

Chapter 4: RESULTS

4.1. Overview

The fathers in San Andrés and San Pedro have their own unique culture which is described in section 1.2.5. The main purpose of the study was to determine how these fathers' experiences and attitudes influence their attitudes toward their own children's literacy learning, and how this influences their own children's attitudes toward learning to read and write. In order to answer these questions I visited and interviewed eight families living in the research context eight times during a one-year period as described in the third chapter of this thesis. I used both open-ended oral interview questions and a written questionnaire to learn about the parents' experiences and attitudes as well as those of their children.

By comparing the results I found some common patterns and some differences among the families. The following information is the result of segmenting, categorizing, and grouping data "according to similar and related meanings" to find similarities and differences (Karther, 2002, p. 185). The results were compared with findings reported in the literature reviewed in chapter one. The categories analyzed below contain details of each family and examples that show why the stated conclusion was reached. This data will be used to answer the research questions in chapter five.

An important concept used to analyze the results of this study is Reading Environment. For the purposes of this study I define "reading environment" in the home as based on two criteria: (1) a variety of reading material (books, magazines, comic books, etc) in the home (There was a stark contrast in the amount of literature in the participant families' homes. Some had very few examples, while others had bookcases

full of books), and (2) a home where at least one parent reads regularly for pleasure. I define reading for pleasure as any reading activity that a person engages in without necessity, such as for school or for employment purposes, and without being encouraged or coerced to do so by another person. My definition includes a wider range of reading materials than main stream forms of literacy. It includes such things as comic books, “romance novels,” the newspaper, “The National Enquirer,” reading on the internet, and anything else a person reads for entertainment. Millard, Taylor and Watson (2000, p.130) say that “the importance of children’s earliest encounters with print is now widely accepted.” Baker and Scher (2002, p. 265) assert that “parents who believe that reading is pleasurable convey a perspective that is appropriated by their children.” Teale and Sulzby (as cited by Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas and Daley, 1998, p. 96) report that parents’ modeling of literate practices is important to a child’s literacy development, for example, reading the newspaper. Britto and Brooks-Gunn (2001, p. 75) refer to it as “learning culture” which they say has two aspects, structure and function. The structure is the “presence and availability of ... printed matter in the home.” Function refers to “parental teaching and reading styles.” Webster and Failer (1998) use the term “print culture” and describe it this way: “Children born into a ‘print culture’, whose parents read more, who own more books, and who read more often with them, tend to enter school with more knowledge about the function of literacy, which appears to be the best overall predictor of achievement at age seven.” I rated families as having either a high, medium or low reading environment. This rating was determined by responses to interviews with the parents and children and on the literacy inventory, along with my own observations of reading material in the home.

The following sections explain the results found for each of eleven categories. How socio-economic and education are associated with reading environment in the home is discussed in the first section in order to give the reader an overall picture of the families. I then review each case study student, their progress in school and how they have been affected by their home environment, in order to show the differences between families and case study students. In section 4.4 I discuss in more detail each case study students' reading level and preferences regarding reading and writing. Section 4.5 is devoted to parents' concerns about their children's education. The following two sections highlight the parents' attitudes to literacy. The last three sections discuss how reading to children, helping with homework, and desire to have children learn English are viewed and handled by the parents who participated in this study. There is also a section on non-school literacies. An effort was made to show how the categories relate to one another.

4.2 Socio-economic and Educational Level

Socio-economic level, parents' educational expectations, and educational level attained seem to be related to each other. See Table 4.1. The fathers in the two families with the lowest economic levels reported the least encouragement from their parents to attend college, and these two fathers finished only middle school. These two fathers and their wives also have not provided a strong reading environment for their children. The four fathers whose socio-economic level is middle class or higher all attended at least some college: 3 semesters, 3 years, bachelor's degree, and master's degree. These four fathers all reported that their parents wanted very much for them to go to college. Three

Table 4.1 Socio-economic Status, Parents' Expectations, and Educational Level

Father of	Current Socio-Economic Level	Parents wanted to him to attend college	Educational Level	Reading environment in home current family
Jaime	Lower-middle	Regular	Middle School	Low
Hector	Upper-middle	Very much	3 semesters university	High
Alicia	Middle	Very much	Masters	High
David	Middle	Very much	Bachelors	Medium
Esau	Lower-middle	Very much	High school	Medium
Roberto	Middle	NA	NA	High
Isela	Middle	Very much	3 years university	High
Abril	Lower	Little	Middle School	Low

of these four fathers have provided a strong reading environment for their children. This agrees with the findings of Baker and Scher (2002). They report that “parental beliefs and home experiences contribute” to their children’s motivation. Baker and Scher did not find that socio-economic level influences motivational levels; however, the findings of this study suggest that they do; at least, as far as attending college is concerned.

The following section gives details on each case study student and their home reading environment.

4.3 Reading Environment

This section reviews the progress of each case study student. The comments of their first grade teacher, the parents’ comments about their children’s progress, and observations about how much of a reading environment exists in the home are discussed. I also provide other pertinent information, followed by an assessment as to how the reading environment level has affected the case study student.

4.3.1 Jaime

Jaime was reported as having a low level of reading after three months of first grade. In fact, at the end of the first grade his teacher reported that he could neither read nor write, although observations of the classroom done by Teague (2004) indicate that he did have limited ability in reading and writing. As is the case with all eight families who participated in this study, his parents, although they have limited formal education, are very interested in the education of their children. His father finished middle school and his mother finished only the second grade; however, they say that they help their children with their homework on a regular basis, almost daily. Elvira helps the younger children with their reading and writing assignments and Juan helps them with arithmetic. Juan and Elvira reported that other than homework the family does not read, nor did I observe novels, magazines or other reading material in their home. They say they listen to the news on the radio and that they watch movies for entertainment. Since *los abuelos* (grandpa and grandma) live with them and are almost always at home it is not necessary to write notes to each other, since *los abuelos* can relay messages to family members as they come and go.

The children, according to my observations and interviews, live in a household where reading is not viewed as entertainment (Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001, p. 76). In spite of this, Juan and Elvira report that their oldest daughter, Mara, who is eleven years old, reads well. Her parents attribute their oldest daughter's success in learning to read, at least in part, to the pre-school she attended, which their two younger children did not attend. It is possible that not being in a "reading environment" could have had an effect

on Jaime since, as his father says, he is more interested in making money than studying. If his interests do not lean toward academic activities, this lack of a “reading environment” could have had an effect. His mother says he develops later than most children and attributes this to his slow start in learning to read and write. His parents report that he is doing much better in the second grade; however, miscue analysis (explained in chapter 3) administered toward the end of the study, as well as my own observations seem to indicate that neither he nor his younger sister read well for their age and grade level. This could be a result of what Cairney and Ashton (2002, p. 332) say regarding teaching practices in the schools. “There is a need to question any claims that specific pedagogical practices are able to meet the needs of all children ... There is a need for further research” that studies the “varied discourse practices ... for children of varying class, cultural and language backgrounds.” It could be that the teaching practices Jaime and his younger sister have been exposed to do not meet their needs because they have not been exposed to middle class literacy practices in their home. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) express it: “The educational mortality rate can only increase as one moves towards the classes most distant from scholarly language.”

Elvira reports frustration at not having had the opportunity to attend school beyond the second grade when she was young. She says as the oldest child she had to take care of her younger brothers and sisters while their parents worked to provide for the family. This seems to have had the effect of making her determined that her children are going to have a good education. When I asked Elvira if the children work outside the home she indicated that she is determined that they should not work outside the home so that they have time to go to school and study. Although Juan, Jaime’s father, finished

only middle school he reported that school was a very positive experience for him because he has always been anxious to learn new things and to learn to do them better.

4.3.2 Roberto

After three months in first grade Roberto's reading level was rated as "high" by his teacher and Teague (2004). He has read to me several times since he started the second grade and his oral reading is excellent. He was anxious to read with me whenever I invited him to do so. This is in spite of the fact that, according to the observations in the classroom done by Teague, he has a tendency to "play around in class." His mother, who studied a technical degree in accounting, tells me that she and her mother, who is a primary school teacher, have spent considerable time reading with Roberto from an early age. He has perhaps fifty books in his bedroom. They include an animal encyclopedia, books about dinosaurs, and science fiction. His mother also showed me examples of activity books that he uses to practice reading and writing in addition to his regular school work. When I asked him if he likes school he responded, "*mucho* (very much)," because it is fun and because he learns a lot. In comparison with most of the other case study students he expresses himself very well for his age. His mother also reports that his way of speaking is very mature for his age. His mother reports that her parents read to her frequently when she was young and that she still enjoys reading as an adult. It appears that Roberto has benefited from being in this reading environment. This environment appears to have contributed in his being very expressive in his way of speaking.

