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**Literacy Practices of Mexican Fathers and How These
Influence the Literacy Acquisition of Their Children**

Tesis profesional presentada por

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This is a qualitative study of the literacy practices of eight families who live in San Andrés and San Pedro, Cholula, Mexico. The study looked at how fathers' literacy experiences affect their attitudes toward their own children's literacy, and how the fathers' attitudes affect their children's literacy development. It also looked at the extent to which fathers in the research community engage in literacy practices with their children. Whether or not the families provide a "reading environment" in the home was assessed, based on two criteria: (1) a variety of reading material in the home, and (2) a home where at least one parent reads regularly for pleasure.

All fathers who participated in the study want their children to have the benefits of learning to read and write, whether or not they themselves had positive experiences while learning to read and write. The fathers do not want their children to have negative experiences, but they do want them to receive the benefits that one derives from being literate. It was found that they are aware of the benefits of spending time with their children in literacy activities, despite popular beliefs to the contrary. It was also shown that there is a range of awareness among the participant families as to the importance of encouraging their children to read regularly, not only by making reading materials available, but also by their own example of reading for pleasure. Although the parents see helping with schoolwork as important, they have different degrees of involvement with this activity. Some of the families reported that the main literacy activity in their homes is homework. It was also been shown that fathers and mothers are willing to share the responsibility of helping their children learn to read and write.

Some of the implications include the need for teachers to be aware that children are influenced by how their parents view reading, and that since not all students are encouraged to read by their parents, teachers need to be aware of the importance of

encouraging students to read for pleasure. Also, parents possess untapped Funds of Knowledge that the schools should take advantage of.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

1.1.1. Theories of Literacy

The social activity of literacy involves “common patterns in using reading and writing in ... particular situations” (Barton, 1994, p. 37) and these “common patterns” “are associated with different domains” (Barton, p. 39). This means that the literacies practiced in the home and in school can be very different. Many studies have shown that the process of learning to read and write begins in the home well before children start school. Ferreiro (1982, p.128) says that “The actual writing evolves within the child through ways of organizing which the school does not recognize [my translation].” If educators are aware of the literacy practices which go on in the home, they can integrate what their students already know into the classroom. Gregory (2002, p. 3) emphasizes that “home and community” literacy practices and ways of learning are learned at home before a child starts formal education. She continues that it is important to “uncover the language and literacy knowledge held by people, ways of learning in their communities, and to become clear about how these may either contradict or complement those which count in school” (2002, p. 4).

This is important because community and school practices can differ significantly (Smith, Jiménez, & Martínez-León 2003). Smith, Jiménez, and Martínez (2003) draw attention to the characteristics of community texts, which differ significantly from school texts in the area in central Mexico where they conducted their study. Goodman (1997) stresses that becoming literate is part of everyday life and that schools usually don't take

advantage of these avenues of learning. Pérez (1998a, p. 27) points out that home literacy practices “may be not only different but oftentimes at odds with” practices associated with school learning.

This present study looked at literacy practices in Mexican homes with emphasis on the fathers’ role in their children’s learning of reading and writing. As will be shown the fathers that participated in this study do play a role in their children’s literacy development. Although most studies of family literacy have focused on the effect mothers have on their children’s literacy, Karther (2002, p.184) summarizes several studies conducted in the U.S. that have shown that the father also influences how well his children learn to read and write. Karther concludes that “early childhood teachers should not exclude or underestimate fathers” (p. 191). Ortiz (2004, p.15) observes that fathers have a role in the “early literacy experiences” of their children “although much of the research has focused on” the mother’s role. Puchner (1997) posits “that educators ... ought to expand the vision of family literacy beyond the literate-mother-to-literate-child focus.” The present study tended to confirm these findings, that is, that fathers in San Andrés also play an important role in their children’s literacy development.

This study treated literacy as a social construction. Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, and Green (2001, p. 356) point out that “to conceptualize literacy as socially constructed is to understand that literacy is both a product of and a cultural tool for, a social group.” “What counts is ...the actions members take, what they orient to, what they hold each other accountable for, what they accept or reject as preferred responses of others, and how they engage with, interpret, and construct text” (Castanheira et al, p. 354). To look at literacy in this light is to take into consideration all the ways that literacy is used and

learned, not only in school, but also in the community and in the home. If what's taught in school is disconnected from what's observed and taught in the home and community, students, while in school, may not be able to build on the knowledge that they've already taken in and continue to take in through their home and community. Also, students have more motivation to learn literacy when what they are learning is connected to their community, home and daily lives (Hensley 1997, p.138, González & Moll 2002, p. 627)

Another concept that this study was based on is the concept of "funds of knowledge." Moll and González (1994, p. 443) define funds of knowledge "as those historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being." Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992, p. 218) stress that "literacy instruction must maximize its use of the available literacy and skills with the home as a means to tap the vast funds of knowledge that parents have, but are seldom given the opportunity to share and express." Moll and González (1994) have documented the "extensive" funds of knowledge that Latino parents and students in the Tucson, Arizona and nearby communities possess and which is often not utilized in schools. Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (p. 207) say that schools often ignore the resources that the families of their students possess. Smith (2001, p. 7) "extended the concept of funds of knowledge to focus specifically on knowledge of a language," or "Linguistic funds of knowledge." This concept includes the conscious and unconscious knowledge people have about their language along with how it is acquired and utilized.

1.1.2. Objectives of Study.

As will be explained more fully in the second chapter, this qualitative study was part of a larger research project conducted at a major university in Mexico. I was part of the team of researchers studying literacy practices in the home, school, and community of a specific locality in central Mexico. “The general objective” of the larger ongoing project is “to understand the processes and ideologies that contribute to the formation of readers and writers in three primary schools in México” (Smith, Martínez-León, & Jiménez, 2002). One of the premises of this study was that the home, community and school are the primary places where children learn to read and write.

As a research assistant on this project, I interviewed eight families whose first grade child had been chosen by Teague (2004) to be case study students as will explained in the second chapter of this thesis. All families expressed agreement to take part in this study after reading a letter which explained the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). These families represent lower- and middle-class social economic levels. The educational levels of the parents range from two years of primary school to a master’s degree, with most having finished middle or high school. As the study progressed I conducted in-depth interviews with the eight case-study families. More details concerning the participants will be presented in the methods section.

1.1.3. Motivation for Research

Since the family is typically where children first encounter literacy practices, (Darling & Lee, 2003; Karther 2002) it is important to understand these home literacy practices in order to connect them to learning that goes on in school. Bennett, Weigel

and Martin (2002, pp. 16, 17) point out that “parents often direct the types of learning opportunities their children engage in, as well as when and how these opportunities take place” and that “future research should ... explore how literacy constructs, including parental education, parental reading habits, parental reading beliefs, and parental writing skills, affect young children’s language and literacy outcomes.” Thus, a major aim of this study was to see how parents’ education, habits, and beliefs affect their children’s acquisition of literacy.

Most of the research that has been conducted on family literacy has been conducted in the United States, Great Britain and Australia. This research has included studies of Mexican-American families, but the results of these studies cannot necessarily be applied to families living in Mexico, because of important differences in socio-political and economic systems, culture, language, literacy practices, and gender roles.

Nutbrown and Hannon (2003, p. 141) report that “relatively little is known about fathers’ roles in their children’s preschool literacy.” Ortiz (2004, p. 15) asserts that “fathers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds do contribute ... although to what extent has yet to be determined.” There is even less information about Mexican fathers’ influence on their children’s literacy development. This study tried to provide a data-based examination of this topic. This will be useful to inform educators in Mexico. The need for this information is highlighted by Cairney and Ashton (2002, p. 332) who studied the literacy practices of three dissimilar families. One was a lower-class single mother with two children, the second was an upper middle-class family with two children, and the third was a middle-class family with four children. Cairney and Ashton (2002) came to the following conclusions: “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 explores the impact that varied discourse practices of the type described have for children of varying class, cultural and language backgrounds.” Thus they emphasize the need for teaching practices that students can relate to, which in turn points to the importance of studying the home and community literacy practices of their students. As Cairney (2002, p. 160) explains: “families construct particular views of literacy, and what it means to be literate;” this in turn affects how they practice literacy in the home. As previously stated, home literacy practices “may be not only different but oftentimes at odds with” practices associated with school learning (Pérez 1998a, p. 27) and this can hinder the learning process.

Another motivation for conducting this study was to contribute toward the improvement of literacy education of Mexican children in the United States. Moll (1992) posits that “many minority students experience curricula that are not responsive to their funds of knowledge (defined on page three of this study) or specific needs.” Understanding more of the literacy cultural roots of Mexican children will help educators to incorporate the funds of knowledge that their students already possess into the learning process. In fact, there are so many Mexican immigrants in the United States who are from the community where this study was conducted, that the area is called an “explosion zone.” (Cortés, 2001, as cited by Jiménez, Smith & Martínez-León, 2003, p. 494). Interestingly, many Mexicans from other parts of the country move into the research site, mainly people of indigenous heritage (Jiménez, Smith & Martínez-León, 2003). It also includes people moving from rural areas of Mexico looking for work. Also, some of the case-study families have family living in the United States and there exists the possibility

that certain members of these families may spend time in the United States. Delgado-Gaitan (1992, p. 513) stresses that “it is necessary to continue examining the family learning environments of children from ethnically different groups to help educators better understand and interpret the discrete circumstances of children’s home life.” Studies done by Chall & Snow (1982) and Heath (1983) which investigated an extensive array of family literacy practices of different social classes show that the more the child’s home literacy practices are similar to the school’s literacy practices the more likely the child will be successful in school (as cited by Auerbach 1989, p.167). Pennycook (1991) suggests that an understanding of literacy practices of minority groups, in this case Mexican children in the United States, can be a means for improving their political status. Educators who understand minorities’ literacy practices are in a better position to help them be successful in their educational pursuits, and that education increases the possibilities of being involved in the political process.

1.1.4. Research Questions

This study gave attention to the following two research questions, established as part of a larger project (Smith, Martínez-León, & Jiménez, 2002):

1. What is the ecology of the written language and the literacy practices in this community?
2. What ideologies underlie the literacy practices in this community?

The following questions reflect the particular focus of this study within the larger project.

1. In the context of the study do Mexican fathers' literacy experiences tend to influence their view of their children's literacy?
2. Do fathers' literacy practices and views of literacy influence their children's literacy practices and development?
3. To what extent do Mexican fathers in this context tend to engage in literacy practices with their children?
4. How do fathers' views of literacy tend to differ from mothers' views?

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. The Socio-Cultural Nature of Literacy.

It is important to be aware of home and community literacy practices and ways of learning. It is also important to be cognizant that they are taken from home to school (Gregory, 2002, p. 5) and from school to home. Fathers' roles in the children's education are framed in part by school attitudes and practices. What fathers think they should and shouldn't do about children's literacy is impacted by schooled beliefs. Gregory continues by saying that taking a socio-cultural approach to education is to "uncover the language and literacy knowledge held by people, ways of learning in their communities, and to become clear about how these may either contradict or complement those which count in school (Gregory, p. 4)." As Luke (2003, p. 138) says: "We need a rigorous understanding of the places and spaces; ... the zones of sociocultural and political power where language and literacy are acquired and used, gained and lost outside of schools." Ortiz (2004 p. 14) emphasizes that "family literacy should be viewed as an activity continually in flux—being changed and modified by a number of economic, social, political, and personal factors to fit the needs of the family."

As already noted, Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, and Green (2001, p. 354) say that the literacy of any group is seen through their dealings, their orientation, and the things they “hold each other accountable for.” Literacy, a cultural tool for the social group, is repeatedly being formed and reformed by new members of social groups (p.356). Therefore, beliefs and ideologies about literacy are formed in the home (Cairney 2002, p. 160) and when a child starts school she has to learn new beliefs and ideologies about literacy. If home and school literacy beliefs are greatly disconnected, the child probably will experience a significant disadvantage in learning to read and write. Nagle (1999, pp. 174,175) conducted a qualitative study of twenty working-class youths and found that those who were not introduced to “school literacy practices” at home before starting school had a harder “time accessing school literacy,” and as a result had less success in learning to read and write. Some of the participants in the Nagle study were disadvantaged because their parents had not learned to read and write well and therefore could not help their children. Also, some participants engaged in home literacy practices such as writing a “comic newsletter,” writing poetry, and reading romance novels, and these were not valued in school. Since the literacy practices in the home of middle-class students more closely resemble those of school, middle-class students have more access to school literacy practices. This actually acts as a way to keep those of different social classes in their respective positions (p. 182, 183), although it may be unintentional. 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.” Luke (2004, p. 334) expresses it this way:

Ethnographies of literacy must bridge not just home and school, but the local and global, and the micro and macro political-economic domains. From an educational

perspective, we need to ask – as Cavalcanti does here – fundamental questions about which languages and literacies, sanctioned by which state education systems and globalized institutions, have which kinds of material consequences in peoples' lives.

Pérez (1998b, p. 259) argues that teachers of children need to know what their students know and do not know about “print in all dimensions,” because learning has to start “from the learner’s primary discourse.” For instruction to make sense to the learner it has to start from her viewpoint. As Ben-Yosef (2003, p.82) expresses it, “Building bridges between home and school literacies ensures a meaningful educational experience for all students.”

In an article in which they analyzed the data from two research projects, Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003, p. 35) compared the literacy genres which exist in the home of students from lower-class families with those of the school. One study looked at children from 4 to 6 years old and the other looked at first graders. Both studies were conducted in the “Greater Boston metropolitan area.” Although they found similarities between home and schools literacy genres, they also found a number of differences. They posit that it is important that the school be aware of home literacy genres and incorporate them into the learning process, so that the students see “the connection between home and school literacies,” because this augments the learning process. As they say: teachers “must find out what kinds of print are familiar to children and build on those.” Along the same lines, Williams (2003, p. 22) reports that a study of three socio-economic areas of London found that there was very little difference in the literacy practices between the homes of middle-class families and those of the school, while there was considerable difference between those of economically disadvantaged families and the school. One of the differences Williams notes is that parents of middle-class children “spent a good deal

of time reinforcing what was being taught in school with reading books, spelling tests, writing exercise and educational computer programs,” while “none of the project (economically disadvantaged) parents bought their children instructional literacy books on a regular basis.”

Jiménez (2001, p. 2) contends that the reason for low academic success among Latino students in the United States is not because they lack incentive or because of their cultural background, but that it is because teachers do not have “information concerning who students are and what they want and need to accomplish through literacy,” and one might add that teachers may not have knowledge of parents’, particularly fathers’, contributions to their children’s acquisition of literacy. Jiménez says the students’ needs and the pedagogical methods used to teach them are “often inadvertently alienating,” and that one reason for this is the “disconnection” between home and school literacy practices. Cairney (2002, p. 169) posits that to be responsive to the needs of children who have difficulty learning to read and write, we need to understand the differences between home and school literacy. Freire and Macedo (1989, p. 152) assert that educators need to develop radical ways of teaching that give students the opportunity to “use their own reality as a basis for literacy learning [my translation].”

