						
Carta						
Catálogo						
Cartilla de vacuna						
Chequera						
Credential						
Computador						
Cuenta bancaria						
Cuenta otra						
Cupón/vale						
Diary de gastos						
Diccionario						
Dinero en efectivo						
Directorio telefónico						
Documento civil						
Documento de compras y ventas						
Documento escolar						
Documento religioso						
Enciclopedia						
Envoltura						
Etiqueta						
Folleto						
Garabato						
Instructivo						
Libreta de _____						

Inventario de lectoescritura		Uso	Uso			Miembro de familia:
date:		Observado	Comentado	frecuencia		
	presencia	L/E	L/E	# / periodo	propósito	Comentarios
Libreta de cuentas						
Libro de adulto						
Libro de de consulta						
Libro de niño de activitidad						
Libro de niño de lectura						
Literatura religiosa: Biblia						
Estampa						
Libro						
Libro de oraciónes						
Misal						
Panfleto						
Revista						
Tarjeta						
Otra						
Lista						
Mapa						
Membrete						
Papelería bancaria						
Papelería de impuestos						
Periódico						
Portada de cassette,CD,VHS,DVD						
Póster/Cartel						
Programa de evento						
Promoción de negocio						
Propaganda política						
Recado						
Receta de cocina						
Receta médica						
Recetario						
Receta médica						
Recibo de pago						

Inventario de lectoescritura		Uso	Uso			Miembro de familia:
date:		Observado	Comentado	frecuencia		
	presencia	L/E	L/E	# / periodo	propósito	Comentarios
Recibo de servicio						
Reloj de manecillas						
Reloj digital						
Revista						
Tarjeta de felicitación						
Tarjeta de presentación						
Teléfono						
Teléfono celular						
Termómetro						
Tiras cómicas						
Título						
Trabajos escolares						
Volante						

Formato de Entrevista COSOLEM para padre o madre de familia o tutor en México

Nombre completo:

Nombre del nin@(s) que asisten a la escuela:

Grados a los que asisten:

Dirección actual:

Teléfono:

E-mail:

Procedencia

¿Es su familia originaria de San Andrés o de otra región del país?

¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuales ustedes vinieron a vivir a este lugar?

Aspectos económicos

¿En qué actividades económicas se desempeña usted actualmente?

¿Colaboran sus hijos con los trabajos que usted realiza o trabajan por dinero en otros lugares?

Aspectos educativos

¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuales está llevando sus hijos a la escuela?

¿De qué formas se relaciona usted con las escuelas a donde asisten sus hijos.?

¿Cómo aprendió usted a **leer**?

¿Cómo han aprendido los niños a leer?

¿Cómo les ayuda usted a los niños a leer en la casa?

¿Usted considera que la lectura es importante? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué cosas lee usted o los niños cotidianamente?

¿Cómo aprendió usted a **escribir**?

¿Cómo han aprendido los niños a escribir?

¿Cómo les ayuda usted a los niños a escribir en la casa?

¿Usted considera que la escritura es importante? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué cosas escribe usted o los niños cotidianamente?

¿Cómo considera que leer y escribir va a ayudar a sus hijos en el futuro?

¿Ha tenido alguna experiencia positiva o negativa que haya afectado su punto de vista en relación a la lectura o escritura?

*Si usted tuviera la oportunidad de regresar a la escuela ¿a qué le dedicaría mayor atención, a la lectura o a la escritura? ¿Porqué?

*¿Que piensa usted que sucedería si viviéramos en un mundo donde nadie leyera o escribiera?

¿Qué otras lenguas diferentes al español usted habla, lee o escribe y porqué le gusta hacerlo?

Le gustaría poder leer, hablar o escribir otra lengua? ¿Porqué?

Aspecto Migratorio

¿Hace cuánto tiempo que emigró su familiar? ¿Fue la primera vez que emigró?

¿Cómo fue tomada la decisión de emigrar?

¿Tenían algunas metas concretas en mente cuando se fue? ¿Cuáles fueron?

¿Han cambiado desde entonces?

Desde la emigración, ¿qué cambios ha habido en las actividades de la familia en casa que involucran la lectura o la escritura?

¿Se mantienen en contacto? ¿Cómo? ¿Con qué frecuencia? ¿Usando qué medios? ¿Porqué lo hacen así?