Figure 4.1 Roberto’s Animal Encyclopedia Set



4.3.3 Alicia

Alicia’s reading level was rated as medium by her teacher and by Teague (2004) after three months of first grade. Observations done by Teague show that she loves to talk to her friends while in class. In spite of the fact that she was often disciplined for doing so, her teacher reported that Alicia had developed well in her ability to read and write by the end of the first grade. Her father tells me that of his three daughters Alicia, who is the youngest, is the one who has the ability to read rapidly. He showed me the example of a “comic book” with 20 pages of dense writing, as he said, “Son bastantes letras (the writing is dense).” See Figure 4.2. He said that she can read this sort of material in about an hour. All five family members reported that they buy books, magazines and other reading material frequently. Alicia’s mother, Amparo, said that she loves to read and that she reads whatever is available. Aldo said he loves to read also but that his reading is impeded by vision problems. He reads as much as his eyes allow. Aldo reported that his parents read to him when he was young and Amparo reported that although her parents didn’t read to her when she was young they often told her stories. I have observed that although Alicia does not express her ideas as well as Roberto (based

on interviews with case study students, see above) when speaking, it appears that this reading environment has helped her significantly, also. During home visits I observed her both reading and writing as a means of entertainment. Her teacher and parents reported that she expresses her ideas well when writing. Being in this environment where reading is done for pleasure has probably helped her to develop the “reading habit” which in turn has helped her develop her writing ability. The following segment from an interview with Alicia shows how she feels about reading:

1. Christopher: En qué otros lugares practicas la lectura, a parte de la casa y la escuela?
 2. Alicia: Mmm, en todo.
 3. Christopher: ¿En to...?
 4. Amparo (mother): Sí, es que luego vamos a algunas partes de las (xxx) y va leyendo.
 5. Christopher: Mmm, mmm
 6. Aldo(father): Hasta en el camión.
 7. Amparo (mother): Hay veces en el carro, en el camión o si estamos esperando alguna cosa, también.
 8. Christopher: Mmm, ¿Cuándo disfrutas, o, cuándo disfrutas más lectura lectura, cuando lees tú mismo o cuando te leen?
 9. Alicia: Mmm (sonríe)
 10. Christopher: ¿Qué prefieres leer tú mismo o que otra persona te lea?, ¿Prefieres los dos? (ríe)
 11. Alicia: (parece que contesta con un movimiento de la cabeza)
 12. Christopher: Los dos,
-
1. Christopher: Besides school and home, where do you like to read?
 2. Alicia: Mmm, everywhere.
 3. Christopher: Every...?
 4. Amparo (mother): Yes, wherever we go she reads.
 5. Christopher: mmm, mmm
 6. Aldo(father): Even on the bus.
 7. Amparo: She reads in the car, on the bus, and when we're waiting for something.
 8. Christopher: What do you enjoy more, reading alone or having someone read to you?
 9. Alicia: mmm (smiles)
 10. Christopher: Do you enjoy reading alone or having someone read to you? Do you prefer both? (laughs)

11. Alicia: (nods agreement)
 12. Christopher: Both.

Although it seems that Alicia may be “agreeing” with the research rather than thinking about the questions, Alicia says she likes to read wherever she is. Her parents confirm this saying that she reads while riding the bus and in the car. If she has to wait for something, she reads. She indicates that she likes to be read to and to read alone.

Figure 4.2 Example from Alicia’s comic book.



4.3.4 Isela

Isela’s reading was rated “high” by her teacher and Teague (2004) after three months of first grade. Observations done by Teague (2004) show that she works very hard in school, and her teacher reported at the end of the first grade that Isela enjoys reading. Her parents also told me that she and one of her sisters read novel, comic books, and short stories for pleasure in addition to what they read as part of their school work. Their mother enjoys reading novels and said that she reads about one book a week and that she would read more if she had the time. Their father says he never developed the habit of reading. He blames this on the school he attended when he was a child. He says he was required to do very little reading in school and as a result he doesn’t like to read. Isela’s mother reported that Isela’s grandmother read to the children when they were in

preschool. Alejandro's father, Isela's grandfather, has written about six books about the history of Mexico (see figure 4.3). Alejandro's parents live in a separate house on the same property, so although Isela's father doesn't like to read, she has benefited from being raised in a reading environment, even reading her grandfather's books.

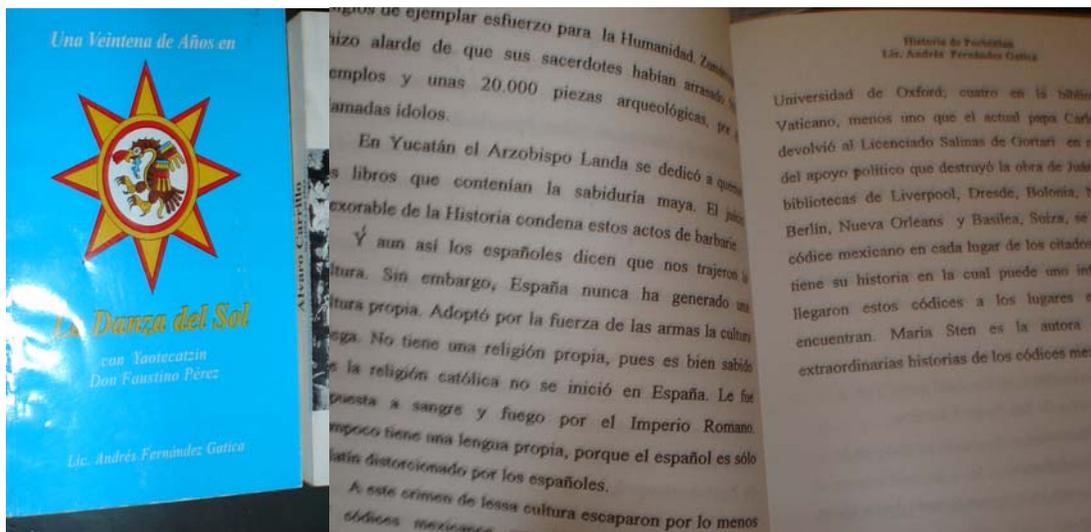


Figure 4.3 Example from one of Isela's grandfather's books

4.4.5 Esaú

Esaú was rated as a “low” reader by his teacher and Teague (2004) after completing three months of the first grade. By the end of the first grade his teacher reported that he likes to read novels and stories. His parents report that he reads very well. Indeed, at about the same time I visited the family in their home and asked Esaú to read to me and he read very fluently. His father reports that he reads the newspaper from time to time and that he likes to read magazines, and that he reads while at work if he has the time. His mother also says she likes to read magazines, “de todo (all kinds).” His mother reports that her parents read to her frequently when she was of preschool age and his father reports that his parents read to him only from time to time. They both report

that their parents bought them books only from time to time. Esaú says he reads books, magazine and other reading material only from time to time. His father agrees with this, but his mother says that he reads frequently. However, his mother says that her husband is the one that spends the most time with the children because of her work schedule (she works in a discount store, so she has to work several evenings a week), so this could account for the difference in opinion. The family's home is adjacent to Marilú's parents' home. Since both parents work they say they often leave written messages for Easú, even though the grandparents could relay messages. I have observed that there are few books in the home, so it doesn't seem that Esaú is being raised in a strong reading environment. Although he reads well he doesn't seem to express himself well when speaking (based on the case study student interview) and he reports that he only likes to write while in school.

4.3.6 Abril

Abril was reported to be a "medium" reader by her teacher and by Teague (2004) after three months of first grade. By the end of the first grade her teacher reported that she had progressed significantly and that she reads very well. Her mother reports that she is doing very well in the second grade; however, both parents report that her reading is average. Her first grade teacher said that she is quite the talker, something I never noticed during home visits. This could be an indication that I didn't get to know her as well as would have been desirable. Her parents tell me that reading and writing in the home is essentially limited to doing school work. Her father says that he doesn't read very much because reading gives him a headache. He says that school was difficult for

him because he didn't always get enough to eat. This could very well have had an effect on his learning and on his subsequent lack of interest in reading. Abril's mother doesn't read regularly either in spite of the fact that she attended two years of teacher training college. I have observed that the family has very few books and other reading material in the home.

4.3.7 Hector

Hector was rated "high" in reading by his first grade teacher and by Teague (2004) after three months of first grade. By the end of the first grade his teacher said that he was doing so well that she was able to give him extra reading assignments. His parents report that he's doing very well in second grade and that he reads for pleasure. His mother says he's very conscientious about doing his homework. The Vázquez home has many books and his father says he likes to read and that he does so daily. Hector's mother, however, doesn't read for pleasure. She says that her own parents supported her very little while she was in school, and she is currently attending a high school for adults. Hector seems to have benefited from living in a reading environment. He has acquired the habit of reading for pleasure and his father reports that, compared to his older brother, he can express himself very well and that he has "facilidad de vocabulario (talent for learning vocabulary)." Hector's father says that if you explain something to Hector he can repeat it back with many of the details. "Te explica algo y te lo explica muy detallado (he explains something and he explains it very thoroughly)."