Barton (1994, p. 34) argues that “literacy is a social activity and can best be described in terms of the literacy practices which people draw upon in literacy events,” which he defines as “particular activities where literacy has a role” (p.35). He also says that each person has “different literacies” and these are “associated with different domains of life” and that these “literacy practices are situated in broader social relations” (p. 39). This makes it necessary to study the “social settings” of literacy domains, such as

the home, in order to understand how these events are (or can be) connected to other literacy domains, such as the school.

Auerbach (1989, p. 166) says that “if educators define family literacy ... to include a range of activities and practices that are integrated into the fabric of daily life, *the social context* [italics added] becomes a rich resource that can inform rather than impede learning.... Doing formal schoolwork and developing literacy are not necessarily synonymous.... In this view, the teacher’s role is to connect what happens inside the classroom to what happens outside so that literacy can become a meaningful tool for addressing the issues in students’ lives.” When one looks at the home as a domain where literacy is learned and experienced, the home is a “rich resource” to complement the learning that goes on in the school. González and Moll (2002, p. 624) talk about bridges that can join “parents and teachers, school and community.” These bridges can be connections “between practical, out-of-school, experiential knowledge and academic, abstract knowledge.” When literacy is looked at as a social construction the need for these bridges becomes apparent.

Vygotsky describes learning as this way: “Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow in the intellectual life of those among them” (as cited by Pérez, 1998a, p. 26). Using Vygotsky to support her argument, Pérez (1998a, p. 26) asserts that “the skills, concepts, and ways of thinking that an individual develops reflect the uses and approaches that permeate the community or social group of which that person is a member.” Therefore, minority students are at a disadvantage if they cannot draw on prior learning from their homes and communities when they are in school. This happens when the pedagogical practices of the school are based solely on

the “uses and approaches” of the dominant community. This can happen when the dominant community and the school are unaware of or otherwise devalue the literacy practices of minority families. Also, the minority families may themselves devalue their own literacy practices and not be willing to share them with the school and dominant community.

Bhola (as cited by Brown (1998, p. 1)) reminds us that families are part of community networks and that there is continual communication between the facets of these networks, between families, schools, and the workplace, etc. As Brown (1998, p.1) points out these communications have a social aspect and if literacy curriculum is to be effective it must “focus on the family unit as a whole,” using the culture and knowledge that the families possess as a basis for instruction.

Pennycook (2001) says that “the effects of learning a language ... can only be understood within a broader context of social and cultural relations. *So too with literacy* [italics added].” He says that instead of viewing literacy as “a monolithic entity” it is better to view it as “a set of contextualized social practices.” Again the more the “contextualized social practices” relate or are related to one another the greater the opportunity for the student to have success in learning to read and write.

A review of the literature shows the importance of the teacher being aware of the Socio-cultural nature of literacy. Since it is a “cultural tool,” teachers need to be aware of how their students and their students’ families use literacy in their everyday lives in order to teach effectively.

1.2.2. Development of First Language Literacy.

Goodman (1986, p. 107) reminds us that in literate societies first language literacy typically starts long before a child enters school. When forms of literacy are an “integral” part of their lives, children learn early that written language is one of the most important ways of representing literacy. Through observing and participating in literacy events very young children learn that “written language is one expression of language,” and that it is the main way that literacy is characterized. Children form “insights” into how written language works and discern that it is systematic (Goodman). They also learn “about the various systems of language use in literacy.” They “develop insights about the graphophonic, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic systems” of reading and writing. Before they start formal schooling they understand that “reading and writing represent ideas, knowledge, and thoughts as well as representing some aspects of oral language (Goodman).” Ferreiro (1982, p. 128) emphasizes this point when she says that “the actual writing evolves within the child through ways of organizing which the school does not recognize [my translation].”

Bloome, Katz, Wilson-Keenan and Solsken (2000, p.2) assert that parents teach their “children how to use written language in ways consistent with their community cultural practices.” Laosa (1982, p. 824) makes the argument, based on a series of studies conducted in the United States, that an effective way to lessen the gap between home and school would be to make schools “more like the home” and to help parents to “better prepare children for school.” These were empirical studies of Chicano families which showed “a strong connection” between how much education parents have and how they “interact with their children.” They looked at the connection between parental schooling

and teaching strategies, whether schooling affected the type of literacy activities parents engaged in with their children, and whether parental education impacted their children's "development of specific cognitive skills" among other factors (p.823). Cairney (2000, p.172), in an article on home and school literacy in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia, makes this important observation:

The increased interest in the relationship between home and school is one of the most positive educational developments of the last decade. While this interest is not new, recent initiatives have increasingly begun to move beyond simply transmitting knowledge from schools to parents and their children. Instead, there has been a growing desire to move towards genuine partnership between home and school and a search for processes to facilitate the reaching of mutual consensus between parents and teachers.

In spite of the progress made in this area, he also says that "schools have done better at acknowledging than at responding" to this need. He says that if schools and parents form a partnership there is a "potential for schooling to be adjusted to meet the needs of families."

From another perspective, Barton (1994, p. 178) says that school literacy "has become the accepted literacy" and that it marginalizes other literacies. He says that "school attitudes and values influence society generally," so that "the general public view of reading and writing is influenced to some extent by schooling and images of what goes on in schools." Schools have rules which are different from the general community (p. 179). "Official teaching has its own set of practices" (p. 180). Nagle (1999, p. 183) reports that the working-class participants in her study were often frustrated because their literacy practices had little connection with the middle-class literacy practices which were valued by their schools. By marginalizing community and homes literacy practices,

schools actually make learning to read and write unnecessarily difficult and children learn to view school literacy as disconnected from what they care deeply about.

This section has highlighted the importance of recognizing the role the family plays in first language literacy learning. It has also shown the importance of not marginalizing home and community literacies, because children learn better when schools build on the forms of literacy they already possess when they start school.

1.2.3. Home Literacy and Funds of Linguistic Knowledge.

Leichter (1997, p. 20) argues that we can further “our knowledge of education in general” by studying the “richly diversified educational encounters” that are a part of family life. She continues that one must view the family as a domain where learning consistently occurs and that this will ideally “enlighten and extend our fundamental theory of educational encounters.” In an article in which she describes the many literacy events that occur in the home, Goodman (1997) makes the following statements:

Those who speak to families and communities about literacy development, who plan literacy curriculum for schools, or who publish literacy materials must be knowledgeable about the literacy events that occur in a wide range of households. As the variety of literacy experiences in different homes are acknowledged and respected, families come to believe that the literacy events they experience in their homes are legitimate roads to literacy learning.

She further explains that it’s important that parents know that the “cultural literacy events” that occur in their home scaffold their children’s literacy learning. Lacasa, Reina and Albuquerque (2002, p. 61) found that when parents help their children with homework “school tasks acquire new meaning.” In other words, by working with their children on their homework parents help their child see a connection between school and

home literacy. However, Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (1991, p. 127) found that the parents in their study tended to believe it was their responsibility to see that their children's homework was completed, rather than viewing the doing of homework as a time to teach their children. This shows the need of educating parents as to their "supplementary teaching" role.

Potts and Paull (1995, p. 168) support what Goodman asserts by saying "most children who succeed in school learned early," most likely from their parents, "that reading and learning are important and that educational goals are attainable." They say that "in some families" this doesn't happen. This underscores the importance of parents being aware that literacy events in the home not only support their child's learning, but also that their attitudes toward home and school literacy affect the attainment of their children's long-term educational goals. They say that "educating children might not have long-term effects if the messages in the home do not support their learning (Potts & Paull)."

Senechal and LeFevre (2001, p. 50) also show the importance of parents being involved in their children's literacy development. They conducted a five-year longitudinal study of 111 middle-class children in Ottawa, Canada, which demonstrated "that storybook reading may have a long-term impact on the acquisition of reading through its relation to the development of vocabulary," but their "results also suggest the children who are exposed to a variety of home" literacy activities have the highest probability of being successful in literacy acquisition.

Research has shown that the amount of reading material in the home and the parents example play a crucial role in their children literacy development (Millard, Taylor

& Watson, 2000; Teale & Sulzby (as cited by Sénéchel, LeFevre, Thamas and Daley, 1998); Webster and Failer, 1998). Britto and Brooks-Gunn (2001, p. 76) found that if parents view reading “as a source of entertainment” their children will have a “more positive attitude” and have “better reading skills.” Along the same lines, Baker and Scher (2002, p. 265) report that “parents who believe that reading is pleasurable convey a perspective that is appropriated by their children.” They found that this view of reading by the parents not only influenced their children’s “developing reading skills,” but also their “choice of leisure activities.” That is they tended to choose reading as a leisure activity more often than other children.

Baker and Scher (2002) studied sixty-five six-year-olds and their mothers from four different socio-cultural backgrounds, which included low income African Americans, low income European Americans, middle income African Americans and middle income European Americans. They found that “parental beliefs and home experiences contribute” to the motivation their children have to learn reading and writing. They also found that “motivation levels” were substantially the same in the four socio-cultural groupings that they studied. They say that “what parents say and do” does more to promote constructive incentives than does socioeconomic status (p. 261). In a study of 137 first-graders in Lima, Peru, Castro, Lubker, Bryant, and Skinner (2002, p. 343) found that “parental expectations appeared to be strongly associated with ... children’s ... reading skills.” Again showing the importance of parents being conscious of their pivotal role in their children’s literacy development.

Another way of looking at home literacy is the concept of funds of knowledge. As previously stated, Moll and González (1994, p. 443) define funds of knowledge “as

those historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being.” They say that family households have vast funds of knowledge that are connected to the family’s origins and to work and activities that take place in the home. They say that exploiting these funds of knowledge “allows both teachers and students to continually challenge the status quo, especially in terms of how the students are using literacy as a tool for inquiry and thinking, and to refurbish their learning with new topics, activities, and questions (p. 451).” When teachers take advantage of these funds of knowledge the learning experience of all students in the classroom are greatly enhanced. As Moll (1992, p. 22) argues: “These ... funds of knowledge represent a *potential* major social and intellectual resource for the schools.” In the study’s research context the father of the family is often more apt to work outside the home than the mother is. The knowledge that fathers gain through their jobs is an important segment of these funds of knowledge that the school could take advantage of.

Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992, p. 218) further emphasize the importance of incorporating funds of knowledge into pedagogical practices. They say that it’s important to give teachers the “opportunities to learn how to incorporate the funds of knowledge from their students’ households into learning modules that approximate the total reality of the population.” Vélez-Ibáñez (1996, p. 275) conducted a study in which this was done. Parents shared their knowledge with the schools, and teachers researched and organized “home resources for classroom use.” One of the outcomes of the study was that the parents “no longer considered their knowledge superfluous to school

knowledge.” Teachers came to view “households as repositories of strategic information” (Vélez-Ibáñez).

Although there has been little study of home literacy in Mexico and specifically of the role of fathers, Rockwell (1997) studied eight diverse schools in Mexico, both state and federal. She did 50 observations of classes from third to sixth grade. Based on these observations she “posits that children are less likely to become literate in school, where instruction focuses primarily on skill acquisition, than through a variety of experiences that she refers to as ‘extra-instructional activities.’” These include magazines traditionally discouraged by the school (such as TVNOTAS, a popular in publication México similar to the National Enquirer in the United States), posters and other announcements in the school directed toward adults, letters written by adults to other adults and other instances of literacy that they find in the school, home and community. She provides evidence “that children appropriate reading and writing processes for themselves, in spite of instruction” (as cited by Seda-Santana, 2000, p. 8). Similarly, Jiménez, Smith, and Martínez-León (2003) found that Mexican schools in the region of their study tended to emphasize the mechanics of writing over the expression of ideas. Apparently children have to learn to express ideas in writing in other places, such as the home, as Rockwell posits. In accordance with this, the Secretaria de Educación Pública (2001, p. 49) in Mexico did point to the need for giving more attention to learning to think and express oneself, both orally and in writing.

Research has shown that parents play an important role in their children’s acquisition of literacy. Parents need to be cognizant of the critical role they play and teachers must be careful not to discount the importance of the literacy practices that take

place in the home and community, so that they can build on what their students already know as they start school.

1.2.4. Fathers' Role in Home Literacy.

Most study of fathers' role in home literacy has been conducted in the United States. Ortiz (2004, p. 15), who has studied Mexican-American fathers, says "that fathers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds do contribute to their children's early reading and writing development has been suggested in the literature, although to what extent has yet to be determined." Ortiz (2000) conducted a study of 26 Mexican-American fathers in Southern California. Of the 26 fathers 21 were 2nd and 3rd generation Americans. (He defines 2nd generation fathers as those whose parents were emigrants from Mexico.) He found evidence that Hispanic fathers do contribute to their children's early reading and writing development (p. 8). He says that the "literacy materials used" in the home "were not always at the child's reading or cognitive level." In spite of this, he says that these literacy activities are beneficial because they promote bonding between the child and father and because the father comes to know his child's literacy preferences. Ortiz say (2004, p. 16) that Hispanic "fathers participated in early literacy activities because they viewed it as important, interesting and necessary not only to themselves but also to their families." Since the studies that Ortiz has done all investigated fathers who were born in the U.S., the results are probably not directly applicable to the Mexican context. Such things as bilingualism, emphasis on English, and amount of education (all the fathers in the 2000 study were bilingual and educated) affect the results of Ortiz's study.

In another study, Ortiz (1996) reports that all fathers who participated in his study reported engaging in some literacy activities with their children. However, his study found evidence “that fathers who share child care duties with their spouses read and write more often with their children than parents who divide these tasks.”

Karther (2002, p. 191) studied two fathers whose families were involved in a federal literacy program in West Virginia. Even though both fathers were described as having “low literacy,” the study found that they were interested in their children’s literacy development and that they initiated literacy activities with them, even the father who could not read. Karther concludes that “early childhood teachers should not exclude or underestimate fathers.”

Although research on the father’s part in the development of their children’s literacy is limited, there is sufficient evidence that shows they play an important role, although this isn’t always recognized by the schools. This underlines the need to continue studying how fathers may influence their children’s literacy development.

1.2.5 Being a Man in San Andrés

Because this thesis focuses on the fathers’ role in the literacy acquisition of his children, this section describes some of the cultural characteristics of men in the research context. Undoubtedly the Cholulan society, like the rest of Mexico, is a society where male opinions and decisions tend to dominate at many levels. In their demographic description of the research community Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 74) affirm that the father is the head of the family and that his relationship with the family is somewhat distant. The mother is the one who establishes the communication and

intimacy with the children, but with the support of the father. This is more evident in a rural context where education, mass media, such as television and the internet, and influences from other cultures have not affected cultural norms as much as in an urban society, but is still evident in San Pedro and San Andrés.