Además del dinero que trae al hogar, ¿surgen otros beneficios de la migración?

¿Cómo ha afectado a los niños el hecho de tener a su familiar en el extranjero? ¿Ha visto algo positivo en relación al trabajo escolar?

*Si veo que la entrevistada está cansando, eliminaré estas preguntas.

Formato de Entrevista COSOLEM para el padre o la madre en el extranjero.

Nombre del emigrado:

Nombre del nin@(s) que asisten a la escuela:

Grados a los que asisten:

Dirección actual:

Teléfono:

E-mail:

Procedencia
¿Es su familia originaria de San Andrés o de otra región del país?
¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuales ustedes vinieron a vivir a este lugar?

Aspectos Migratorios
¿Hace cuánto tiempo que emigró? ¿Fue la primera vez que emigró?

¿Cómo fue tomada la decisión de emigrar?

¿Tenía algunas metas concretas en mente cuando se fue? ¿Cuáles fueron?

¿Han cambiado desde entonces?

Aspectos laborales
¿En qué actividades económicas se desempeña usted actualmente?

En su trabajo, ¿cuánto inglés necesita hablar, leer, o escribir para llevar acabo su trabajo?

¿Cómo aprendió el inglés que ya lleva?

En su trabajo, ¿usa el español? ¿Cómo?

Aspectos sociales
¿Vive solo o con alguien más?

¿Vive en casa o departamento?

¿Cómo paga las cuentas?

¿Cuáles pasatiempos tiene que involucran la lectura o la escritura?

¿Cómo es distinta la vida en donde vive a la vida en San Andrés?

Aspectos Familiares

¿Qué tipo de comunicación se mantiene con la familia?

¿Porqué lo hace así?

¿Cuál ha sido su papel en relación a la educación de sus hijos desde que emigró?

¿Cuáles beneficios han surgido a partir de su migración?

Además del dinero que trae al hogar, ¿surgen otros beneficios de la emigración para usted o para su familia?

¿Cómo ha afectado a sus hijos el hecho de que radica en el extranjero?

¿Ha visto algo positivo en relación al trabajo escolar de sus hijos?

Aspectos educativos

¿Cómo aprendió usted a leer?

¿Usted considera que la lectura es importante? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué cosas lee usted cotidianamente?

¿Cómo aprendió usted a escribir?

¿Usted considera que la escritura es importante? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué cosas escribe usted cotidianamente?

¿Cómo considera que leer y escribir va a ayudar a sus hijos en el futuro?

¿Ha tenido alguna experiencia positiva o negativa que haya afectado su punto de vista en relación a la lectura o escritura?

*Si usted tuviera la oportunidad de regresar a la escuela ¿a qué le dedicaría mayor atención, a la lectura o a la escritura? ¿Porqué?

¿Qué otras lenguas diferentes al español usted habla, lee o escribe y porqué le gusta hacerlo?

Le gustaría poder leer, hablar o escribir otra lengua? ¿Porqué?

* Si veo que la entrevistada está cansando, eliminaré esta pregunta.

Formato de Entrevista COSOLEM niñ@ de padre o madre emigrante
Nombre completo:
Edad:
Sexo:
Grado:
¿Te gusta estudiar en esta escuela? ¿Porqué (no)?

¿Te gusta **leer**? ¿Porqué (no)?

Además de la escuela, ¿en dónde más lees?

¿Qué tipo de cosas lees?

¿Cuándo lees?

¿Porqué lees?

¿Esta lectura es diferente o parecida a lo que lees en la escuela?

¿Crees que es importante leer? ¿Porqué (no)?

Te gusta **escribir**? ¿Porqué (no)?

Además de la escuela, ¿en dónde más escribes?

¿Qué tipo de cosas escribes?

¿Cuándo escribes?

¿Porqué escribes?

¿Esta escritura es diferente o parecida a lo que escribes en la escuela?

¿Crees que es importante escribir? ¿Porqué (no)?

Tu papá / mamá está en otro país. ¿Cómo te comunicas con el / ella?

¿Hablan de la escuela?

¿De sus experiencias en el otro país?

¿Qué te ha impresionado más de lo que te haya contado?

¿Sientes que te apoya? ¿De qué manera?

¿Mandan cartas o paquetes? ¿Qué cosas le manda? ¿Porque? --