4.3.8 David

David was also rated as a “high” reader by his teacher and Teague (2004) after three months of first grade. By the end of the first grade his teacher said that his reading was good, although she said he hadn’t progressed as much as she would have expected. His parents report that his reading ability is average for his age. His mother reports that she read to her children frequently when they were preschool age. Both his mother and stepfather say they are avid readers, but indicate that the three children don’t read very much. When I asked David if he likes to read he responded, “No mucho (not much).” Although he indicated that he likes to read suspense and action stories, it appears that David hasn’t acquired the reading habit. In spite of the fact that his parents report that they both read a lot, I observed very few books in the house. However, I never had occasion to go upstairs. There are probably other factors that affect David’s reading ability. One could be that his teacher says that his mother doesn’t support him. Also, it was my impression that Javier, his step-father, was not actively involved in the education of the children. The following excerpts from an interview indicate that David is a little ambivalent about writing:

1. Christopher: Mmm, ¿Escribes mucho o poco?
2. David: Mmm mucho
3. Christopher: ¿Quién te ayudo?
4. David: Mi mamá
5. Christopher: ¿Tienes buena ortografía?
6. David: (Tarda un poco en responder) no, más o menos.
7. Yo na’ mas con la “be” y la “de”
8. Christopher: ¿Qué escribes fuera de la escuela?
9. David: Pos hay veces que escribo cartas, mmm, nada más.
10. Christopher: ¿Te gusta escribir cuentos?
11. David: No he escrito ninguno.
12. Christopher: ¿Crees que es fácil escribir?
13. David: Nnno (tarda un poco en contestar).
14. Christopher: ¿Te gusta escribir?

15. David: Algunas veces.
 16. Christopher: ¿Por qué?
 17. David: Porqueee no sé, si no me aburriría
 18. Christopher: ¿Crees que tuuu letra está bien trazada?
 19. David: Mmm, no.
 20. Christopher: ¿Acerca de qué te gusta...?
 21. David: ¿Mande?
 22. Christopher: ¿Acerca de qué te gusta escribir?
 23. David: ¿Acerca de qué?
 24. Christopher: Mmju.
 25. David: De cómo me la pasé en la escuelaaa.
 26. Christopher: ¿Tareas?
 27. David: Aja.
 28. Christopher: ¿Qué más?
 29. David: Antes, usa... teníamos un diario dondeee ahí poníamos lo que hicimos en casa, en la escuela.
 30. Lila: ¿Y eso te gustaba?
 31. David: Si.

1. Christopher: Do you write a lot or a little?
 2. David: mmm a lot.
 3. Christopher: Who helps you?
 4. David: My mother.
 5. Christopher: Do you know how to spell well?
 6. David: (hesitates) no, more or less.
 7. David: I only confuse the “be” and the “de”.
 8. Christopher: Do you write outside of school?
 9. David: At times I write letters, nothing more.
 10. Christopher: Do you like to write stories?
 11. David: I’ve never written any.
 12. Christopher: Do you think it’s easy to write?
 13. David: No (He hesitates before he answers)
 14. Christopher: Do you like to write?
 15. David: Sometimes.
 16. Christopher: Why?
 17. David: Why? I don’t know. If I didn’t I’d be bored.
 18. Christopher: Do you think you have nice handwriting?
 19. David: mmm, no.
 20. Christopher: What do you like...?
 21. David: What?
 22. Christopher: What do you like to write about?
 23. David: What do I like to write about?
 24. Christopher: mmju.
 25. David: About what happened at school.
 26. Christopher: Homework?

27. David: aha.
28. Christopher: What else?
29. David: Before we had a diary where we wrote what we had done at home and in school.
30. Lila: You enjoyed doing that?
31. David: Yes.

Note that in line 30 his mother expresses surprise that he says he liked writing a diary. It could be that she is not in touch with his likes and dislikes as far as reading and writing are concerned in accord with what the teacher told me, or maybe he was answering according to what he thought I wanted to hear.

As Table 4.2 shows three out of four of the case study students who were rated as high readers after three months of first grade live in homes with a strong reading environment. The fourth student who is living in a strong reading environment was rated as high by the end of the first grade. Their parents encourage their children to read by buying them books that interest them and at least one of their parents reads regularly for pleasure. Also, a significant number of books were observed in the home. Three of these four students excel in both written and oral expression. This suggests that living in a reading environment has a positive effect on a child's academic development, as reported by Britto and Brook-Gunn (2001, p. 76) and Baker and Scher (2002, p. 265). See Chapter one.

Table 4.2 Reading Environment and Reading Level

	Reading environment in home see 4.2	Reading level after 3 months of first grade	Expresses ideas well orally ¹	Expresses ideas well in writing ²
Jaime	Low	Low	No	No
Hector	High	High	Yes	Yes
Alicia	High	Medium	No	Yes
David	Medium	High	Yes	No
Esaú	Medium	Low	No	No
Roberto	High	High	Yes	Yes
Isela	High	High	Yes	Yes
Abril	Low	Medium	No	Yes

¹Based on the judgment of researcher after conducting Case Study Student Interview (see appendix E).

²Based on parents' assessment of student's writing ability.

Buying reading material for their children, along with modeling literacy practices, is an important way parents provide a “reading environment” for their children, but as indicated in Table 4.3, there doesn't seem to be a relationship between whether their parents bought them reading material and whether or not they buy material for their children. This could be because the ability to buy reading materials is dependent on economic status. If the economic status of the participating parents is higher than that of their families of origin they would be in a better position to buy reading materials for their children. Conversely, families whose socio-economic status has declined may be in a position to buy fewer reading materials. Conversations with the families seem to indicate the middle-class families have increased their socio-economic status from that of their families of origin, with the exception of Andrea's family who stayed constant, and that the lower class families have stayed the same as their families of origin.

Table 4.3 How often do the participating parents buy reading material for their children?

	Father		Mother	
	Parents bought him books, etc.	Buys children book, etc.	Parents bought her books, etc.	Buys children book, etc.
Jaime	From time to time	Frequently ¹	Never	Frequently ¹
Hector	From time to time	From time to time	Never	Frequently
Alicia	From time to time	Frequently	I bought them myself	Frequently
David	Frequently	From time to time	From time to time	Frequently
Easú	From time to time	From time to time	From time to time	From time to time
Roberto	NA	NA	From time to time	Frequently
Isela	From time to time	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
Abril	From time to time	From time to time	From time to time	From time to time

¹All three children report that their parents never buy them reading materials.

4.4 Reading level of case study students

As Table 4.4 shows, when one compares the case study students' assessed reading level after three months of first grade with that of the parents' assessment after seven months of first grade, only two of those students who were originally assessed as average or low showed improvement. Three who were originally assessed as high stayed high-level readers and one who was originally assessed as high went to average. The parents' assessments tended to be consistent with the miscue analysis results, although there are some differences as discussed in chapter three.

Of course, each case study student is an individual and is affected by different factors and by their individual rate of development. It could be a learning disability is the

reason that Jaime hasn't progressed or it could be he was affected by the absent father while he was from age 3 to age 6. Hector started with a high assessment and continues to do well which is probably due to natural ability and to the support he gets from his parents. The fact that the miscue analysis scores were average/low could be attributed to the fact that he is a very timid child and was too nervous to do the reading well. Alicia started as average but has progressed to a high assessment which is probably due to living in a family where reading is valued. David started high and is now rated as average which could be attributable to a lack of support at home. Esaú started as low and has progressed to high. This could be because he develops slower than most children and because his parents help him with his school work. Roberto started high and has remained high which is probably due to natural ability and to the support he gets from his mother and grandparents. Isela started high and has continued high which is probably due to natural ability and to the benefits of living in a reading environment. Abril started average and has continued average. This could be due to not having encouragement and example from her parents to read other material in addition to her school textbooks. It is important to remember the classifications of high, medium, and low are not conclusive, but are based on a several measures: first grade teacher's assessment, parents' assessment, miscue analysis, and my own observations.

Table 4.4 Comparison of Case Study Students' Reading Levels over a 1½ year period.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Case Study Student	Reading level after 3 months of first grade ¹	Teacher at end of first grade	Parents' assessment of reading level after seven months of second grade father's-mother's	Column 2 compared with 4. ²	Miscue analysis ³ Oral accucay/ compre- hension	Students' self assessment after seven months of second grade
Jaime	Low	Low	Low-Low	Same	Low/Low	Low
Hector	High	High	High-Average	Same	Ave/Low	High
Alicia	Average	High	High-High	Up	Ave/Ave	High
David	High	Average	Average-Average	Down	Low/High	Average
Esau	Low	High	High-High	Up	High/Ave	Average
Roberto	High	High	NA-High	Same	Low/High	Average
Isela	High	High	High-High	Same	High/High	High
Abril	Average	High	Average-Average	Same	Ave/Ave	Average

¹ Teague and first grade teacher

² Reading assessment after three months of first grade compared to parents assessment after seven months of second grade.

³ Conducted after seven months of second grade

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 summarize some of the views of the case study student regarding their reading and writing practices and preferences. All of those who indicated they didn't always understand what they read either started with an average or low assessment (Alica and Esuú) or they haven't progressed in their reading ability (Jaime and David). Starting with a low assessment could indicate that they develop slower than most children. As noted above, Jaime may suffer from a learning disability and David's lack of progress could be a result of a lack of support from his parents. Two of those who prefer to be read to (Jaime and David) are the ones who have not progressed in their reading ability. Although Abril indicates she prefers to read alone she also indicates that

she only reads her school textbooks at home, which could explain why her reading level is rated as average after seven month of second grade.