Robichaux (2003, p. 136) reports that, traditionally, when a couple marries the husband takes his wife to live in the father's house, and then builds his own house on his father's property near his father's family. He says that the exception is the youngest son who continues to live with his parents in order to care for them and when they die he inherits the family home. If the husband goes to live with the wife's family one hears sarcastic comments such as "Se fué de nuero." The role of the man and father is provider and protector of the family. In many cases this is only an ideal because of diverse factors such as alcoholism and unemployment. In fact, unemployment is the main reason many Mexicans from this community, especially men, migrate to the United States in search of work in order to provide for their families materially. Many men leave confident of their wives' fidelity, leaving her to take care of their children. Many who emigrate to the United States for a time believe, upon returning to Mexico, that they have bettered themselves economically (Malkin, 1998). Others say they return in worse conditions. Others prefer not to return to Mexico to live, although many do return to visit when they can. Given that it is a society with wide economic differences, there are those who because of education, family inheritance or because of connections have been able to acquire wealth without leaving the country (Malkin, 1998).

In her study of gender roles in San Andrés and San Pedro Mlade (2001, p. 36) explains that "the wife has the right to complain if her husband is not meeting his

responsibility as provider, likewise the children can complain if their father is not supporting them correctly.” Mendoza (2005) tells us, in an article in a popular Mexican magazine, that in return many Mexican men expect obedience and, at times, submission from their wives, and children. From his wife he expects fidelity, although infidelity on his part is considered a sign of virility and masculinity, especially if he fathers many children with his wife and his mistresses (Mendoza, 2005). Even so, it is not considered manly for a man to be seen carrying his young children in his arms. These concepts are currently in the process of changing, since, in many young couples, it is more common to see one, two, three children, at most, instead of the larger families that were common previously. It is also now more common to see young fathers carry their young children in the arms, and it appears to me that fathers are more apt to worry about their children’s well-being and future. One of the participant families in the current study reflect this trend. The mother finished only the second grade because she had to stay home and take care of her younger brothers and sisters while her parents worked, so she and her husband do not want their children to have part-time jobs so that they have sufficient time to attend school and do their homework. Also, all the participant fathers say they want their children to attend university although most of them didn’t attend university themselves. It has been suggested that these trends are due to various factors that are changing old customs, such as education, television, the internet, and influences from other cultures, which can be observed in those who return from the United States and bring the American culture with them (Mendoza, 2005).

The literacy rates for men and women in the two communities still reflect the fact that previously women weren’t encouraged to finish primary school (Mlade, 2001, p. 39,

40). While the overall literacy for persons 15 years and older in San Andrés is 92.3 percent, 94.7 percent of the men are literate, and only 90.1 percent of the women according to the 2000 census. The same trend holds true in San Pedro; the overall literacy rate is 93.8 with 94.7 percent of the men and 90.1 of the women being literate (2001 tabulation based on 2000 census, INEGI). More women were economically active in 2000 than in 1990 in San Andrés according to INEGI, 16 percent in 1990 versus 28 percent in 2000. This is compared to 67 percent of the men in 1990 and 74 percent in 2000 (2000 census, 1990 census), possibly showing that women are becoming less economically dependent on men. However, educational opportunities do not seem to have increased substantially for men or women. In 1990, 42 percent of the females in San Andrés aged 15 to 19 were attending school, whereas in 2000 the percentage had only increased to 43 percent. During the same period the percentage of men attending school increased from 40 percent to 45 percent. By way of comparison the percentage of persons in this age group attending school in the United States was 82 percent in 2000 (US Census Bureau, 2000).

1.2.6. Methodological Precedents

This study followed the qualitative procedures as outlined by Bogdan & Biklen (2003) and Neuman (2000). I chose qualitative procedures because they are an ideal means to identify and analyze the practices of a certain community. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand “behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). As Taylor (1983, p. 89) explains: “The importance of qualitative research is not the discovery of some particular manipulation, but the

questions it raises in developing new understandings of the local and distinctive meanings and uses of literacy in the *lives of people* [italics added], we may come a little closer to appreciating some of the assumptions ... that form the basis of our present pedagogy.”

As will be explained more fully in the third chapter of this thesis, I collected the data through interviews, observations, and analysis of school and home literacy documents. Collection was over a period of eight months during which I visited homes of each participant from seven to eight times, allowing for “sustained contact with people in settings where subjects normally spend their time” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). I used constant comparative method as described in the third chapter of this thesis so that analysis would be ongoing and would affect the nature of the interviews conducted.

The methods that I used in this study were based on methods used previously in four projects. The first was an ethnographic study conducted by Karther (2002), in which she used semi-structured interviews in accordance with qualitative procedures. She spoke in-depth with two fathers whose families were involved in a federal family literacy program in West Virginia. She interviewed them regarding their own experiences in trying to learn to read and write. Both are described as having low literacy and had “been in special education programs and had problems with reading in school” (p.191). She wanted to find out how “they view literacy experiences for their children,” and if “they engage in literacy activities with them as readily as other fathers” (p.184). Karther says that she used the phenomenological approach outlined by Hycner in which “statements were segmented, categorized, and then grouped according to similar and related meanings. Common themes and groupings were examined to determine similarities and differences” (p.185). A similar approach was used for the present study.

The second study that I used as a methodological model was that conducted by Taylor (1983). She used ethnographic procedures to describe six middle-class families who lived in suburban communities within fifty miles of New York City and “the diverse ways in which” they “use literacy daily in their daily lives” (Taylor, p. viii). She collected examples of the families’ writing and says that “the discussion which the artifacts stimulated proved an invaluable source of information” (Taylor, p. 26). The current study used the same data collection technique to stimulate conversation about the families’ literacy activities and their views thereof.

I also used as a model for my study a study conducted by Auerbach (1989). In the Auerbach study the researchers used a “social-contextual mode of family literacy” to study how parents’ ways of understanding literacy could be used to make school curriculum more meaningful to students. In this study they “listened, read, and talked with students about literacy in their lives.” They observed what these students “said, did and showed in the course of day-to-day classroom interaction” (Auerbach, p. 167). This same method was used when visiting the homes of the participant families.

The last study I used as a model was conducted by González & Moll (2002) and is an ethnographic study with household visits which sought to discover families’ funds of knowledge. They say the investigators entered the homes “as learners ... with a theoretical perspective that seeks to understand the ways in which people make sense of their everyday lives” (p. 625). They used a “mix of guided conversation and interviews” whose purpose was to draw out information to “foster a relationship of trust” so that families would be able to tell about their way of life and their experiences. The teachers were from a variety of backgrounds and were not necessarily of the same culture as the

families they visited. They say that the interview became “an exchange of views, information, and stories,” and that the families and the researcher became acquainted on a personal level (p. 625). The current study endeavored to use these same interviewing techniques.

1.3. Research Strategy

1.3.1. Assumptions

The current study sought to understand how fathers’ own literacy experiences influence their views toward their children’s literacy and how these influence their children’s views about literacy. It also sought to find to what extent Mexican fathers in the research context engage in literacy practices with their children. In order to investigate these questions I visited the homes of selected case study families in order to document the experiences, attitudes and activities of the individual members.

The first assumption I made is that the families in this Mexican context may participate in different literacy practices than families in others contexts such as in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia where other home literacy studies have been conducted. This assumption is made because the history, culture, and languages of the research context are different from the above mentioned contexts. Also, the role of the father may be different (see section 1.2.5 of this thesis). At the same time one would expect to see some similarities between the literacy practices of those of Mexican origin living in the U.S. and the participants of the study. However, by not being unduly influenced by research conducted in other contexts I entered the investigation with an

open mind and was able to come to conclusions that were relevant to this particular research context.

The second assumption was that the participants have lived in the research site for a considerable period of time. This is important because if the participants are from other countries or other parts of Mexico their practices and beliefs could be influenced by their places of origin in addition to their residence in the local community. One of the instruments used in the larger study, the Socio-Familiar form (see Appendix C) which is described in the third chapter of this thesis, was designed to confirm this assumption (Teague 2004, p. 17).

I also made the assumption that we do not know enough about the father's role in literacy development and that there is great potential in using this knowledge to improve the outcome of the pedagogical process (see section 1.1.3 of this thesis).

1.3.2. Possible Outcomes.

One of the principal questions of the proposed study was: do the fathers' feelings and views about literacy influence their children's feelings and views about literacy? At the start of the study I thought it possible that even though the fathers' feelings and views seem to influence their children's feeling and views about literacy, there are other factors that may influence them more, such as the child's personality and interests. Keeping this in mind helped me to keep an open mind about the outcome of the study. I also thought it possible that some parents had experienced low access to education when they were young and that they would seek more opportunities for their children.

In Karther's (2002, p. 191) study of two fathers with low literacy, she found that "the fathers attempted to support their children's literacy learning" (Karther, p.191). Based on preliminary evidence, I thought it was possible that the current study would find that the fathers in this context also attempt to support the children's development of literacy. The extent to which fathers do this and the ways in which they see and define "support" may be influenced by their own literacy experiences and activities. Other factors could have been identified which seem to influence this, such as socio-economic status and educational level.

Bennett, Weigel and Martin (2002) found the literacy activities in the home had a positive effect on children's literacy development. I expected that the current study could come to a similar conclusion. Other possible factors which could have been identified included parents' attitudes toward literacy and/or the actual practices that take place in the home.

Ortiz (2004) found that Hispanic fathers participated with their children in literacy practices "for many reasons, such as bringing the family together, taking part in fun time," and involving their children in their work (p. 15). I viewed it as probable this study would also find that Mexican fathers engage in literacy practices for these reasons and I thought it was probable that it would discover others. I thought it possible that the findings would be similar to those of other Mexican contexts and contexts outside of Mexico; however, I thought it was also possible that there would be important differences.

I also expected to find that some families wouldn't provide a reading environment, defined in section 4.1, (Teale and Sulzby, as cited by Sénéchal, LeFevre,

Thomas and Daley, 1998, p. 96; Britto and Brooks-Gunn, 2001, p. 75; Webster and Failer, 1998) for their children and that that would effect the literacy development of their children in a negative way.

1.4 Research Design

The design of this study was based on qualitative methods outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). The qualitative paradigm was chosen because the purpose of the study was to identify and analyze the literacy practices of parents in a certain community. Gay & Airasian (2003) say that the qualitative “researcher studies the perspectives of the research participants toward events, beliefs, or practices.” The investigation consisted of case studies of eight families. As Merriam (1998, p. 28) explains a case study design is used when “researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing.” Case study design does not imply a particular kind of data collection or analysis, but refers to a design which involves “the examination of an instance in action (MacDonald and Walker (1997), as cited by Merriam, p. 29).” Ethnographic methods, such as interviews and observations, were used to examine “how people create and understand their daily lives—their method of accomplishing everyday life” (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 29).

Case studies can be distinguished from other types of qualitative research in that they are “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Particularistic means certain ‘situations, events, programs, or phenomenon’ are the focal point. Each case reveals important information about the phenomenon. Descriptive refers to the end product containing “rich, thick description.” The description is qualitative and

uses narration and documentation of situations and events instead of numerical data to analyze phenomenon. Heuristic means that the reader is helped to understand the phenomenon under study. The case studies “can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (p. 30).

Data collection was mainly based on interviews, observations and document analysis. I interviewed the families using a form (described in the third chapter of this thesis) which was developed by the larger project to gather basic educational, employment, and literacy information on the families. I also used a form (described in the third chapter) developed by the larger project to gather socio-economic information along with linguistic characteristics of the families. Another important source of information was the field notes taken during the 2003-2004 school year by Teague (2004), who observed the first grade class from which the eight case study families were selected. Additional data were gathered during the literacy inventory and semi-structured in-depth interviews, which are described in the third chapter of this thesis.

Qualitative research design entails a blend of data collection and analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (2003, p. 66) describe it this way: “First the interview, then the analysis and theory development, another interview, and then more analysis, and so on.” This constant comparative method is ideal for multi-data source studies and since the analysis starts near the beginning it is almost complete when data collection is finished (Bogdan & Biklen). Glaser ((1978), as cited by Bogden & Biklen, p. 67) says that the constant comparative method can be described as a series of steps, but these steps happen at the same time. “The analysis keeps doubling back to more data collection and coding (Glaser as cited by Bogdan & Biklen, p. 68). As Neuman (2000) points out the

qualitative researcher “is not seeking universal laws, only regularities within a social context.” The constant comparative method was useful in seeking these “regularities within” the “social context” of the study.

CHAPTER 2: SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

2.1. Context and Participants.

2.1.1. Community

The school from which the case study students were initially selected is a semi-private school located in San Andrés Cholula, a municipality of about 50,000 people. San Andrés is located near a city of about 2 million which is the state capital. Jiménez, Smith and Martínez-León (2003, p. 494) say that this municipality “is one of the oldest continually populated cities in the Americas. Its history reaches back at least 2,000 years, perhaps further.... This region is close to areas considered ‘expulsion zones’ (Cortés, 2001, as cited by Jiménez et al., p. 38) by the Mexican government because so many people ... leave to work in the United States ... This region is also a ‘recipient zone’ for persons of indigenous background who come primarily from the southern regions of the country” (Jiménez et al., p. 38). According to INEGI (2001 tabulation based on 2000 census) 320 persons from San Andrés (0.7 per cent of the population 15 years and over) and 335 from San Pedro (0.4 per cent of the population 15 years and over) reported emigrating to another country in the year 1995. This is a substantial change from what Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 27) report from the 1990 census. They say that only ten persons from San Andrés attempted to emigrate to the United States in 1990 and that not all were successful. These numbers seem low given that 96 of 218 (44%) of those who participated in the *censo-lingüístico* survey (described in Section 2.2.3)

responded that they had family living abroad. However, only one of the participants in the current study reported having lived in another country (U.S.A.).

Because many persons from the research community emigrate to the United States for work, their transnational status may affect literacy in the homes of the families still living in the community. For example, families of trans-nationals may receive letters and gifts from their relatives in the United States which may include English names and expressions. The gifts they receive may include instructions for use in English, such as for a small appliance. Many persons of indigenous background also move to the area from other parts of Mexico, mostly from the southern regions, in search of work (Jiménez, Smith and Martínez-León, 2003, p. 494). For this reason the research community is influenced by literacy practices and indigenous languages of the new residents' places of origin. One of the members of the COSOLEM team (see section 2.2.1.1) is currently writing her Master's thesis on how trans-nationalism and migration within Mexico affect literacy practices in the homes of families in San Andrés. Sullivan's (2005) preliminary results indicate that when a family member is living abroad, the remittances that the family member sends back to his family in Mexico have an indirect impact on literacy practices. Although these remittances are being used to meet everyday needs, they are also invested in more long-term undertakings, such as opening a business which introduces new literacy practices to the children and practices which the mother may already use but applies in new ways. In addition to the thesis being done by Sullivan, the directors of the COSOLEM project have done work on transnationalism and Mexico Profundo (indigenous peoples and their customs as discussed below) (Smith, Murillo & Jiménez, 2005).