As far as writing is concerned, all students except Jaime indicated that they like to write, and all but Jaime and Esaú indicated that they write a lot. However, when asked if they prefer to write in school or at home, all but Alicia indicated they prefer to write at school, a possible indication that they haven't yet become comfortable with writing and that they don't do it as a form of entertainment. (Jaime says he prefers to write at home. This could be because of his limited writing ability and because his classmates make fun of him because he is less advanced than they are in reading and writing.) A common activity for primary-age children is to write stories. It appears that only Alicia has developed her writing ability enough to do so as a form of entertainment.

Table 4.5 Case Study Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

Case Study Student	Likes to read	Understand what s/he reads	Prefers to	Reads comic books	Miscue analysis ¹ Oral accucay/ compre- hension
Jaime	Yes	Sometimes	Be read to	No	Low/Low
Hector	Yes	Yes	Read alone	Yes	Ave/Low
Alicia	Yes	Sometimes	Be read to and to read alone	Yes	Ave/Ave
David	Yes	Sometimes	Be read to	Yes	Low/High
Esaú	Yes	More or less	Read alone	Yes	High/Ave
Roberto	Yes	Yes	Read alone	Yes	Low/High
Isela	Yes	Yes	Read alone	No	High/High
Abril	Yes	Yes	Read alone	No	Ave/Ave

¹ Conducted after seven months of second grade

Table 4.6 Case Study Students' Attitudes Toward Writing

Case Study Student	Likes to Write	Is it easy ?	Has written letters	Has writ. notes	Has writ. e-mail messages	Likes to write stories	Prefer to write in school or at home	Writes a lot or a little
Jaime	At times	No	No	No	No	Yes	At home	Some
Hector	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	At school	A lot
Alicia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	At home	A lot
David	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	At school	A lot
Esau	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	At school	A little
Roberto	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NA	A lot
Isela	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	At school	A lot
Abril	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	At school	A lot

The data presented in this section tend to confirm that a home reading environment contributes toward the children having “better reading skills” (Britto-Gunn (2001, p. 76), but they also point to the fact that different factors affect each child differently.

4.5 Parents' concerns about their children's education.

A common theme among all parents was that they wanted their children to learn to read and write well so as to have a better future. They all believe that learning to read and write is an important foundation to a good education. All the parents said they very

much want their children to go to college. The two fathers that have jobs that require good communication skills (teacher, rural planner) were concerned that their children learn to communicate well. On the other hand, the parents who work long hours want their children to have a good education so they won't have as hard a life when they are adults. All parents see learning English as a way of opening doors to a better future. What follows is some of the concerns that the parents expressed to me during conversations and interviews.

Jaime's father is concerned that his children learn to read well so they can learn about other peoples and countries. He says if they can read and write well they can communicate with people in other places by way of the internet and exchange ideas and opinions. Elvira wants them to have an opportunity to have the education that she didn't have. They want their children to go to the university and find good jobs while they are young, because it is their belief that in Mexico if a person does not find a good job while he is young he will be stuck in a dead-end job.

When I asked Hector's father what he believes constitutes a good education, his response was that memorizing shouldn't be the emphasis in school, but that the emphasis should be on application of knowledge and on learning to write and give presentations. He says he wants his sons to have what he describes as "a good quality of life" and, in order to attain that, he thinks they should study "a master's degree, a doctor's degree," because a bachelor's degree is not enough in today's world.

Alicia's parents are concerned about the quality of their girls' education. Aldo says that he wants an education for his girls that permits them to develop their communication, analytical and critical thinking skills. He says that they chose to send

their girls to a private school for this reason. They liked the philosophy of Centro Telpochcalli better than that of the private school that the girls attended during the second year of the study. They say that the current school is run like a business, but it is the best option. They say that the philosophy of Centro Telpochcalli was inclusive of all persons: those of limited resources, indigenous persons, and those with handicaps, and that this is important to them because they want the children to learn to respect all persons. They believe that public schools in the area in which they live are of low quality. Aldo says that one reason is that the teachers are poorly paid and they often have to have another job, so they have very little time for lesson planning. Amparo said it is important to her that her children learn English. She said that this is one of the reasons that she is studying English herself, so that she can help them with their English.

David's parents want their children to study in order to have a better future, which is a common theme among the parents who participated in the study. David's mother is concerned that he doesn't always do his homework and that he has to exert himself more in the public school than he did at Centro Telpochcalli. The family has a computer and the children occasionally use the internet as an aid in doing their homework. However, Javier says the internet makes it too easy for children to do their school assignments. He says it was better when they had to go to the library to do research. He says:

La lectura es la computadora de la universidad de la vida. O sea la lectura te ayuda a conocer, te ayuda la ortografía, tu gramática, la lectura. (reading is the computer of the university of life. Reading helps you to know, it helps your spelling, your grammar.

I asked Javier if there is a difference between the way children learn literacy in Mexico and Cuba he said yes, that the Cuban system is better and that Cuba spends more per child than does Mexico. When I asked him for examples of how the Cuban system was better he was unable to provide any.

Esaú's parents are concerned that he is not learning as much in public school as he did in Centro Telpochcalli. They say that he and his sister who is in first grade are learning very slowly. Marilú says that nowadays times are harder and people are better educated, so it's important that their children study hard so as to have a better future.

Roberto's mother, Mariela, expressed concern about the bilingual program that her son is attending. This is the first year the school has had a bilingual program in which the students are taught part time in English and part time in Spanish. She said the teachers are under so much pressure to teach the students English quickly that they can not teach it well. Mariela said the students are just getting to the point where they speak, read, and write Spanish well, so the teachers should be a little calmer as far as English is concerned and let the students learn at their own pace. As previously stated, she would also like to have Roberto learn Nahuatl, an indigenous language, so that they he learns something of his heritage. Mariela and Roberto have been attending an informal study group in which she says they mainly read poems in Nahuatl.

Isela's parents say that Isela and her older sister have done very well in school. In fact they were getting 9.5-9.8 on a ten point scale in all their subjects. However, Alejandro and Rocio were concerned about their son who is 12 years old. Alejandro said his son was not doing well in his first year of middle school. They said this was because he did not exert himself, because the school he was attending then had higher academic

standards than Centro Telpochcalli, and because the transition between primary and middle school is always difficult. Also, their youngest daughter, who is four, was attending a special education school because she suffers from cerebral paralysis. They said that the paralysis is slight and that there is hope that she will be completely rehabilitated.

Abril's parents don't want their children to have to work as hard, when they are adults, as their parents do now. As already stated, Abril's father, Jose Luis, works seven days a week and doesn't get home until 8:00 at night. Nohemí also works very hard as their home doesn't have the modern conveniences that many people have. For example, I have seen Nohemí wash the family's clothes in a large tub outside. They said they want their children to study hard so that they have a better life. Another concern was that when Centro Telpochcalli closed their children no longer had art, music, English and computers classes. However, they have found another school where the two older children are studying English and computer skills for four hours a week.

Although all parents see learning to read and write as a way to have a better material future, they also want their children's education to include such things as the ability to exchange ideas with other persons, the ability to apply knowledge, respect for all humans, the ability to express themselves through art and music, and the learning about their cultural heritage.

4.6 Fathers' experiences that affected the view of literacy

As discussed in Chapter One, the experiences that children have regarding literacy can effect how they view literacy as adults. Views toward literacy reflect the groups of

which they were a part (Vyagotsky, as sighted by Pérez, 1998a, p. 26). Whether or not the school literacy was greatly different from the home literacy is another factor that affects one's view of literacy (Williams, 203, p. 22). Also, parents and teacher attitudes and beliefs affect how children come to view literacy (Bennet, Weigel and Martin (2002, pp. 16.17).

The fathers who participated in this study had a wide range of experiences with literacy while they were young. Some were given encouragement by their families to read regularly, while others say their parents never read to them or bought them books. Even though some had negative experiences, they still see literacy as very important for their children's future. Two of the fathers reported they don't like to read, but at the same time they want their children to be readers.

Juan, Jaime's father, said that all his experiences in school were good. He said he has always been open to new ways of doing things and that this has enriched his life. He gave the example of the job he had at the time. He said if someone came along and showed him a better way of repairing tires he would be willing to adopt it, if indeed it was a better way.

Ricardo, Hector's father, said that before he started school his older brother taught him to read. He said that his brother used an authoritarian manner to teach him, but in spite of this he did learn to read. I asked him if he was bored during the first grade since he already knew how to read and he replied that no it had just made it easier. He also says that when he started his current job he didn't have a big vocabulary and couldn't express himself well. He says he remedied this problem by reading extensively. He says this helped him to increase his vocabulary and to be able to express himself better.