The state of Puebla also has a high concentration of speakers of indigenous languages, and the school from which the case study students were selected also directs “outreach centers” in the northern part of the state to help indigenous populations (Jiménez et al, 2003, p. 38). These outreach centers consist of schools based on the same philosophy as the school from which the case study students were selected. The two communities in which the participant families live have many remnants of indigenous cultures in the food, everyday language and religious customs (Murillo, 2005, Jiménez & Smith (2004). INEGI (2001 tabulation based on 2000) reports that 6.1 percent of the population of San Andrés and 3.7 per cent of the population of San Pedro speak an indigenous language. Shadow and Rodríguez (1992, p. 65) describe in detail San Jaun Tlautla, which is only five kilometers from the center of San Pedro. They report that in this community, Nahuatl, the language spoken by their great-grandparents, has disappeared. However, it is still apparent in many family names and local vocabulary. Although, there are still some speakers of native languages in San Pedro and San Andrés, the situation is similar to that of San Juan Tlautla in that most of the population do not speak a native language, but their family names and the vocabulary they use reflects the native languages of the predecessors.

Bonfil Batalla (1996) discusses in-depth how indigenous peoples’ customs still play an important part in the everyday life of the average Mexican. This is in spite of the efforts made by colonizers to rid the country of these customs. He refers to these indigenous peoples and their customs as *México Profundo*. Bonfil Batalla urges that policy changes be put into effect which would allow indigenous persons to have more

control over their own destinies and that would allow them to “reconstruct the necessary cultural space to develop a modern civilization” (p. 172). He says that

educational policy must be revised in depth with the goal of leaving in the hands of the community an ever-larger number of decisions about the content, methods, general organization, and functioning of the school system. It will be necessary to direct the sufficient credit and funding to finance self-directed productive projects, without trying to subject them to the rigid policies of the imaginary Mexico,

that is the Mexico which ignores the culture and needs of indigenous peoples. Of course, doing so would include allowing indigenous persons to incorporate their own literacy practices into their schools and local governments. Luke (2003, p. 139), speaking of indigenous communities in Australia, says that “it is easy to deliver education and, indeed, alphabets on the one hand while running policies that actually accelerate the deterioration of communities’ kinship structure, traditional values, and forms of work, ... and community social infrastructure on the other.” These are the kind of policies that Bonfil Batalla (1996) seeks to replace with approaches that are more sensitive to indigenous persons’ background. This is important for the current study because some of the participating families have roots in *México Profundo*.

The community is a rich archeological zone and is also rich in colonial architecture and history. For this reason many tourists, both Mexican and those from other countries, visit the area. It is common for residents of San Andrés and San Pedro to say they want to learn English to be able to speak with foreign tourists. Like other parts of Mexico there are many small businesses which cater to residents and visitors. These businesses generate much “community script” which shows variations from standard Spanish (Smith, Jiménez, & Martínez-Leon, 2003). There are several large

universities in the community which provide educational and employment opportunities for the local residents as well as for those from other parts of Mexico and other countries.

Although poverty is evident, there is a significant middle-class, as evidenced by the many housing developments and late model automobiles. The populations of the two communities are quite young with about 62 percent of the population being 29 years and younger. (2001 tabulation based on 2000 census INEGI). While this is about the same as the rest of Mexico, the percentage of persons in the United States 29 years and under is only 42 per cent (US Census Bureau, 2000). Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 158) say that in 1992 the area was essentially rural; however, it now shows all the signs of becoming increasingly urbanized.

The area is rich in traditions which have been passed down from pre-Hispanic and colonial times, such as the religious cargo system (described later in this section). One lower-middle-class family expressed disappointment that although many of these traditions still exist they are slowly disappearing because of new residents and modernization. One of participants of the present study, a middle-class mother who grew up in the nearby capital city, said the reason she chose the area for her and her son is because it “represents a quality of life: clean food, lack of pollution, not a lot of noise, and the ability to walk the streets.”

Mlade (2001) has described the two municipalities in which the eight participant families live. She says that the two municipalities, which are adjacent, are closely related politically and economically. Both communities still have some unpaved streets; however, the commercial areas and all major streets are paved. All respondents to a socio-linguistics census, described in section 2.2.3, reported having electricity in their

homes, although two families interviewed for purposes of the larger study said that service was often cut off because the landlord did not pay the bill and they do not have separate metering. See Table 2.2 for more information on access to basic services in the research communities.

Although San Pedro and San Andrés were originally agricultural communities, this is no longer the case. In their description of San Juan Tlautla (described above) Shadow and Rodríguez (1992) say that in Tlautla the majority of the residents cannot make a living in agriculture and that most residents either work in the local brick-making industry or find employment in San Pedro or the nearby state capital. According to Shadow and Rodríguez the situation is the same for the residents of San Andrés; that is, they often find employment in nearby communities.

Mlade (2001, p. 18) reports that religion is an important part of the residents' daily lives, and that many events, such as birthdays and saint days, are "celebrated with a mass." Indeed Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 256) conducted a study of one of the two communities, San Andrés, in which they analyzed the government census data, Civil register, and interviewed 14 percent of the population. They report that in 1992 72.9 percent of the population said they attended mass every week, although they believe this to be an exaggerated number, "an attempt to project a favorable image of themselves [my translation]." There are many churches in the two cities: thirty-eight Catholic and two Protestant (Mlade, 2001). Mlade (2001) describes in detail a religious cargo system which is an important part of religious and social life in San Andrés and San Pedro. This cargo system is characterized by fiestas, "rites and rituals which are designed to appease their spiritual network of God, Jesus, Mary, and the saints" (p. 25). Participation fulfills

both spiritual and social obligations. It is also common for residents of San Andrés and San Pedro to participate in pilgrimages to religious shrines, some of them many miles away, by bicycle and on foot. All these religious practices involve literacy practices, such as memorizing prayers, reading the Bible, and making lists of guests and resources needed for fiestas. In spite of the general religiousness of the community only one of the participant families in the current study stated that they attend church regularly. Perhaps the participant families are not typical as far as involvement in religious life is concerned.

Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 234) report that at the time of their study 89 per cent of the heads of household reported that they could read and write and a third of those interviewed indicated they hadn't completed the third grade. Indeed, while conducting the socio-linguistic survey, described in section 2.2.3, it was noted by members of the larger project that there were some parents who didn't feel competent enough to fill out the questionnaire without the help of the interviewer. Only 9.9 percent of those who participated in the Álvarez study indicated that they read a newspaper everyday and 60.2 per cent said they rarely or never read a newspaper (p. 235). Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (p.248) conclude that there are two obstacles that make education difficult for the children of the area: (1) economic necessities and (2) a lack of perceived relevance that the educational system has to the lives of the families. They say that there is still a need for children to help the family to earn a living and that parents in San Andrés often don't see the practical relevance of educational programs. In order to overcome these problems they say that competent and motivated teachers are needed and that the "classroom needs to be inserted into the community." Mlade (2001, p. 39, 40) reports that in the past many women did not finish primary school, and that now the

attitude is changing and many mothers encourage their daughters to finish high school. The literacy rates in the two communities still reflect this attitude. See section 1.2.5. INEGI statistics show an increase in the literacy rate in San Andrés from 89 percent in 1992 (according to Alvarez) and 92.3 percent in 2000 (according to INEGI).

2.1.2. The Case Study School

The school from which the case study students were selected was part of the larger study, and regular observations in the first grade classroom of Gertrudis (pseudonym) had been ongoing for nine months when the present study began. Access to the school had already been negotiated by the larger study. Indeed, the eight case study students had already been selected, as will be described in the next section.

The school, Centro Telpochcalli, is a semi-private, non-governmental institution which was founded in 1985. Members of the local community built and equipped the school which consists of 16 classrooms, along with workshops, offices, computer lab, and library. The school originally consisted of preschool, primary, middle and technical high school (Vázquez, 2003, p. 2). (The Vázquez document was written by a former principal of the school for fund raising purposes.) During the 2004-2005 school-year only the high school is in operation,¹ along with special after-school classes in art, English, and computers for primary and middle school students who attend other schools. However, at the time the case study students were identified, during the 2003-2004 school year the primary and middle school levels were still in operation.

The mission of Centro Telpochcalli is to “investigate, develop and implement psycho-socio-educative actions and processes in order to develop the human, social and

technical capacities of the children, youth and the marginalized population of the country in order to better their socioeconomic situation and that of their families and their communities (Vázquez, 2003, p.8).” The stated goals of the school include the betterment of the levels and quality of life for indigenous populations and the acquisition of knowledge, abilities and attitudes by the students that promote their personal, social and economic development along with that of their families and communities (Vázquez). Although the original goal was to fill the needs of low-income and marginalized children, the students represent a range of socio-economic classes, from children of laborers to children of university professors. The director told me the main focus has always been low income children and children with learning disabilities (Juan Balmaceda, personal communication. May 10, 2005). Because the school claims to be based on an educational model which responds to the human potentials of children and youth, it appeals to parents who are concerned about their children’s education. Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 234) reported that although much progress had been made in providing education to all children in San Andrés, a quality education was still not available to all public school students in the community. (Lorandi, one of the authors of the above cited reference, is a co-founder of the case study school.) Indicating that this problem still exists, several participant families stated that the low quality of public education was the primary reason for choosing Centro Telpochcalli for their children.

One middle-class father who participated in the study told me that he and his wife had chosen the school because it included children with disabilities. He was glad that his daughters had had the opportunity to learn sign language and thus converse with deaf students at the school. He said that the fact that there were art, English and computer

classes had also influenced their decision. In the *censo-lingüístico* survey conducted at Centro Telpochcalli (described in Section 2.2.3) 34 of 65 parents gave the quality of education as the reason for choosing the school for their children. Some of the others reasons given were music, English, and computer classes; teaching methods which helps the students to develop self-esteem and thinking ability; and the inclusiveness of all peoples.

The case study parents saw Centro Telpochcalli as an alternative to both public and private school curriculum. However, since the selection of the case study students (described below) Centro Telpochcalli has closed the primary and middle school sections and only the high schools remains. The school raised the tuition from 600 pesos (about \$54 US) a month to 1200 pesos (about \$108 US). This resulted in many parents choosing to send their children to other schools and thus led to the closure of the primary and middle school sections.¹ One of the participant families told me that there had been rumors of corruption in the financial dealings of the school. I attempted to get the director's side of the story, but this proved to be impossible. Since the school was closed I probably spent more time with the children's family than otherwise would have been the case. If the school had been open I could have observed the case study student's literacy development both at home and at school.

2.2. Researchers

2.2.1. Larger Project

As previously stated, this study was part of a larger project being conducted at a university in central Mexico. This project began in 2002 and is scheduled to continue

through 2005. The primary investigators for this research project are two professors from a local university, both with Ph.D.'s in Education, and a professor from Vanderbilt University in the U.S., who also holds a Ph.D. in Education. During past semesters the professor from Vanderbilt has taught classes as a visiting professor at one of the universities situated in the proposed research site. Also, there are three graduate students and one undergraduate student gathering and evaluating data in support of the larger project. One of the graduate students is studying education and two of them along with the undergraduate are studying applied linguistics. The research team is made up of three native Spanish speakers, one who speaks English fluently, and four Americans, two who speak Spanish fluently and two who speak it at the advanced level. Teague (2004), who is bilingual, was part of the research team from 2002 until 2003. Thus, all members of the COSOLEM team are either advanced or native speakers.

2.2.2. Primary Researcher

I am a U.S. citizen and have lived most of my life in the United States. I had considerable exposure to literacy events and material from an early age. I lived with my mother, older brother, and grandfather until I was 18 years old. My mother and grandfather both read for pleasure regularly. My mother was a very religious person and read the bible and bible-related materials daily. She also required that my brother and I read such materials when we were old enough to read. She also required us to attend religious meetings three times a week where these materials were read. After each paragraph was read aloud, a question that was printed in the magazine was read and the audience was invited to answer the question by summarizing the information in the

paragraph. My mother required my brother and I to read the article ahead of time, to underline the main points in the paragraphs and to participate in the church meetings. All of this was, of course, in addition to the reading I did in and for school. In spite of this additional reading, I never developed the ability to read rapidly. However, about in the seventh grade I did start to read for pleasure. In the ninth grade I started reading classics such as works by Charles Dickens and Somerset Maugham. Also, in the ninth grade I started to apply myself in my school work and achieved a B average throughout high school. I believe that I achieved modest success in high school because I had learned to read for pleasure. I believe that if one reads for pleasure, reading becomes second nature and academic reading becomes easier.

I am the father of one child (now an adult), so I have considerable personal experience with family literacy. Both my former wife and I read for pleasure regularly, and our daughter acquired this same habit and did very well in school. Unfortunately, because of the religious beliefs we held at the time my daughter did not go to college. In fact, I did not attend college until I was fifty years old. During the years between high school and university I often read news magazines, such as *Time*, and novels. During this time I worked as a computer programmer and regularly read information technology journals.

While completing an undergraduate degree in Spanish I studied as an exchange student at the university where the larger study is being conducted. I am currently studying a master's degree in applied linguistics at the same university and have lived in the research area for two years. One of the required courses of this program gave me opportunity to learn about the literacy practices of San Andrés. Each student was

required to gather information about the literacy practices in the community in different domains, such as in schools, libraries, and businesses. In a final course project, I investigated and reported on literacy practices in a sixth grade classroom in a public school in San Andrés (Vance, 2005). The graduate students read each other's observations and interviews and used this information when writing their research papers. This added to my background knowledge of the research communities. Before living in Mexico I spent many vacations in Mexico and other Latin American countries. During these visits I noticed an absence of materials that I associate with mass literacy. I noticed that book stores and newsstands do not seem to sell many novels. The easy-to-read novels sold at most American supermarkets seemed to be missing, although translations of the classics were often available in bookstores. Although comic books also seemed to be commonly available at newsstands, I started wondering if Latin Americans have acquired the habit of reading for pleasure.

While doing research of a sixth grade classroom in a public school (explained above), I noticed that many fathers accompanied their children to school and spoke with their teachers. They also attended special events and meetings to which parents were invited. While interviewing fathers for the current study, I found that they viewed literacy as an important asset which would allow their children to have a better quality of life. I see fathers in the research community as being very interested in the literacy acquisition of their children.

My knowledge of Spanish is at the advanced level. During the data collection phase of the study, I compensated for not being a native speaker by recording interviews and having them transcribed by a native speaker, as well as by verifying my

understanding of local culture with residents of the area and with members of the research team. During my two years in Mexico I have lived with a Mexican who is a primary school teacher who has twenty years of teaching experience. He has proved to be a valuable resource regarding Mexican literacy practices and ideas about schooling.

2.3 The Families

As part of my work with the larger project, I observed and interviewed eight families that had already been selected by the larger project regarding their literacy practices. These eight families were participants in the current qualitative study. All the families had at least one child who attended the Centro Telpochcalli during the 2003-2004 school-year. As part of my work with the larger project, I observed the first-grade class of teacher Gertrudis during the last two months of the 2003-2004 school-year. Teague (2004) observed this same class from August 2003 through May of 2004 and had already selected ten students to be case study students. The case study students were chosen on the basis of their literacy level (high, medium, low) (Teague 2004). This is similar to the way Jiménez, García and Pearson (1995, 1996) assessed reading levels of the participants in their studies, but in this case an addition level was added, medium. Teague (2004) made an initial determination of the students' literacy levels after observing the class for three months. Without revealing his findings, he asked the teacher to divide the students into the same three literacy levels (high, medium low) for the purpose of confirming/disconfirming his findings. The case study students were then selected from each of the three literacy levels with an effort to include students from different socio-economic status, genders, those with and without family living abroad,

and some who have family members who speak an indigenous language (see section 2.1.1). Of course, with only ten subjects it was not possible to have perfectly balanced groups, so the ten students represent a mix of these factors (Teague 2004, pp. 41-43).

While the main purpose of the Teague study (2004, p.2) was to “understand the processes and ideologies that contribute to the construction of readers and writers” in the classroom, the main purpose of the current study was to understand these processes and ideologies as they occur in the home. For this reason it was necessary to visit the families in their homes. In order to get to know the parents of these ten case study students the other researcher and I waited at the front gate after classes were dismissed for the day until the parents came to pick up their child(ren). We introduced ourselves and asked if we could visit them at their homes in order to talk about home literacy practices. Two of the families were contacted by Teague (2004) and I contacted seven of the families. The father was present when I initially visited these seven families, which was important since the focus of this study is to assess the father’s influence on their children’s literacy development. All the families received me well and I told them that I was doing a thesis on family literacy. All of them indicated they would be willing to talk with me further. Although one of the families contacted by Teague (2004) is headed by a single mother, I decided to include this family in the study because one of the research questions asks how fathers’ views of literacy tend to differ from mothers’ views. I was unable to contact two of the ten families.

The families were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, that all information was confidential and that their identities would be concealed. They were

asked to sign a consent form giving me permission to publish my findings using pseudonyms (see Appendix H).

As stated in section 1.2.5, Álvarez, Corro and Lorandi (1992, p. 74) report that although the father is the head of the family, his relationship with the family is somewhat distant. They say the mother is always the one who establishes the ties of communication and intimacy with the children, but with the support of the father. Mlade (2001, p. 61), who conducted her study nine years later, reports that gender roles are still well defined, but that they are “subject to individual interpretation and flexibility.” The fact that the families who participated in this study had chosen an alternative school in hopes of improving their children’s education could mean that the fathers in these families are more involved in their children’s upbringing than most fathers in San Andrés. What follows is a brief description of each of the eight families.

The Torres family consists of seven persons. Juan moved to the research area when he was three years old and Elvira when she was 12 years old. They have three children, Mara, Rebecca, and Jaime, a case study student. Juan’s parents, Pedro and Juana, also live with the family. They live in a lower-middle-class house with three bedrooms, a kitchen, a living/dining room, and a bathroom and they own a 1988 pick-up truck. Their house is made of concrete blocks and has a cement floor. The property they live on was purchased by Pedro, Juan’s father, thirty years ago. They live on a dead-end street which is near several upscale housing developments. Across the street from their home there is a cornfield. The property has a run-down look to it. The roofs of the various buildings have the skeletons of second floors not yet completed. Juan’s brother also lives on the property in a separate house with his family and has a fork-lift repair

business there. This arrangement fits the pattern described by Robichaux (2003) for families with Mesoamerican roots, in which the sons build homes on their father's property. In fact, Juan is in the process of building a separate apartment for his family above the house his family is currently living in with his parents.

Juan, who finished *secundaria* (middle school), was unemployed when I first met the family, but subsequently found work in a tire shop. Toward the end of the study he quit his job at the tire shop and is now doing construction work. He lived in the United States, where he worked in a tire shop for over three years, and returned about two years ago. He recently mentioned that he'd like to go back to the United States in order to earn money to support his family. He has mentioned several times that he earns very little at his current job. His wife, who works as a housekeeper, finished only the second grade of primary school, but gives the impression of having had more education in the way she expresses herself. She likes to do handicrafts such as embroidery and ceramics. Juan's parents, Pedro and Juana, also, finished only second grade of primary school. The three children were attending Centro Telpochcalli when I met the family. Mara was in the fifth grade and Rebecca and Jaime were in the first grade. Jaime is a year older than Rebecca, but they are in the same grade because Jaime had to repeat the first grade. The children are now attending a public school. The three children were very friendly and always greeted me enthusiastically.

The Vázquez family consists of five persons. Ricardo and Alma and their three children: Carlos, 19, Eric, 10, and Hector, 8 (case study student). The parents were both born and raised in other parts of Mexico, Ricardo in Mexico City and Alma in Saltillo, Coahuila. The family lives in an upper-middle-class home which is in very good

condition and has a fenced yard for their two small dogs. Ricardo, who attended three semesters of university, is an instructor of automobile mechanics and Alma, who finished *secundaria* (middle school), does not work outside the home and is currently attending a high school for adults. She plans to have a high school diploma by the end of 2005. Carlos, who has always attended public schools, is taking a year off school and working in a restaurant before finishing his last year of high school. Eric and Hector, who are very fond of playing soccer, were attending Centro Telpochcalli when I met the family, and are now attending a bilingual parochial school. During the summer of 2004 Ricardo and Alma took a two-week tour of Europe, which is something that the other participant families would not have the resources to do. Eric and Hector are both very quiet and usually only talked to me when I asked them specific questions.

The López family also consists of five persons, Aldo and Amparo and their three children: Natalia, 17, Teresa, 15 and Alicia, 8 (case study student). Aldo and Amparo were born and raised in the research area. They live in a rural community about seven kilometers from the center of San Pedro Cholula in a middle-class home. They say they intentionally chose to live in a rural area so that they are not close to their families, who live in the city of Puebla. This is in opposition to the pattern Robichaux (2003) describes for Mesoamerican families, in which sons often build homes on their parents' property. Their home is at the end of a dead end street which has about five homes on it. Their living room is attractively painted and has nice furniture; however, the rest of the house is a little more rustic. Aldo has a master's degree in rural development planning and Amparo, who doesn't currently work outside the home, has a bachelor's degree in engineering. Amparo is currently studying English for three hours a day and Aldo works

as a training consultant. The three children were all attending Centro Telpochcalli when I met the family. Aldo and Amparo both taught content subjects in an indigenous school in the northern part of the state for seven years after they finished their university degrees. Both have expressed their belief in the importance of acceptance of all people, including people of different races, handicapped persons, and gay and lesbian persons. The children tend to be shy, but did make an effort to talk to me. All three of the children are now attending a private school.

The Arellano family also consists of five persons: Javier and Lila and three children. Javier, who was born and educated in Cuba, is the step-father and does sound engineering work as a private contractor. Lila, who studied one year at a local university, describes herself as a *comerciante* (merchant). The children are Octavio, 13, Dolores, 12, and David, 8 (case study student). Of the three children, only David attended Centro Telpochcalli when I met the family. The family lives in a small middle-class home in a housing development. The home, called a *casa aparte*, is similar to what is commonly called townhouse style in the U.S. It has a very small front yard, which is mostly taken up by the only parking place. The family owns two cars. The two older children tended to disappear upstairs when I visited the family, but David, the youngest, is very outgoing and liked to talk to me. He is now attending a public school.

The Lara family is made up of the two parents, Marcelo and Marilú, and three children: Esaú, 8 (case study student), Areli 6, and Leticia, 1. They live in a one-room home above Marilú's father's workshop and own a late model economy car. Their home is divided into sleeping area and living/kitchen area by a curtain. When I met the family the main door to their home was a curtain, but they have since installed a white metal

door. They are also in the process of painting the walls which were unpainted previously. Both the parents finished high school. Marcelo was unemployed when I first met the family and is currently working for a bus company as a mechanic trainee. Marilu works as a clerk for a large discount chain. When I met the family, Esaú was the only child attending Centro Telpochcalli because the younger two weren't then of school age. Esaú and Areli are now attending a public school. The children tend to be shy, but seem to enjoy talking with me about their literacy practices.

The Escoto family consists of only two members: Mariela, the mother, and Roberto (case study student), age 8. They live in a small two-bedroom apartment in a pleasant apartment building, and Mariela bought a used late model economy car about three months before the study ended. Mariela completed a technical degree in accounting and works at a local university. Mariela has traveled to Cuba and England for short periods for vacations. She is interested in learning Nahuatl and also in having Roberto learn it, so he will learn something about his heritage. They were studying Nahuatl in an informal study group when I met them, but their teacher left the area for two months, but has now returned and Mariela hopes that she and Roberto can continue to study Nahuatl with him. She says the study group mostly reads poems in Nahuatl. Roberto is very outgoing and seemed to enjoy interacting with me. He is now attending a bilingual parochial school.

The Ramírez family is made up of six persons: Alejandro and Rocío and their four children, Roman, 12, Cristina, 10, Isela, 8 (case study student) and Graciela 4. Alejandro studied for three years to be a veterinarian, but dropped out of university and has been a semi-truck driver for twenty years. He is away from the home for one to two weeks at a

time because of his job. He works for a company based in Laredo, Texas, and drives between Laredo and Puebla. Rocío, who doesn't currently work outside the home, completed middle school. The family lives on a property owned by Alejandro's parents. Alejandro's parents live in a large house and three of their sons, including Alejandro who is the oldest, live with their families in smaller separate houses on the same property. This fits the pattern Robichaux (2003) describes for Mesoamerican families (see section 1.2.5). The property has a prosperous feel to it. There is a very pleasant picnic area near the houses with picnic tables and lawn. Alejandro and Rocío have recently added a new kitchen to their house. The walls are decorated with colorful tiles below and painted peach above. Alejandro's father, Isela's grandfather, is an author of books which he says tell the unofficial history of Mexico. Alejandro tells me that his youngest daughter, Isela, enjoys reading her grandfather's books. All the children except Graciela, who suffers from cerebral paralysis and attends special education classes, were attending Centro Telpochcalli when I met the family. The children are now attending a private school.

The Gutiérrez family is made up of five persons, Jose Luis and Nehomí and their three children Antonio, 9, Abril, 8 (case study student), and Fernando, 1. They live in a very basic brick house and don't own a car. The house has a dirt floor which has been treated in some way so that it is not dusty. The brick walls are sparsely decorated and the furniture is quite old. The kitchen has a refrigerator and a two-burner hot plate, but there are no cupboards or counters. Two cardboard boxes serve as storage space. The family lives on property owned by Jose Luis's mother. His father recently passed away. Jose Luis, who works as a butcher for his brother-in-law, finished middle school. Nehomí, who currently does not work outside the home, attended Normal, which is a teacher

training school, for two years in Puebla. She left school before graduating in order to care for the children. Jose Luis works seven days a week and doesn't arrive home until eight at night. Although Jose Luis seemed concerned about his children's education, he didn't seem as interested in participating in the current study as the other fathers. The children are very shy and only talk to me when their mother encourages them to do so. Antonio and Abril both attended Centro Telpochcalli when I met the family and are now attending a public school.

As the foregoing discussion shows, the eight participant families share some similarities and a number of differences. Six of the eight families own their own home, but their homes vary greatly, from a home with a dirt floor to an upper-middle-class home. All but one of the families owns at least one car. The educational level of the parents varies greatly. Alicia's mother has a bachelor's degree and her father has a master's degree; whereas, Jaime's mother finished only the second grade and his father finished middle school. Most of the parents finished at least high school. Six of the eight families have three children. The socio-economic level of the families varies from lower-class to upper-middle-class, with most being middle-class. On average, the socio-economic level of the eight participant families is higher than the community at large. See Table 2.2 for further information. Five of the families have family members living abroad and six of the heads of household have traveled to a foreign country. None of the family members report being able to speak an indigenous or a foreign language.

2.4 Case Study Students

David is an energetic, intelligent seven-year old, who says he likes American football very much. He exerts himself in school, although he is easily distracted. At the end of the first grade his teacher told me that although he learned rapidly he had not developed as much as he should have during the first grade. She said this was due to a lack of support from his mother. I mostly observed and talked with David in his home. He was always friendly and anxious to be a part of the conversation, although he didn't interrupt the adults. He had the major role in the Christmas play at his school and was very excited when he told me about it. When I asked him if he likes to read, he said, "not much." When I probed a little more he said he likes to read action and suspense stories, but not novels. His mother tells me that he does not like to write, but when I asked him about that toward the end of the second grade he said he had written notes and letters to his friends. His mothers tells me that he has to work harder in the public school he is now going to than he did in Centro Telpochcalli. She says this is because the public school demands more of him. The miscue analysis performed near the end of his second grade (described in section 3.3 of this thesis) suggests that although his oral reading ability was low, his comprehension was high.

Although Alicia appears to be shy when talking to adults, she was often reprimanded by her first grade teacher for talking to her table-mates too much. During my visits to the family she always spoke with me and showed me a book or something

she had written. Her teacher told me that Alicia is very good at drawing, that she exerts herself in her school work, and that she reads and writes very well. Her parents tell me that she often writes “historietas,” which are similar to what Americans call comic books (see example, Chapter Three, Figure 3.2), and that she reads very rapidly for her age. Her mother says Alicia likes to read stories, especially novels, and that she also likes to read aloud. Her mother says that Alicia sometimes reads to her when she is doing housework. The miscue analysis assessment performed near the end of the second grade (described in section 3.3) suggests that her reading level was high in both oral accuracy and comprehension.

Esaú is a quiet boy who says he likes to do homework very much. At the end of the first grade his teacher confirmed this, saying that he seemed to really like school. She also said that he is creative and that he had changed considerably during the year. She said by the end of the year he had become more outgoing, didn’t get angry as easily, and that he had developed the ability to make friends. She also said that he was able to write long sentences. His parents told me that he reads well and that he likes to read silently, although the miscue analysis test performed near the end of the second grade (described in section 3.3 of this thesis) suggests that although his oral reading ability was high, his comprehension was average. They also said they were proud of how well he had done during the first grade. When I asked him what he liked to do in school he said, drawing, reading, and arithmetic. When I asked him if he liked doing homework he replied, “Mucho (very much).” He says he likes to read about dinosaurs and the human body. He says he likes to write stories in school, but when he is at home he prefers to draw. His parents said they were concerned that he wasn’t learning as much in the public school as

he had in Centro Telpochcalli. They said that much of what was being covered in his second grade class he had already learned during the first grade at Centro Telpochcalli.

Hector is a quiet boy who takes school seriously and takes soccer even more seriously. His first grade teacher told me that he learns very quickly and that at times he got bored so she assigned him additional work. She said that although he was serious about school he did have the tendency to play around during class at times. When I first met him at school he seemed very shy and would hardly speak to me, but at home he did respond when I talked to him. His parents say he is conscientious about doing his homework and that he likes to read fables. His father says that if he explains something complicated to Hector, he understands and can repeat the details very exactly. He says Hector is very articulate and that he has a good imagination. He is now going to a private bilingual school, where he is studying English. The miscue analysis procedure performed near the end of the second grade (described in section 3.3 of this thesis) suggests that his oral reading level was average, but his comprehension was low.