Alicia's father, Aldo, said he had negative experiences in middle school. He gave an example of a literature teacher who required that the students read aloud and if they made mistakes the teacher would laugh at and make fun of the students. He said middle school students are at an age particularly susceptible to this type of treatment, and that it harmed the students, including himself. However, he said in high school he had more positive experiences. He said he had opportunities to express his own ideas in writing and that he enjoyed this along with the freedom to choose his own reading material.

David's father said that his father was an avid reader and that by example his father inculcated this love of reading in him. He said his older sister was also an avid reader and this played a role in his becoming an avid reader himself. He said he didn't have toys to play with when he was a child. Instead, he had books to read. Since he is from Cuba I asked him if Cuban children typically do a lot of reading. He responded that many children, but not all, read for pleasure, many more than in Mexico.

Esau's father says that he had bad experiences:

A mi nada mas me pusieron a leer frente a los compañeros del salón de clase ... entonces ... yo empecé a leer ... pero no hacía yo las pautas que se debían de hacer ... yo leía todo de corrido ... como le decimos ... sin hacer, puntos, sin hacer comas, entonces ni yo mismo entendía lo que estaba yo leyendo ... y la maestra me llamó la atención delante de todos ... y pues fue una mala experiencia porque ... no supe leer en ese entonces ... entonces ella ya me explicó como es que debía yo de leer. (My teacher had me read in front of the class, and I began to read. But I didn't pause like I should have; I read very rapidly. As we say, without periods, comas. Even I didn't understand what I was reading. And the teacher scolded me in front of everyone. It was a bad experience because I didn't know how to read. She then explained to me how I should have read).

He also says he also had a teacher that hit him and other students with a ruler if their writing wasn't up to her expectations. He says he is glad his teachers taught him how to read and write correctly, but he doesn't think children should be treated in these ways.

Isela's father says that he never learned to love reading because in the public school he attended there was no discipline so he didn't have to exert himself to learn. He says he was spoiled and not required to learn to read well.

Abril's father says that to:

ir con el estómago vacío porque también el estudiar es un trabajo para un niño y luego va uno con el estómago vacío y luego a la hora de receso de recreo no tiene uno ni para una paleta, na' mas ver que los muchachos están ahí comiendo y uno ahí sin nada de nada, si pues eso si me afectó bastante. (to go school without having eaten anything. Studying is a job for a child. When one goes with an empty stomach and at recess time doesn't have any money, not even for a lollipop, and sees the others with something to eat, and me without anything. Yes, that affected me a lot).

Two of the fathers had negative experiences reading aloud in class. They were criticized in front of their peers for not displaying specific "types of behavior" while reading aloud. On the other hand, learning to enjoy silent reading as a means of entertainment was seen as a positive experience by some and as a goal to be reached (for) by others, especially for their children. Some of the fathers, especially Isela's, put the primary responsibility on the school, rather than the parents, to see that the children develop the habit of reading for pleasure.

4.7 Fathers' attitudes to reading and writing.

The following comments made by the fathers who participated in the study show the importance they put on literacy. Not only do they see it as a way for the children to have a better future, they also see it as an important way of improving the quality of one's life. They see it as a way of communication with diverse persons, as a way of expressing oneself, as a way of developing one's imagination, etc. They also see literacy as an important foundation on which mankind's advances are built. It is important that parents

have a positive view toward literacy as Potts and Paull (1995, p. 168) posit: “Educating children might not have long-term effects if the messages in the home do not support their learning.” Although all the parents seem to have a positive attitude toward literacy, I did find that not all parents encouraged their children to become readers. This could be because their comments were a reflection of the communities’ attitudes toward literacy and/or because they aren’t aware of the importance of their role in guiding their children’s literacy development.

Jaime’s father expressed his view of the importance of reading and writing in the following comments.

“son dicen comienza uno tal vez hablar deee otro lugar ... por medio de la lectura porque pues uno cuando va ir o sea no no llegamos has-hasta ya. (Reading is a way of knowing about other parts of the world that one may never have the opportunity of visiting.)”

“Pues, yo pienso que es para que se supe para tener una buena comunicación ... con diversas personas. (Reading and writing are a way of having better communication with diverse persons.)” “[Si no fuera ni lectura ni escritura] nadie se podría comunicar. (Without reading and writing we wouldn’t be able to communicate.)”

Hector’s father showed a similar view but adds the importance of being able to express oneself well. *“Pues, casi toda la información que necesitas hoy en día es a través de la por la lectura. (Almost all the information that we need today is in the form of reading.)” “Estamos en la época de la información y el que nooo tiene información ahora pues tiene pocas oportunidades en la vida. (We are in the information age and he who has no information has very few opportunities in life.)” “[Escritura] es una manera una me una manera de expresarse. (Writing is a way of expressing oneself.)” “[Sin lectura y escritura] no sería un mundo desarrollado ..., y sería muy difícil comunicarse.*

(If we didn't have reading and writing we would have an undeveloped world, and it would be very difficult to communicate.)”

Alicia's father believes literacy is important not only academically but also socially.

Bueno...yo creo que (tose) teniendo una buena lectura aunque no hayas tenido un buen maestro puedes tener muchas ventajas porque ee siempre los libros serán ... cofres de información. (If a child has learned to read well, he'll have advantages even if he has a bad teacher, because books will always be ... *coifres* de information).

La lectura siempre la hemos considerado que es un placer no porque la in...te permite desarrollar la imaginación, te permite contrastar tus pensamientos con muchas gentes...este es...creo que es algo una de las cosas que una actividad muy muy que humaniza la lectura realmente humaniza. Si todo mundo leyéramos tendríamos un mundo más humanizado. (We've always considered reading to be a pleasure because it permits you to develop your imagination. I believe that it is an activity that humanizes people, because of the interchange of ideas. If everyone read we would have a more humane world.)

On the other hand, David's step-father emphasized literacy's importance for academic success.

Yo considero que [la lectura es importante], pues porque lo ayuda a tener...lo ayuda a tener mejor fraseología, los enseña a tener mejor aritmética, mejor gramática. (Reading is important because it helps one have better phraseology; it teaches one to do arithmetic better and have better grammar.)

“*[La escritura] pues es una forma de comunicación, es la forma más antigua de comunicarse.* (Writing is a form of communication. It is the oldest form of communication.)”

Esau's father stressed literacy as the foundation for the world as it exists today.

[Si viviéramos en un mundo donde nadie leyera ni escribiera] no sería un mundo. no habría comunicación; no habría nada.... (If we didn't have reading and writing there wouldn't be a world. There wouldn't be communication; there wouldn't be anything.)

“*[La escritura] es muy importante.* (Writing is very important.)”

Isela's father emphasized communication and passing on knowledge to future generations:

La lectura y escritura son la base fundamental del conocimiento, si no sabe leer o no sabe escribir, pos el conocimiento no, no se queda. (Reading and writing are the foundation of knowledge. If one doesn't know how to read or write, knowledge would not be available for future generations.)

[Sin la lectura y la escritura] no podríamos comunicarnos más que a palabras y a corta distancia, verdad, porque la escritura camina y pues la palabra pues nada más es en corto. (Without reading and writing we wouldn't be able to communicate except with the spoken word and only with those who are nearby, because writing can be sent great distances and the spoken only short distances.)

Abril's father talked about the importance of literacy for learning and self-expression.

¿La lectura es importante? a pus si para saber en cómo desenvolvemos en el vocabulario y conocer las un poco más de lo que de lo que uno no sabe. (Is reading important? Yes, so that we can express ourselves with a larger vocabulary and more correctly and learn a little more than one would know otherwise.)

Si, [la escritura es importante]. A parte sirve para muchas cosas ... para mandar mensajes, para escribir lo que uno siente como son las cartitas, entonces si es muy esencial saber escribir, firmar y todo eso. (Writing is important. Besides serving for many things, such as sending messages, one can write how one feels in letters. It's very essential to know how to write, to be able to sign and all that.)

The fathers in this study seem to view reading and writing not only as an important part of the fabric of society, for academic, technological, and social advancement, but also as a way for their children to have a better future. It's interesting that even those who say they do not read regularly, including Abril's and Marco Antonio's fathers, say that it is important to know how to read in order to know more about the world.

4.8 Mothers' attitudes toward reading and writing.

The mothers who participated in the current study expressed similar beliefs about reading and writing. They also mention world knowledge, communication, and reading for pleasure.

Jaime's mother sees literacy as an important way of knowing about the world.

“[Si viviremos en un mundo donde nadie leyera ni escribiera] sería fatal. pero no abriríamos no seríamos más allá de lo que está ahí. (If we didn't have reading and writing it would be tragic. We wouldn't know anything about the world. We'd only know what's happening in our own little world.)”

“[La escritura es importante porque] abrirse puertas. (Learning to write is important because it opens doors.)”

Alicia's mother sees reading and writing as a source of enjoyment and as the foundation for human progress. *“En serio, tengo que estar leyendo, o sea, porque me gusta, me gusta mucho. (Seriously, I have to read, because I very much like to read.)”*

“Sin la escritura el progreso humano hubiera sido mucho más lento. (Without writing human progress would have been slowed greatly.)”