Abril is a quiet girl who likes to talk with her friends. Her teacher told me that she is very studious and that she likes to learn new things. Her teacher says she advanced considerably during first grade, but that her mother helps her too much. When I visited her family's home she seemed quite bashful, but when I engaged her and her brother in a game of "Basta" (see section 4.12 of this thesis), both were quite animated. Her parents tell me that her reading is limited to school work, although on the first visit they did show me a story book that they read to the children from time to time. Her mother said that she has Abril read to her while she is doing her housework, and they look up words they don't know in the dictionary. Her parents said that the subject she prefers the most in

school is Spanish language arts. She likes to write and she often plays at writing letters to her friends. She also likes to tell stories to and read to her baby brother. When she reads to him she read from her Spanish language arts book and from a small book of children's fable. Her parents report that she is doing well at public school and the miscue analysis performed near the end of the second grade (described in section 3.3) suggests that her reading level was average.

Jaime is a distracted seven year who was thought to suffer from learning difficulties when he was in the first grade. His teacher told me that was a very noble boy who likes to share and that he likes to talk to everyone. The first time I talked to his parents they told me that he had a learning deficit; however, the observations done by Teague (2004) suggest that he is easily distracted but that he can learn when he puts his mind to it. His parents reported that he has progressed well during the second grade, however, a miscue analysis assessment performed near the end of the second grade (described in section 3.3) suggests that his reading level was low. His mother says that he matures slowly and attributes this to his lack of progress. His parents report that the family only reads when the children are doing their homework. His father says Jaime seems to be more interested in earning money than in studying.

Isela is a quiet, hard-working girl who likes to talk with her friends. Her first grade teacher described her as an excellent student who likes to read and who writes interesting stories. Her teacher also said that she gave Isela extra work at times because she was able to finish the regular work before the rest of the students, and therefore would get bored. Her parents tell me that she loves to read and that she reads for pleasure just about everyday. Isela's grandfather writes books which he says are about the

“unofficial history” of Mexico. Isela likes to read her grandfather’s book, showing she is at an advanced reading level for her age. Her parents tell me she is continuing to do very well in all her subjects at the private school she attends. The miscue analysis performed near the end of the second grade (described in section 3.3) suggests that her reading level was high.

Roberto is a very out-going boy who enjoys playing soccer and talking with his friends. His teacher tells me that he changes between being aggressive and affectionate. She says he reads well, which was confirmed by the miscue analysis procedure performed near the end of the second grade as far as comprehension is concerned, (described in section 3.3), and that he expresses his ideas very well when he writes. Roberto draws very well and his father, who is an artist, gives him drawing lessons. His mother says he spends a lot of time drawing. During first grade he was disciplined by his teacher for fighting with other students and not working. His mother reports these problems are continuing in second grade. His mother also tells me that his language is mature for his age. Roberto tells me he likes to read about robots and outer-space.

Table 2.1 Background of Case Studies Students and Their Families

Case Study Student	Education of Parents Father Mother	Socio-Economic Status ²	Gender of Case Study Student	Reading Level of Case Study Student ³
Jaime Torres	Middle school 2 years prim.	Lower-middle	Male	Low
Hector Vázquez	3 semesters univ. Middle school	Upper-middle	Male	High
Alicia López	Masters Bachelors	Middle	Female	Medium
David Arellano	Bachelor's 1 year univ.	Middle	Male	High
Esaú Lara	High school High school	Lower-middle	Male	Low
Roberto Cano	NA ¹ Tech. degree	Middle	Male	High
Isela Ramírez	3 years univ. Middle school	Middle	Female	High
Abril Gutiérrez	Middle school 3 years univ.	Lower	Female	Medium

¹ No data available on father. Does not live with family.

² Socio-Economic Status was arrived at by observing the families' homes and possessions.

³ Reading level is what was originally determined by Teague (2004) and confirmed by their first grade teacher after three months of first grade.

Table 2.2 is based on data collected by the larger project using the *censo-lingüístico* instrument (see Appendix B) which was developed to gather socio-economic and linguistic information about the families whose children attended the three schools that the larger project is studying. The questions focused on the type of home the family lives in, their educational level, their perceived importance of learning English, whether or not the family has relatives living abroad, whether or not the family has visited other countries, etc. These data were collected at Centro Telpochcalli during November 2003 by asking parents to fill-out the *censo-lingüístico* form. The table compares the eight participating families with the sample (65) collected from the school from which the families were selected (Centro Telpochcalli). The last column contains the same information from samples of the three school (218) which the larger project studied, Centro Telpochcalli and two nearby public schools. The data seem to indicate that the eight participating families are representative of the school from which they were selected, but when the participating families are compared to the data of two public schools, it appears that their socio-economic and educational levels are higher. This is understandable given the fact that Centro Telpochcalli charges tuition, and parents with higher socio-economic status would be more able to afford to send their children to this school. Also, Centro Telpochcalli is an alternative school whose stated goal is to provide better learning opportunities for its students. It seems likely that parents with higher levels of education would be more apt to have chosen such an alternative school.

On average, the socio-economic status of the eight participating families is higher than that of the families whose children who were attending the two public schools being studied as part of the larger study. A higher percentage of participant families have

phones, cable TV, Internet access, and cars than the public school families. Also, the case study families have a substantially higher level of formal education, on average, than do the public school families. 100% of the heads of household of the case study families finished middle school, while only 50% of the heads of household of the public school families finished middle school. The difference is even more pronounced when high school (75% versus 23%) and university (50% versus 5%) are compared. The percentage of participating families that have traveled abroad is also much higher than the public school families (75% versus 4%) as is the percentage that reports that they speak some English (25% versus 5%).

Table 2.2 *Censo-lingüístico* data. Comparison of Cento Telpochcalli and the Two Public Schools Being Studied as Part of the Larger Study.

	The participating families (8)	Centro Telpochcalli (65)	Paz Montaña (69)	Abraham-Sánchez (82)	PM and AS (151)	The three schools (218)
Phone	7 88%	55 85%	40 58%	56 68%	96 64%	151 69%
Cable	2 25%	6 9%	0 --	6 7%	6 4%	12 6%
Internet	3 38%	23 23%	0 --	6 11%	6 4%	29 13%
Car	7 88%	52 80%	10 14%	27 33%	37 25%	89 41%
Own their own home	6 75%	47 72%	51 74%	60 73%	111 74%	158 72%
Finished middle school	8 100%	60 92%	23 33%	52 63%	75 50%	135 62%
High school/technical career	6 75%	53 92%	10 14%	25 30%	35 23%	88 40%
At least some university	4 50%	34 52%	2 3%	6 7%	8 5%	42 19%
Post graduate	1 12%	8 12%	0 --	0 --	0 --	8 4%
Family living abroad	5 63%	34 52%	24 35%	38 46%	62 41%	96 44%
Visited other countries	6 75%	23 35%	2 3%	4 5%	6 4%	29 13%
Speak English fluently	0 --	1 1%	0 --	0 --	0 --	1 1%
Speak Some English	2 25%	28 43%	2 3%	5 6%	7 5%	35 16%
Indigenous Languages	0 --	0 --	3 4%	4 5%	7 5%	7 3%

(00) number of families interviewed % represents percentage of those interviewed

Notes for Chapter Two

1 In August of 2005 the middle school was reopened, with class sizes averaging about 7 students.

CHAPTER 3: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

As already stated in section 1.4 the design of the current study is qualitative using ethnographic methods, including interviews and observation data. The investigation consisted of case studies of eight families whose children attended one of the first grade classes at Centro Telpochcalli. I interviewed eight families in their homes about their literacy practices. The following sections describe in more detail how the data was collected and analyzed.

3.2. Materials and Procedures.

3.2.1. Field Notes.

I wrote detailed field notes of all observations and interviews. As Bogdan and Biklen point out, field notes are “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study (2003, p. 111).” It is not only important to record what happens, but also the context so that the researcher can attain a deeper level of understanding. The field notes included both descriptive and reflective facets. Bogdan and Biklen say that the reflective facet includes “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” which are later used to help the researcher analyze the data more accurately (p. 114). Reflective field notes help the researcher to be aware of and “control observer’s effect (p.116).” I normally took notes during the visit and wrote the field notes immediately afterward. My data pool contains 38 field notes.

Figure 3.1. Example of reflective fieldnotes.

I entered the house and José Luís (pseudonym) was helping Abril (pseudonym) with her math homework (they were both standing up). I greeted them and the response was less than enthusiastic. **OC: José Luís didn't seem unhappy that I was there, but at the same time he was very reserved during the whole visit.** ... After the interview we talked very briefly and then we made an appointment for me to visit them on the 13th of February. José Luís walked with me to the main door. I said I hoped that my visits weren't a bother. I said little by little I'm learning about the literacy of the Mexican culture. He indicated that my visits were not a bother and that yes it takes a while to learn about another culture. We shook hands and said good-bye. **OC: José Luís works long hours so that could account for why he's friendlier on some visits than he is on others. Nohemí (pseudonym) was upbeat during the whole visit. (OC = Observer Comments)**

3.2.2. Observations

Observations are an important part of qualitative analysis. Analysis conducted for this study was partially based on observations already done by Teague (2004) of the first grade class of Gertrudis during the 2003-2004 school-year. Analyzing these observations gave me insight into the case-study students' literacy levels and attitudes toward literacy as expressed in a classroom context. These observations were participatory in that Teague (2004) interacted with the students, talking with them, helping them with school work, and playing games with them. I also observed the same first grade class about ten times over a two-month period in order to observe the case study students in their classroom and to prepare for the home visits and interviews I conducted for this study.

I also observed the families during home visits. The observations were also participatory in nature in that I interacted freely with the families. I read with the children and took part in other family activities, such as playing games and watching movies with the family. The field notes taken during these observations were used to

identify and analyze patterns in the participants' literacy practices, attitudes, and the reasons they do what they do with written language.

One purpose of the initial visits was to begin to foster mutual trust between the families and me, so the families would come to feel free to share information about their lives with me during the interviews which were to follow. Whenever possible, I tried to visit the family when the father was at home. This required making evening and weekend visits, since the fathers usually weren't home during the day on week-days. The visits were from a half hour to an hour and-a-half long depending on how much time the family had available. Sometimes the visits included eating a meal with the family and other activities such as reading and playing board games with the children, and eating *rosca* cake, a Mexican tradition. For example, on one visit with the Gutierrez family, Nohemí said that the two older children enjoy playing "Basta," which is a word game played with paper and pencil, with their cousins who live nearby. On the next visit I asked Abril and Juan to teach me the game, which they seemed to enjoy doing. Each family was visited about eight times over a period of a year.

3.2.3. Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured in nature. Although I had specific questions in mind I didn't limit the discussion to these questions. The form of the interviews was similar to that described by González and Moll (2002, p. 625), in which the interviews became "an exchange of views, information, and stories." I took notes during the interview and wrote field notes as soon as possible afterwards. I recorded some of the interviews which were then professionally transcribed. My data pool contains 28

transcribed interviews. I then checked the transcriptions and made any necessary changes. If, after reading and analyzing the field notes and transcripts, other questions came up, I asked the families for further information on the next visit. For example, on a visit with the Cano family, Mariela showed me the book that she, her boyfriend, and Roberto had made. When I read my notes I realized I hadn't asked for details. On the next visit I asked her about it and she explained how the three had made it for a special Day of Reading that was held at the school. I also analyzed interviews conducted by Teague (2004) with the teacher, Gerturdis, the case study students, and some of the parents. These interviews gave me insights to the personalities and abilities of the case study students before I conducted the interviews with the families and case study students.

3.2.4. Instruments.

Several of the instruments used in the current study were developed by the larger project. Because they were developed to be used in the same research community as the current study, they were contextually appropriate tools for the current study. The first instrument which was developed by the larger project, the Socio-Familiar form (see Appendix C), was used to gather basic information about education, employment, birth date, place of birth, and the literacy practices and languages spoken by family members. These interviews often lead to important information about the families' interests, views, and practices regarding literacy. This interview was conducted following the Linguistic Census form (see Appendix B), which is described in the second chapter of this thesis. I took notes during these interviews and then wrote up field notes after the interview.

Two other instruments originally developed by the larger project were also used. The first is a literacy inventory (see Appendix F) designed to gather information about home literacy materials, including books, magazines, phone messages, grocery lists, homework, and many other artifacts. The second instrument was used to conduct a semi-structured in-depth interview (see Appendix G) with the families regarding their literacy experiences, practices, and attitudes. The interview included such questions as: How did you learn to read? What do you read and write on a daily basis? Do you consider reading to be important? Interviews of both types were recorded with the families' permission.

I adapted the case study interview developed by Teague (2004) to interview the case study students. It included such questions as: Do you like to read? Do you read regularly at home? How is what you read at home different that what you read in school? (See Appendix E.) This interview was also recorded. I also developed a more quantitative type questionnaire on which the family members wrote their responses. (See Appendix D.) There was a section for each parent and another for each child in the family. This questionnaire included such questions as (for the parents): Did you like school when you were young? Did your parents help you with your homework when you were in school? and the corresponding questions for the case study child students: Do you like school? Do your parents help you with your homework? This questionnaire was developed so I could triangulate quantitative data with the qualitative data I was collecting and also gather data not easily collected by qualitative means.

3.2.5 Document Analysis

I also collected and analyzed home literacy documents as a supplementary source of data. These documents include a wide range of items, including graduation diplomas, homework assignments, book covers, recipes, and greeting cards. Since each family is different, the number of documents varies by family from about five to fifteen. In addition to these documents, I also had access to documents that were collected during classroom observations by Teague (2004). I used a digital camera to collect the home literacy documents and, when appropriate, I asked the family if I could borrow them to scan or photocopy. The documents helped me to understand the families' literacy interests, attitudes and abilities. They also helped me to compare the differences between the families in terms of the specific uses of literacy in their daily lives. Figure 3.2 shows an "historieta" that Mayra wrote for me. It is a story about a boy who is transported to a place where there are a lot of sweets to eat by means of a special machine. When he gets there he finds a giant cookie which scares him. The non-conventional spelling (*aya* for *allá*) and punctuation errors (no *espera* instead of *no, espera*) seem typical for her age, and the plot and sequence of ideas in this *historieta* show that Mayra's writing is developing well for her age. Figure 3.3 is an example from Hector's notebook. The first page is an example of writing words several times in order to learn the spelling and the second page is a dictation. The teacher reads a passage and the students write it in their notebooks. This example shows that Hector's writing ability is well developed for his age. His writing is legible and there are few spelling errors.