Isela's mother also sees reading as a mean of personal enjoyment and as the foundation of today's world . When asked what she would devote more attention, reading or writing, if she could return to school, she replied: *“Yo me dedicaría a las dos, a mí me encanta leer y escribir. (I would devote equal time to both reading and writing. I love to read and write.)”* When I asked what it would be like if we lived in a world where no one read or wrote she responded:

Pues la única manera de comunicarnos sería a señas. No, no habría escuelas, no habría nada ... Ni libros, ni revistas ni nada por el estilo, Sería muy diferente el mundo. (The only way to communicate would be signs. We wouldn't have schools, or books, or magazines or anything of this type or anything. It would be a completely different world.)

David's mother very simply said: "*Me gusta leer de todo.* (I like to read everything.)"

Esau's mother sees literacy as an aid to personal development:

La lectura nos ayuda mucho ... en podernos expresar un poco mas, ayuda a relacionarse mas con la gente, aprendemos cosas, podemos leer el periódico, las revistaaaas, y se entera uno de mas cosas que pasan. (Reading helps us a lot to be able to express ourselves a little more. It helps us to relate more with other people and learn things. We can read the newspaper, magazines; one finds out more of the things that happen.)

When asked what she would devote more attention, reading or writing, if she could return to school.

A ambas, porque si sabemos ... eh ... leer, pues lógico que vamos a saber escribir ... igual si sabemos escribir, vamos a saber leer ... yo creo que las dos son muy importantes ... (Both because if we know how to read, then it's logical that we will know how to write and if we know how to write we'll know how to read. I think they're both very important.)

Roberto's mother also sees reading and writing as important to personal development.

Considere que es muy importante" la lectura "porque es la única razón, digo la forma más bien que te hace verte a ti mismo como en cuestiones de cultura o de ortografía, redacción pues todo lo que involucra este tener ... saber leer. (Reading is very important because it is the only way to see yourself in matters of culture or spelling, writing. Everything that is involved is to have ... to know how to read").

Sí, considero que es muy importante" la escritura "por qué porque pues es otro lenguaje, te da oportunidad de expresarte mejor, entre más escribes. (I consider writing to be very important because it is another language. It gives you the opportunity to express yourself better, the more you write.)

[Si viviéramos en un mundo donde nadie leyera ni escribiera] pues pienso que sería muy lamentable, seríamos muy incultos y muy mediocres también. (If we lived

in a world where no read or wrote I think it would be lamentable. We would be very unrefined and very mediocre also.)

Abril's mother sees reading as a survival skill and as a way to make life more interesting.

Si no sabemos leer fácil también nos engaña la gente, no? y si no leemos pues no, puede haber muchos problemas por eso. (If we don't know how to read people can cheat us ... if we can't read it will cause a lot of problems.)

Porque hoy en la actualidad es lo que se pide si no hay estudios no hay trabajo no hay este pues si muchas puertas se abren. (These days it's required. If one doesn't study there's no job. Studying opens many doors.)

“Si no leyéramos pues si nada más viviríamos así la vida sería muy monótona. (If we didn't read we'd only exist; life would be very monotonous.)”

Again even the mothers who say they don't read very much see literacy as important for knowing more about the world around them. They also see it as a foundation of world progress and as a way for their children to develop and have a better future.

4.9 Reading to children.

According to a study done by Senechal and LeFevre (2001, p. 50) “story book” reading has a beneficial effect on children's acquisition of vocabulary. Of the seven fathers who participated in the current study only two report having read to their children frequently during their preschool years. The other five say they read to their preschool children only from time to time. However, of the eight mothers participating in the study five report reading to their children frequently during their preschool years. Apparently, the job of reading to their preschool children is seen as primarily the mother's responsibility in six of the eight families; however, it is interesting to note that one of the

mothers reports that she never read to her children during their preschool years. Of the four families that provide a strong reading environment for their children, only two report that at least one of the parents read to their children frequently during their preschool years. One of the two case study children who express themselves well both orally and in writing was read to frequently during the preschool years and the other only from time to time. Five of the case study children were rated as high readers by at least one of their parents, and four of these were read to frequently by at least one parent. The two rated as average readers by their parents were read to from time to time, so there appears that children do benefit from having their parents read to them before they start the first grade.

Table 4.7 Difference between how often fathers and mothers read to their preschool children

Case Study Student - parents' assessment of reading level Father's-Mother's	Father		Mother	
	Parents read to him in preschool years	Read to children during their preschool years	Parents read to her in preschool years	Read to children during their preschool years
Jaime Low-Low	From time to time	From time to time	Never	Frequently
Hector High-Average	Never	From time to time	Never	Never
Alicia High-High	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
David Average-Average	Frequently	From time to time	Never	Frequently
Esaú High-High	From time to time	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
Roberto NA-High	NA	NA	Frequently	Frequently
Isela High-High	Frequently	From time to time	Never	From time to time
Abril Average-Average	Never	From time to time	Never	From time to time

Two of the fathers and five of the mothers report that their parents never read to them when they were young; whereas, two of the father and five of the mothers report reading to their children frequently during the preschool years. There seems to be an inverse relationship between these two factors. This could also be an indication that the parents in this study have more time to read to their children and more financial resources to buy them books, than their parents had. Hector's father, who says his parents never read to him, makes this interesting comment regarding his childhood:

a mí si me hubiera gustado mucho queee que mis papás mee leyeran cuentos, o sea, hay libros que nunca leyeron conmigo, cualquier cosa hubiera sido bueno ¿no?, pero los cuentos de niños sonnn una bonita experiencia, eee, de niño sí me hubiera gustado mucho y que me compraran el tipo de lectura queee a mí me gustaba, a mí me gustaba mucho laaa eee encontraba revistas de tipo policiaco, me gustaban mucho esas pero era las que yo encontraba nunca mis papás me dijeron qué libro quieres que te compre o así. (I would have liked it if my parents had read stories to me. There are books that they never read to me. Any book would have been good. No? Children's stories are a beautiful experience. I would have liked it very much if they would have bought me books that I liked. I liked looking for detective magazines, but my parents never told me that they would buy me whatever book I wanted.)

Not only does Hector's father see reading to children and buying them books as important for the literacy development, he also sees them as a ways to enrich their childhood. As he says, "*Los cuentos de niños son una bonita experiencia. (Children's stories are a beautiful experience.)*" Although he expresses these sentiments, he reports only reading to his sons in their preschool years and buying them books from time to time. However, I did observe a lot of books in their home.

Although seven parents participating in this study report that their parents never read to them when they of were preschool age, only one reports not having read to their children before they started school. This suggests that these parents see the value in this literacy activity.

4.10 Help with homework.

Lacasa, Reina and Albuquerque (2002, p. 61) report that it is beneficial for parents to help their children with school work. As discussed in chapter one Mexican-American fathers believe that helping their children to learn to read and write is important (Ortiz, 2000). Indeed, all parents participating in the study seemed to agree that helping children with homework is important and all reported giving their children at least some help with homework, although some seemed more concerned with seeing that it was completed rather than recognizing their roles as supplementary teachers (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill, 1991, p. 127). However, as indicated by Table 4.8 there doesn't seem to be a correlation between whether or not the case study student expresses ideas well both orally and in writing and the frequency s/he receives help with homework. There may be an inverse relationship between the amount of help the parents received and the amount of help they give their children. Four fathers and four mothers reported giving more help with homework than they received from their parents. This could indicate that they believe that they would have benefited from having been helped by their parents and that they want their children to receive this benefit. However, two fathers, Andrea's and David's, indicated that they gave their children less help with homework than they received from their parents. Andrea's father is away from home much of the time so he's unable to spend time helping with homework. Also, the fact that Javier, although an avid reader, doesn't seem to be involved in his step-children's education could explain why he gives less help with homework than he received from his parents.

Table 4.8 Help with homework

	Expresses ideas well both orally and in writing	Father		Mother	
		Parents helped with school work	Helps children with school work	Parents helped with school work	Helps children with school work
Jaime	No	From time to time	Frequently	Never	Frequently
Hector	Yes	Never	From time to time	Never	Frequently
Alicia	No	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
David	No	Frequently	From time to time ¹	From time to time	From time to time
Esaú	No	From time to time	Frequently	Frequently	Frequently
Roberto	Yes	NA	NA	From time to time	From time to time
Isela	Yes	Frequently	From time to time ²	From time to time	Frequently
Abril	No	Never	Frequently	Never	Frequently

¹ Step-father

² Limited because of work schedule.

The following paragraphs discuss how the parents in each family handles helping their children with homework and what the children in the family say as to how often their parents help them.

As stated previously Jaime's parents help with difference aspects of their children's schoolwork. His mother helps him and his younger sister with reading and writing and Juan helps them with arithmetic, since he considers this to be his forte. However, Juan indicated that he did spend time with his children while they were learning to read, helping them to read syllable by syllable. Juan expressed frustration that he can't help his children understand Spanish grammar. He says this is because he doesn't understand it himself. Elvira says she reviews the children's homework before

she signs the *libreta* indicating that they have done their homework. Elvira doesn't feel competent enough to help her eldest daughter who is in the fifth grade, since Elvira finished only the second grade. As stated earlier Mara, Jaime's older sister, reads well and her parents attribute this to the preschool she attended, so the quality of help that he and his younger sister get from their parents because of limited education may be a factor in their slow start in learning to read and write. The younger children say that their parents help them frequently with their school work, and the oldest daughter says that they help her from time to time.

Hector parent's both spend time helping their children with their school work. Hector's father, Ricardo, says they mainly help by reviewing the work after the children have finished, "*los corregimos que lo escriban bien y si no lo tienen que volver a hacer.*" (we make sure it is correct and that they don't have to do it again.)" Ricardo is anxious to have his children learn English, as are all the parents in the study. For this reason, he reports that he spends time with his two younger sons doing exercises with them, although his own knowledge of English is limited. Hector and his older brother report that their parents help them with their homework from time to time.

Figure 4.4 Ricardo and Alma help their two younger children with their homework.



Alicia's father reports that all three children learned to read in the first grade. He partly attributes this to the help they got at home. Before they could read he and Amparo read to the girls. After they had heard a story enough times they could pretend they were reading it although they were reciting it from memory. He believes that this served as a stimulus for them to want to learn to read. He says that he and Amparo always helped them with their homework. If they didn't understand something they explained it and then gave them extra exercises so they would learn it well. All three girls report that their parents help them with homework frequently.

David's mother says that she and her husband don't help with homework except to answer specific questions. David's step-father says that they review it after the children have finished to see that the spelling is correct and to see "what is done well and what isn't." David's mother says that at times David tells her that he doesn't have homework even though he does, so it doesn't get done. All three children report that their parents help them with homework from time to time.

Both of Esaú's parents say they help their children with their homework and that they spend extra time helping them with the spelling and pronunciation of new words. They say they have the children read stories and their school books aloud. Even when they are driving down the street, they have the children try to read signs and advertisements. Esaú's father says that he enjoys helping the children with their homework, because he is reminded of things he learned in school that he has forgotten. He says he relearns things that were hard for him when he was in school. He says, "*Es bonito volverlo a recordar.* (It's nice to remember.)" He says that since there were nine children in his family and both his parents had to work very hard, his parents didn't have

very much time to help their children with their school work. Marilú had a similar experience. She says her mother would tell her brothers and sisters:

'A ver hijos... vamos a hacer la tarea...' ella se ponía a hacer su "que hacer" y nos decía apúrenle a la tarea! Ya nada, nada más nos la revisaba ... y ya ... porque siempre tenía que lavar o siempre tenía que hacer comida... porque éramos muchos. ('Do your homework children.' Then she would do her housework and tell us to hurry with our homework. She only checked our work, because she always had to wash or make our meals, because we had a big family.)

Both Marcelo and Marilú are happy to be in a position where they can help their children with their school work. The two older children report that their parents help them with their homework frequently.

Roberto's mother says she and her parents support him in doing his homework, but that they only do so from time to time. She says he is doing very well in school. She says that she learned a lot about teaching from her mother, a primary school teacher, that she was able to apply while helping Roberto. She showed me a number of examples of exercises that she has Roberto do at home to help reinforce his learning. Roberto says that his mother helps him with homework from time to time.

Isela's father reports that his wife, Rocio, helps the children with the homework most of the time because he's away from home so much because of his job. He says,

Bueno, de hecho la que les ayuda es ella, y es corrigiendo la ortografía cómo hacer las letras mayor, algunos ejercicios de caligrafía que les pone, cuando no es la correcta. (In fact, the one that helps them is her (his wife), correcting spelling and homework ... making sure their writing is legible and giving them writing exercises when there are having problems.)

Two of the children say their parents help them frequently and one says her parents help her from time to time.

Abril's parents say they help their children with homework, but it is Nohemí that does it most of the time because Jose Luis works 12 hours a day, seven days a week. She

says she has the children read to her while she is working and she corrects any mistakes that they make. She says that before they went to preschool she taught them the basics of reading and writing, so that it was easier for them when they started preschool. She also says that when they were learning to read in school, she gave them additional exercises to help them along. Both Abril and her brother say that their parents help them with school work from time to time.

Figure 4.5 Abril's father helping her with her school work



4.11 English

All families expressed their desire to have their children learn English. The primary reason given was so their children would have better employment opportunities when they are adults. They also mention that it is important to know English because there is so much information that is only available in English, especially on the internet. Some of the parents also mention travel to other countries as an important reason for learning English.

Jaime's father spent over three years working in the United States and returned about two years ago. Although his English is very limited, he did speak to me in English

from time to time. After a sentence or two he always reverted to Spanish. The three children studied English while they were attending Centro Telpochcalli and continue to do so for two hours a week in an after school program offered at Centro Telpochcalli.

Axel's father, Ricardo, says that English "*es importante, prescindible. No se puede evitarlo. Cualquiera trabajo le van a requerir.* (is important. One can't avoid it. Any job is going to require it.)" Ricardo has studied English but he says he doesn't speak it fluently. He never said anything to me in English during my visits to the family's home. Ricardo and Alma visited Europe for two weeks during the summer of 2004. They say that they were able to communicate in English with quite a bit of effort. "*Bueno, es el idioma universal.* (Indeed, it is the universal language)". Ricardo has his own theory as to the best way to learn a second language. He says that one should learn words for all the things that surround you while you are at home. After you have mastered them you can then start learning words for things outside the home and expand to other places, such as school, etc. When I first met the family Ricardo was teaching Hector English using flash cards with household words. Ricardo said that he tried to make it a game so that Hector would enjoy learning. During one visit he demonstrated how he was teaching Hector. He told me to correct him if his pronunciation wasn't correct. I corrected them a few times on their pronunciation. For example, they pronounced "cup" as "coop." At the time Hector had a few hours of English a week at Centro Telpochcalli. Hector and his older brother Alberto are now attending a bilingual school. Ricardo expressed concern to me that the textbook was too simplistic and that his sons weren't learning English as quickly as they should be. However, he also said that this was the first year that the school has had a bilingual program and that he should be

patient. Alma is studying English on her own, because she needs to be able to pass an English exam before she can graduate from the adult high school she is attending. On one occasion I helped her with one of the lessons she was studying. Her knowledge of English was very limited.

Alicia's parents both say it is important to learn English because there is a lot of information that comes in English, but not in Spanish. The three girls studied English at Centro Telpochcalli and continue to do so at the private school they are now attending. Aldo indicates that he knows very little English and that he isn't interested in studying it; however, Amparo is studying English at a government training agency for three hours a day, five days a week. She gives several reasons as to why she wants to learn English. She loves to read and says that many novels come out in English first and she doesn't like having to wait a year before they come out in Spanish before she can read them. She also says there are web sites that are only in English that her daughter would like to read and she would like to be able to help them. Another reason is that from the time she was very young she has had the desire to learn English.

David's step-father says he would like to learn English, "*porque así podría informarme más.* (because by doing so I could learn more.)" David has English class once a week in the public school he is attending. He also has some video recordings and the textbook that accompany them. On one occasion I went over a lesson with him and found his knowledge of English to be quite limited. He didn't even seem to know the numbers one through ten.

Esaú's parents would like their children to learn English because they say that many good jobs require that one speaks English well. They bought a book so that they

can help their children to learn English even though they don't speak it themselves.

Marcelo says that

*hasta para poder viajar, si uno no sabe el inglés, se queda ... difícil.
A veces en las cosas que uno compra... vienen en inglés...y no sabe uno lo que es...
entonces ya tiene uno la idea de lo que se trata...y como funciona el aparato. (even
to be able to travel, if one doesn't know English it is difficult. At time the things
one buys come in English, and if one doesn't know it, one doesn't know what it's
about and how the appliance works.)*

During one visit I went over some English words with Esaú and he knew the names of several animals in English.

Isela's parents say that English "*ahorita es básico para los niños y para poderles ayudar necesita uno aprender inglés en la escuela.* (Now English is basic for children, and in order to learn one needs to learn English in school.)" The three older children are attending a private school that is bilingual.

Las materias como Biología, Ciencias Biológicas, las aprenden en Inglés. ...Y la clase de Inglés es verdaderamente una clase de Inglés, la maestra no habla una sola palabra en Español, todo en Inglés desde el principio hasta el fin de clase es en Inglés. (The subjects such as biology, biological sciences, they learn in English. And the English classes are true English classes. The teacher doesn't speak even one word in Spanish. Everything is in English from the beginning until the end of the class.)

Abril's parents also want their children to learn English in order to increase their opportunities in life. They say that the children learned quite a bit of English in Centro Telpochcalli and that they are continuing to study it in an after school program two hours a week.

All the parents want their children to learn English because they see English as means of increasing the likelihood of "success". However, not all have the economic means to send them to a bilingual school. Three of four of the families who provide a strong reading environment for their children are middle class and have enrolled their

children in a private bilingual school. The fourth family is middle class and has enrolled their children in a school which provides three to five hours of English instruction a week. David's family is middle class, but hasn't provided a strong reading environment nor have they enrolled their children in a bilingual school. The three poorer families probably would enroll their children in bilingual schools if they had the means. David has one English class a week in the public school he goes to. The parents in the three poorer families have all made arrangement for their children to attend after school classes. The fact that David's family hasn't enrolled him in a bilingual school although they have the means and that the poorer families have done what they could to help their children learn English suggest that parents' socio-economic level doesn't necessarily influence the expectations they have for the children's education as reported by Baker and Scher (2002).