Figure 3.2 Una historieta de Mayra

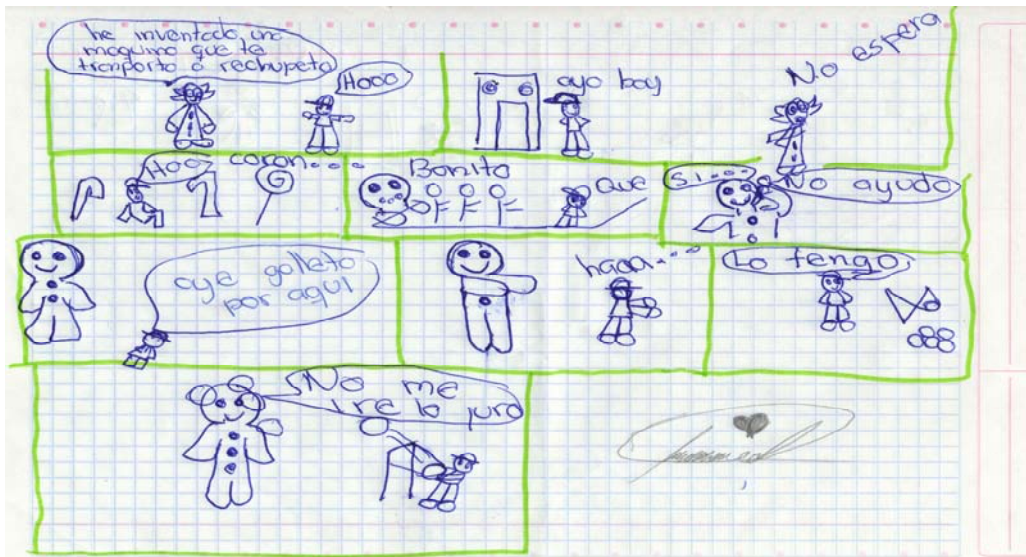
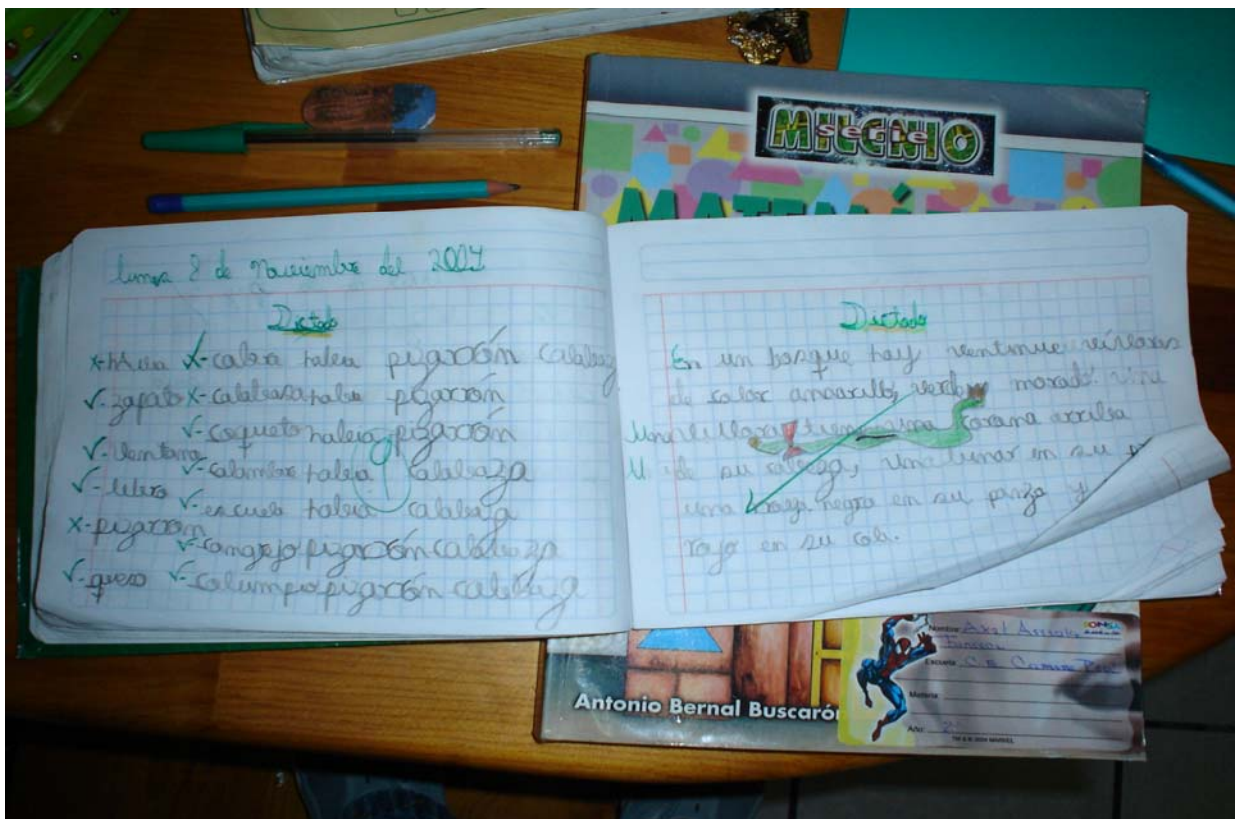


Figure 3.3 Hector's Notebook



3.3 Data Analysis

As previously stated, the constant comparative method was used to analyze the data (see the Chapter One). As data was collected, I read and reread the data to identify common themes. For example, the data that showed parents attitude and concerns toward education was extracted for each parent. I read and reread the data looking for how different parents agreed and differed in this aspect. This also served as a basis for questions during subsequent home visits.

Miscue analysis was used to assess the oral reading ability of each case study student. Goodman (1996, p. 53) describes miscue analysis this way:

Miscues are points in oral reading where the *observed response* ... doesn't match the *expected response* ... Miscues provide windows on the reading process, because they show the reader attempting to make sense of the text. They reveal as much about the reader's strengths as they do about weaknesses.

Thus, miscue analysis provides a "model of the reading process." Miscue analysis "provides the listener with insights into the reader's knowledge of language cueing system and his or her proficiency in using reading strategies" (Goodman, 1998, p. 313). I included miscue analysis in this study because I wanted to have quantifiable data to complement the teacher's and the parents' assessments, and because standardized reading test scores are generally not available in Mexico.

The miscue assessment was conducted near the end of the study as the case study students were completing their second year of primary school. Each case study student was asked to read a text that was unfamiliar to him or her and the techniques of miscue analysis were used to assess whether their reading level was high, medium, or low. An undergraduate student conducted these assessments as part of a class project and she

shared the results with me. Each student was assessed only once, so the results are not conclusive, but they do provide an idea as to the students' reading proficiency at the time.

The procedures for collection of these data were as follows: The person conducting the miscue analysis followed along while the subject read aloud and listened for omissions of words, insertions of additional words, successful self-corrections, unsuccessful attempts at self-corrections, running starts or repetitions, slow reading, etc. Table 3.1 shows the results of the miscue analysis based on the following scale: 10-20 miscues, high reading ability; 21-33 miscues, medium reading ability; and 33 or more miscues, low reading ability. After the subject finished reading, the person conducting the miscue analysis checked for comprehension. Table 3.2 shows the results of that part of the analysis.

Table 3.1 Results of Miscue Analysis for Accuracy

Accuracy			
	Low	Médium	High
Roberto	X		
David	X		
Haydee	X		
Marco A.	X		
Héctor		X	
Abril		X	
Esaú			X
Isela			X
Alicia		X	

Table 3.2 Results of Miscue Analysis for Comprehension

Comprehension¹			
	Low	Médium	High
Roberto			X
David			X
Haydee	X		
Marco A.	X		
Héctor	X		
Abril	X		
Esaú		X	
Isela			X
Alicia		X	

¹Comprehension assessment based on retelling of story in student's own words.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show Isela scored high in both accuracy and comprehension. However, a case study student's oral reading can result in enough miscues for his oral accuracy reading to be classified as low, although his comprehension is rated high. This was the case with Roberto and David. Teachers in the research area have been found to subject oral reading "to intense scrutiny with the expectation that this performance should be flawless" (Jiménez, Smith, & Martínez-León, 2003, p. 503). Since parents' beliefs tend to reflect the beliefs of teachers, it is probable that many parents share this viewpoint. Therefore, the assessment that teachers and parents have made of the case study children's reading levels as discussed in chapter two are probably influenced by this belief. However, it could be argued that comprehension is more important, which is my professional belief. As mentioned, I included miscue analysis in this study because it reveals aspects of a student's reading ability that other assessments do not show.

The computer software NVivo was also used to analyze the data. NVivo allows the qualitative researcher to code his or her field notes, interviews and other documents

according to categories that make sense to the particular research study he or she is conducting. As the project progresses he can add and change, and collapse categories. The software gives the researcher the ability to search the data by individual categories and by any combination of categories. This allows the researcher to see the data from different perspectives.

Early in the project I read my field notes, noting possible categories and groupings. I then reread the field notes to see if these categories and groupings made sense. After deciding on the categories, such as attitude toward learning, reading habits, etc, I then entered them into the NVivo project. The software allowed me to code data segments by category, called nodes by NVivo. I could then produce a report which showed all the data segments coded to a certain node. This facilitated finding common and contrasting themes. Some of the data, my field notes, are in English and some are in Spanish, the transcribed interviews. Since I am bilingual I was able to code data without having it translated.

Figure 3.4 shows the data code under “David, case study student, reading ability. I have highlighted the salient data segments which helped me to understand David’s reading ability.

Figure 3.4 Data coded under node “David - Case Study Student – Reading Ability”

Section 0, Paragraph 11, 48 characters.

he certainly **read well** the last time I was there

Document 'CV-022~oct28~2004', 1 passages, 289 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 9, 289 characters.

The last time I was there he read from his second grade Spanish book and he read quite well. **The Despierta was harder and he stumbled over more words.** When he brought that book his mother said: That book again. I said that kids often enjoy reading the same book or story over and over.

Document 'CV-032~jan13~2005', 1 passages, 477 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 9, 477 characters.

I asked David if he felt like reading with me. He said, “Me da igual.” He went and got a book. It was a simplified version of Olive Twist. I told him that when I was in high school Charles Dickens was my favorite author. **He read the first page. It appeared that it was a little advanced for him. His mother and I helped him with the words he didn’t know.** I especially helped with the English names. After he read the first page, we talked a little about the characters.

Document 'Interview DavidFather16feb~2005', 1 passages, 177 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 67-70, 177 characters.

Christopher: qué cosas leen ustedes o los niños, diariamente?
 Javier: qué leen?
 Christopher: ustedes y los niños?, los dos
 Javier: pus a veces eh, a veces libros de aventuras

Document 'InterviewDavidMar18~2005', 1 passages, 123 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 361-364, 123 characters.

Christopher: ¿lee rápido?
 David: no
 Christopher: ¿entiendes todo de lo que lees?
 David: algunas veces sí, y algunas veces no

Document 'InterviewDavidParents14jan2005', 1 passages, 123 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 23-29, 123 characters.

Christopher Ajá ... y lean ... **David lee las instrucciones?**
 Lila **si**
 Christopher si?
 Lila entre los 3 leen

Document 'InterviewwithDavidsparents', 1 passages, 205 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 13, 205 characters.

Lila sat at the table and helped him with words he didn’t know. He read about 8 pages from the book. **He reads quite well for his age.** When he finished I thanked him and told him that he read wells.

Table 3.3 shows the way I coded the data. Certain categories were divided individually by family members while others were coded at the family level. The characteristics that directly answered the research questions were divided by family

members and other issues, such as ability to speak English, were left at the family level. Many data segments were coded to two or more categories. For example, one case study student stated in a very enthusiastic manner that he enjoyed doing homework. This was coded under case study student's "personality" and "attitude/ability toward learning." As the data was coded I examined print outs of the coded data. For example, I could print out the detail of all the case study students reading habits in order to compare them.

Using the NVivo software, it was easy to compare the mothers' attitude/concerns toward education with those of the fathers, for example. Using this method also helped me to identify where data were thin or otherwise unsatisfactory, so I could revisit the families and ask additional questions. For example, when analyzing data relating to the reading habits of the case study students I realized that I didn't have any data on the reading habits of a particular case study student and I was able to collect the data on the next visit.

The category "personality" was used to code characteristics of the participants which helped me to understand their behavioral patterns. Such observed events as fighting with another student in class, offering me a cup of coffee during a home visit, and shyness were coded under "personality." The teacher's and parents' comments about the case study students' and siblings' reading and writing skill as well as my observations were coded under "reading ability" and "writing ability." "Reading habits" included self-report and parents' comments about what, where and how often the participants engaged in reading. "Attitude/ability toward learning" included comments the case student made about school and learning in general and also comments made by the teacher and parents.

For the category parents' "attitude/concern about education" I included comments they made that helped me understand how they viewed their children's education. For example, one father said he was concerned that one of his sons didn't want to study. This helped me to see that this father wanted his son to succeed in school. This same father said he was glad his son Eric, who doesn't like to read, was spending a considerable amount of time playing a computer game that required him to do a lot of reading in order to play the game. The father thought this would help his son develop his reading ability.

Table 3.3 Coding Structure

Case study student	Personality
	Reading ability
	Writing ability
	Reading habits
	Attitude/ability toward learning
	Other interests/activities
Siblings	Personality
	Reading ability
	Writing ability
	Reading habits
	Attitude/ability toward learning
	Other interests/activities
Father	Personality
	Reading ability
	Writing ability
	Work
	Education
	Reading habits
	Other interest/activities
	Reading to children
	Attitude/concern to education
	Help with homework
Mother	Personality
	Reading ability
	Writing ability
	Work
	Education
	Reading habits
	Other interest/activities
	Reading to children
	Attitude/concern to education
	Help with homework
English	
Transnational ¹	
Family activities	
Mexico profundo ²	
Socio-eco status	
Computer use	
Religion	
Literacy materials	

1 Has anyone in the family lived in another country and/or do they have relatives who live or have lived in another country?

2 Does the family have connections with indigenous cultures?

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.

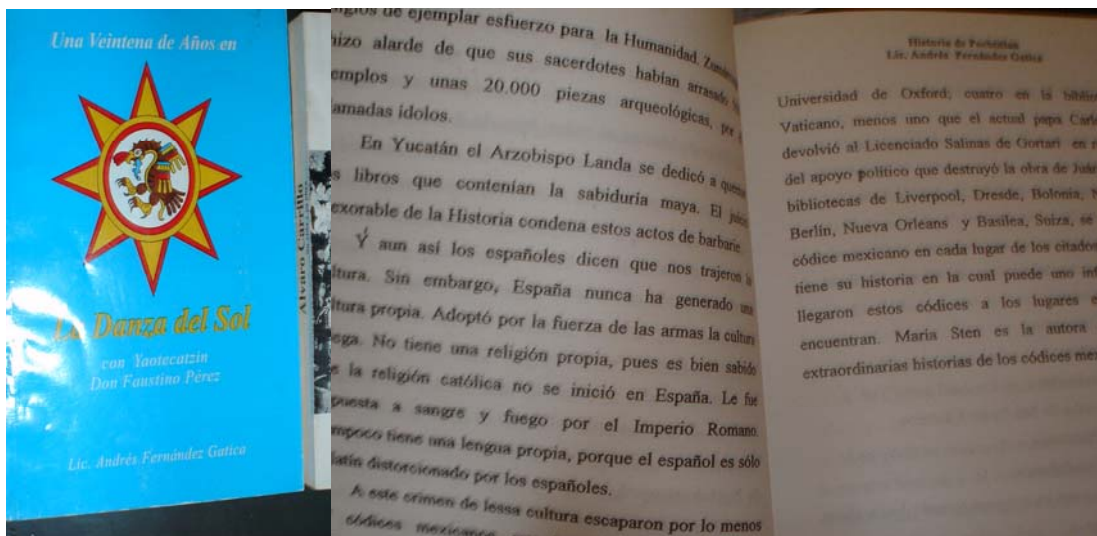


Figure 4.3 Example from one of Isela's grandfather's books

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.