4.12 Non-school Literacies

The participant families in this study seemed to undervalue non-school literacies. When I asked about literacy activities in their home they almost always concentrated on school-based literacy. However, I was able to observe several forms of non-school literacy. These include computer games, non-school story books, business transactions, and wall posters.

One of the activities that children of middle-class families enjoy is computer games. I observed both Hector, Juan, David (Figure 4.6) and the Isela's older sister playing computer games. Of course, not all the families have computers. Those of the lower-middle class and those of the lower class don't have computers.

Figure 4.6 David playing a computer game



Hector's father told me, as already mentioned, that Hector's older brother, Alberto, likes to play a computer game that requires him to do a lot of background reading. Ricardo, Hector's father, is hopeful that this will trigger a love of reading in Alberto. He changes games from time to time, but the last time I visited the family he was playing "The Age of Empires." Roberto said he used the computer to find interesting things about science since that is one of his special interests. Roberto and his mother do not have a computer in their home, so he uses the computer at his mother's office.

Another example of non-school literacy is the informal group that Roberto and his mother attend to study Nahuatl. An interesting wall-hanging (Figure 4.7) is in Abril's living room, it says, "*Mientras que yo estoy triste, tu sonríes.* (While I'm sad you smile)." I asked Roberto who had made this decoration. He said that his brother makes and sells them. Many other similar texts were observed in the homes of the participant families.

Figure 4.7 Wall-hanging in Gabriela's living room.



When I asked the case-study students if they would like to read with me, they usually brought a school textbook. However, Roberto, David and Alicia read to me from non-school books that their parents had bought for them. (Example, Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8 Roberto's story book.



On one visit to Jaime's home, his grandfather showed me a certificate of ownership for some land in his home village that he has rights to. He said he was going to rent the land to another person so he needed to show the deed to the recording authorities. I went with Juan, Jaime's father, to an office supply store to make copies of Jaime's grandfather's deed (Figure 4.9) figurand personal identification. After we

returned to their home, Jaime's grandfather left to go to his home village with the documents in order to take care of the transaction.

Figure 4.9 Jaime's grandfather deed.



On another occasion I stopped by the tire shop where Juan, Jaime's father, worked and took pictures of some of the signs that Juan had made to advertise the business. He said that he believed them not to be of good quality (Figure 4.10)

Figure 4.10 Jaime's father's sign announcing the hours of business.



In Jaime's home there is a religious shrine (figure 4.11), the only one I observed in the homes of the eight participant families. I asked Marco if they were Catholic, since this is the religion of most Mexicans, and he said no, that they were "spiritualists."

However, he said his wife's family is Catholic. He pointed out that the U.S. dollar bill



has the same eye as that that was in their shrine.

Figure 4.11 Religious shrine in Jaime's home.



Posters were observed in Roberto's and Esau's homes. One in Roberto's home (Figure 4.12) is about a children's club that encourages imagination and creativity. A poster in Enrique's home was of a rock group called the Jaguares. Enrique's parents said it was a well-known rock group in Mexico. They said it dated back to when they were about 13 or 14. They said they like this particular group very much, so I asked them if they'd been to any of their concerts. They said yes, but they hadn't been able to go to the last one. I was unable to take a picture because they were in the midst of remodeling the home and there were boxes blocking the view.

Figure 4.12 Poster in Roberto's home.



Another non-school literacy activity that the families reported participating in was board games and pencil and paper games. Most of the parents said they play board games as a family and that their children sometimes play board games without the parents. I was able to play board games with Roberto and Easú. I played the simple game of “Serpientes Escaleras” (Figure 4.13) with Esaú and his younger sister. Enrique’s parents told me that Enrique could read and understand the instructions for most games although he’s only in the second grade. Gabriela and her older brother played the word game “Basta” with me on one occasion (see section 4.12 of this thesis). The players had their own score sheet and kept track of their own points. Each player had to think of words that began with a certain letter. Figure 4.14 shows Gabriela’s score sheet. It shows that her writing is well developed for her age. There are few spelling errors and the writing is legible.

Figure 4.13 Serpientes Escalares.

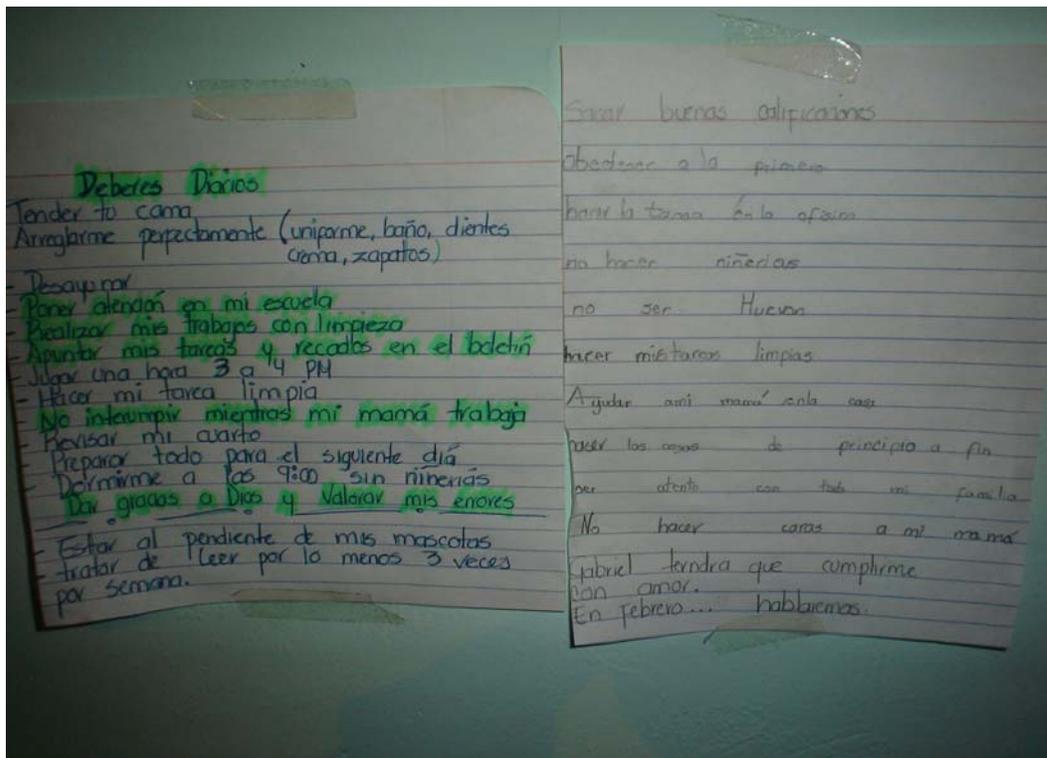


Figure 4.14 Gabriela's score sheet from game of Basta

nombre	apellido	edad	animal	cosa	flora	total
Laura	Lopez	Leon	Leon	Lampara	Lima	
100	50	100	100	100	50	500
Marcos	Martinez	Monterrey	Mario	martillo	Matecales	
100	50	100	50	50	100	450
Emiliano	Erazo	Estados Unidos	Elefante	helado		

Some of the families also wrote grocery lists and notes to each other. The notes to each other were used to communicate when one of them was not going to be at home. On several occasions I asked them to keep examples of these lists and notes. However, when I asked about the notes on the next visit they always told me that they had forgotten to save them. Roberto has a “List of chores” on the wall of his bedroom.

Figure 4.15 Robert's list of chores.



Undoubtedly these families engage in other non-school literacy practices. However, since they tend to view non-school literacies as less important than school literacies and because these non-school literacies are an integral part of their lives they didn't always think about these practices when I asked about them. Because I was unable to observe the families on a continual basis I was unable to document all their literacy practices; however, the foregoing examples show that literacy permeates their homes, so much so that they don't always see the many forms in which they use literacy.

4.13 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the fathers who participated in this study, regardless of their socio-economic class, are indeed interested and involved in their

children's literacy acquisition. Interviews with the fathers show that even those who had negative experiences while learning to read and write want their children to learn to read and write well. They see it as their responsibility to help their children achieve this goal. Although the parents see helping with schoolwork as important, they have different degrees of involvement with this activity. We have also seen that providing a reading environment for their children, as defined in section 4.3 of this study, tends to improve their chances for successfully learning to read and write. Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 248) say that in 1992 some children in the case study community lacked educational opportunities because there was a need for children to help the family make a living and that parents often did not see the practical value of education. The general attitudes of families of the current study did not reflect these "obstacles." The families indicated that they view education as very important and even the poorest of the participant families do not want their children to help the family earn a living so that they have sufficient time to attend school and do their homework. In the following chapter the results presented in this chapter are used to answer the four research questions on which this study was based.