Esau'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.

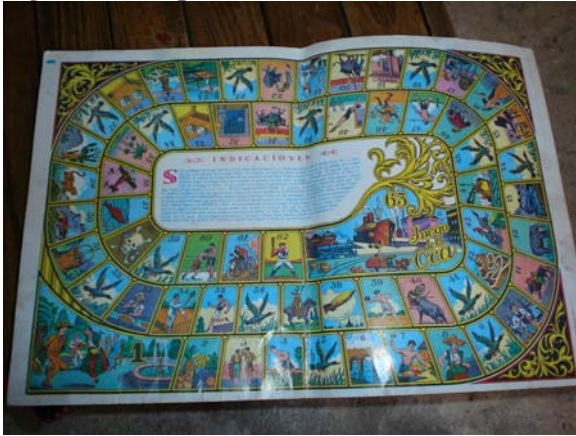
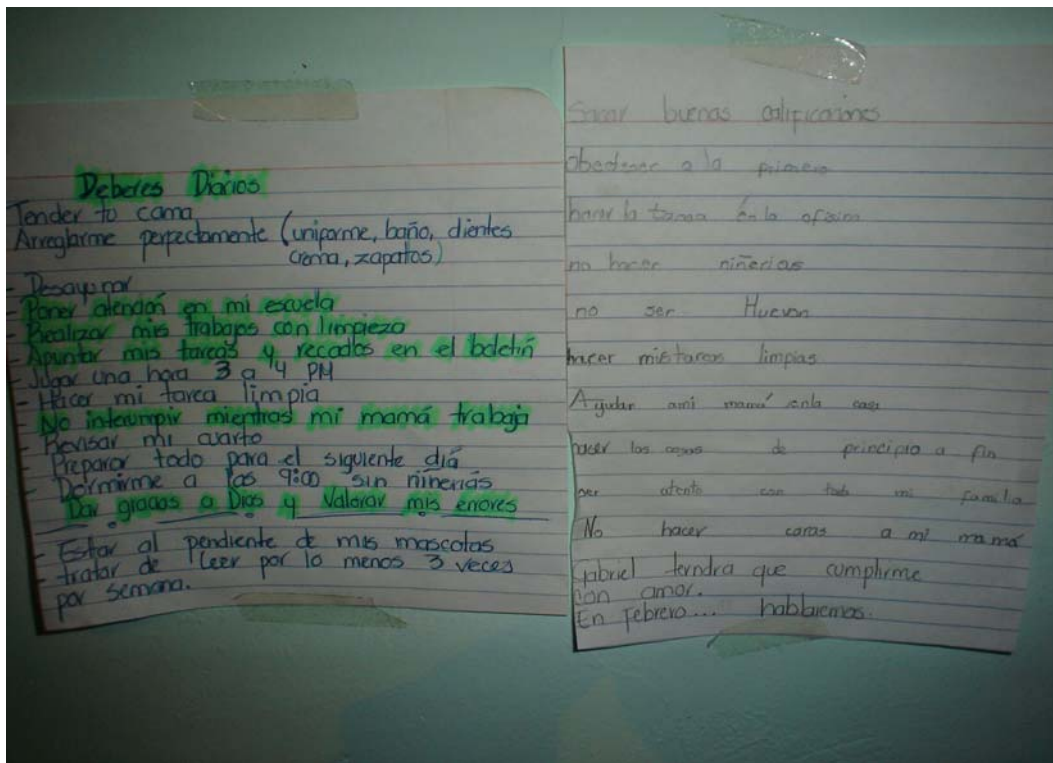


Figure 4.14 Gabriela's score sheet from game of Basta

nombre	apellido	edad	animal	cosa	flora	total
Laura	Lopez	Leon	León	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.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Findings

5.1.1 Overview

This study has found that fathers in the research context are very interested in their children's education and that they view it as their responsibility to help their children learn to read and write well. Contrary to stereotypes of Latino men, the fathers in the current study, regardless of socio-economic level, indicated that they view it as very important to help their children with their school work, and all say they provide such help on a regular basis. This is true even if the father had negative experiences when he was learning to read and write. All the participant families also want their children to receive a good education so that they can be better off economically in the future. All the families, again, regardless of socio-economic level, want the children to go to college. The data support the findings of other studies that if at least one parent reads for pleasure the children are more apt to learn to read and write well. The data show that among the study's participants the mother is more apt to read to the children than fathers during pre-school years. It is important to remember that these results were found in a research context where six percent of those 15 years and older are reportedly unable to read and write, another 15 per cent have not finished primary school, and another 29 per cent have not finished middle school ("Alarmante rezago educativo," 2005). In spite of, or perhaps because of, these low levels of education, the participants are very interested in their children's education. The results of this study suggest that the residents of the research communities place a high value on education; however, the above-cited statistics show

for that everyone to have an equal access to education more is needed than placing a high value on education.

5.2 Discussion of Research Questions

Each of the four research questions will be discussed based on the results contained in the previous chapter. The results are compared with results of other studies which were discussed in Chapter One in order to show how these results relate to trends in the field of home literacy.

5.2.1. Research Question #1: In the context of the study do Mexican fathers' literacy experiences tend to influence their view of their children's literacy?

The data do not seem to indicate that father's literacy experiences tend to influence their view of their children's literacy. Whether or not they had positive or negative experiences while learning to read and write, the data indicate that all seven of the fathers are anxious to have their children learn to read and write well. The data also indicate that they are willing to spend time with their children helping them to learn. This supports the findings of Ortiz (2004, p. 16), that Hispanic "fathers participated in early literacy activities because they viewed it as important, interesting and necessary." Those fathers who had positive experiences while learning literacy want their children to have the benefits of learning to read and write. Those who had negative experiences also believe it is important to learn to read and write. They do not want their children to have negative experiences, but they do want them to receive the benefits that one derives from being literate.

Jaime's father says all his experiences were good although he says he liked school "*regular*" (OK). Hector's father says reading extensively helped him to achieve his goal of increasing his vocabulary and being able to express himself better. Alicia's father says he had some bad experiences with a literature teacher in middle school and, also, that he has vision problems that make it hard for him to read. David's step-father says that reading has been a source of pleasure since he was seven or eight years old. Esaú's father says he had negative experiences with a teacher in primary school. Isela's father regrets that he was not required to exert himself to learn to read well while in (public) primary school. Abril's father says he didn't always get enough to eat while he was in school and that this affected his learning.

These various experiences didn't seem to affect how they view their children's literacy learning. All seven fathers want their children to learn to read and write well so that they will have a better future. In support of this, all said they were concerned that their children didn't miss school for unnecessary reasons and all said they very much wanted their children to attend college.

These findings are consistent with what Karther (2002, p. 191) reports in a study of two low-literate fathers. She found that "despite their own school failures and frustrations with learning, the fathers attempted to support their children's literacy learning." Four fathers in the current study report having had negative experiences while learning to read and write. However, all four make tangible efforts to support their own children's efforts to learn to read and write. Karther (p. 191) emphasizes that school "should not exclude or underestimate" father's influence on their children literacy development. Pucher (1997) says the school's view of the family literacy shouldn't focus

on just the “literate-mother-to-literate-child” paradigm, but should include the father. The results of the current study support this conclusion.

As previously stated, Ortiz (2004, p. 16) found that Mexican-American fathers helped their children with literacy activities “because they viewed it as important, interesting and necessary.” He says that this is true of fathers from “diverse backgrounds” (Ortiz, p.15). All the Mexican fathers in the current study expressed this same view that it is important and necessary to help their children. Those who were from middle-class families and those who were from low-income families believe that if their children are to have a better future it is their responsibility as fathers to help teach their children to read and write well. This concurs with the findings of Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (as cited in Millard, Taylor & Watson (2000), p. 191.) They found that parents of all socio-economic classes want their children to have a good education. Also, the fathers in the current study had this same desire for their children whether or not their parents had supported them in their own efforts to learn while they were children.

In support of this, these seven fathers all expressed their belief that it is important to help their children with their homework. Five of the fathers report helping their children with their homework frequently, and two say they help from time to time. One of the fathers that reported helping with homework from time to time works out of town most of the time; therefore, he is unable to help his children frequently. The other is a step-father and doesn’t seem to be involved in his step-children’s education. He says he helps them with specific questions only and that he checks for accuracy and completeness after the children have finished their school assignments.

Senechal and LeFevre (2001, p. 50) emphasize the importance of parents being involved in their children's literacy learning. An important way for parents to be involved is to help them with their homework. Lacasa, Reina and Alburquerque (2002, p. 61) report that when parents help their children with homework, it enlarges "the range of meanings that learners attribute to the task," because the parents provide a different "script" than that of the school. All the parents seemed to be instinctively aware of this in that they could see the importance of explaining things to their children that they didn't understand about their school work. They seemed to be aware that they possessed funds of knowledge (Moll and González, p. 143). For instance, I observed Hector's father help his older son study Greek mythology. He was drawing on his own knowledge to help his son. Esaú's father said he enjoys remembering the things he had learned in school, which he draws on when he helps his children with their homework. Jaime's father spoke of sharing the knowledge he and his wife have with their children. However, the parents seemed to discount the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being (Moll and González, 1994, p. 443)." For example, Jaime's father said he and his wife want their children to have more education than they would receive at home. As discussed in Section 1.2.3, a study conducted by Vélez-Ibáñez (1996) suggests that for parents to see the value in these types of funds of knowledge they need to be educated as to their usefulness.

Although fathers' experiences didn't seem to affect their view of the importance their children's learning of reading and writing, it appears that they had some effect on whether or not they provided a reading environment for their children. The data suggest

that parents who were read to as children are more apt to provide a reading environment for their children. Three of the four fathers who report that their parents read to them frequently during the preschool years provide a reading environment for their children.

The data collected from the eight families tend to indicate that the family's socio-economic level, the father's parents' educational expectations, and the father's educational level correlated with whether or not the family provided a "reading environment" for their children. When asked if reading and writing were important, all parents participating in the study responded that they were very important. However, the more formal education the parents have, the more apt they are to provide a "reading environment." Although it appears that reading for pleasure is a middle-class literacy practice, it is important to note that the ability to provide this reading environment requires the family to have the economic resources to buy books and other reading material. The data reflect this reality; the three families with the lowest socio-economic level are the ones that are least apt to buy reading material for their children.

5.2.2. Research Question #2: Do fathers' literacy practices and views of literacy influence their children's literacy practices and development?

Baker and Scher (2002) report that "what parents say and do" (views and practices) does more to promote constructive incentives than does socioeconomic status. The results of this study tend to confirm this. All seven fathers (and their wives) expressed the view that it is very important to them that their children learn to read and write. At the same time, all the case study students responded that they believe that it is important to be able to read and write well. Since both the father and the mother believe it is important for their children to be literate, it is not possible to posit whether the

father's attitude toward literacy is more important than the mother's. However, it is probable that when both parents hold this view that it has the most beneficial effect.

If we look at the practice of reading for pleasure, we see a difference between the mother and the father in several of the participant families. However, all the children who read for pleasure also have at least one parent who reads for pleasure. In the case of Hector, only his father reads for pleasure. Both of Alicia's parents read for pleasure, especially her mother. There are no data on Roberto's father (who does not live in the same household), but his mother does read for pleasure and Isela's mother has a passion for reading. The children who do not read for pleasure do not have a parent who reads for pleasure. This suggests that both the mothers' and the fathers' example is very important.

The data also tend to support Rockwell's (1991) findings from a study of eight diverse Mexican schools. She concluded that much of what children learn regarding reading and writing often takes place outside the school setting, in the home and community. The case study students in this study who seem to have the highest probability of succeeding academically are also those who see their parents reading at home and who are surrounded by reading materials. Seda-Santana (2000, p. 8) say that children tend to "appropriate reading and writing for themselves." It is more probable that they will do this successfully if they have the example and access to reading materials in their homes.

5.2.3. Research Question #3: To what extent do Mexican fathers in this context tend to engage in literacy practices with their children?

Some of the literacy practices that the fathers in this study report engaging in with their child include reading stories while their children were of preschool age, helping with school work, helping with English, and watching movies in English with Spanish subtitles. Some also reported that they have their children read street sign and advertisements while they were walking or driving down the street. When asked how they help their children with reading and writing all responded that they did so by helping them with their homework.

Only two of the seven fathers reported having read to their children frequently during their preschool years. As Karther (2002, p. 191) asserts “men may still be working through their role definitions in regard to early literacy activities.” Alicia’s father said they tried to stimulate their daughters’ interest in reading by reading to them frequently when they were preschool age. He says they also gave them books and other reading materials as gifts. He says that they have a family practice that if they give their children a present, such as a toy, they also give them a book at the same time.

Desde chiquitas, entonces siempre las estimulamos; yo creo que todas desde muy chiquitas agarraban libros, sin entenderlos, nos los leían. (Since they were very young we always tried to interest them [in reading]. I think that from a very young age they would grab books and even though they didn’t understand they would read them to us.)

He also says that the girls often memorized the stories that were read to them and that they would look at the page and pretend they were reading although they were reciting

the story from memory. Alicia's father was the only parent that reported that their children heard certain stories so many times that they memorized them.

The only literary practice that all father reported engaging in with their children is helping them with homework. Four of the seven reported helping them with their homework frequently and three reported helping them from time to time. The following paragraphs summarize some of the comments made by the fathers who report helping their children with their homework frequently concerning literacy activities in the home.

Although Jaime's father says he only read to his children from time to time when they were pre-school age, he says that he did spend time with them while they were learning to read, helping them to read syllable by syllable. When I first met the family Jaime was finishing the first grade for the second time, and Juan told me he was trying to help Jaime to learn the letters. However, he says his strong point is mathematics so he spends more time helping the children with their math assignments while his wife helps the two younger children with reading and writing. It appears that in Jaime's family the only explicit child-directed literacy practice is helping the children with their homework.

In addition to reading stories to the girls when they were of preschool age, Alicia's father also reports helping them with homework and giving them additional exercises to do if they didn't understand a certain point. He also says they have used games, music and theatre to stimulate their children's interest in literacy activities. He also says that they always encouraged the girls to write when they were preschool age. It didn't matter that they were just scribbles; the important thing was that they were developing an understanding of what writing is all about. He makes the following comment:

Me acuerdo que [nuestras hijas] siempre nos teníamos pintarrajeado la la televisión, las camas, los las paredes, el refrigerador, los cristales, todo siempre una vez que escribían empezaban a escribir en donde se les ocurriera, no? Y les dejábamos a ellas pus no a al principio nos molestaba ya después dijimos: “Bueno si esa es su manera de expresarse le empezaban a gustar vea a gustar mucho”. (I remember that we always had scribbles on the television, the beds, the walls, the refrigerator, and the windows. Once they started writing they wrote everywhere. At first it annoyed us, but they we said, “Ok, this is their way of expressing themselves. In this way they started to enjoy writing.”)

This is an example of how children form insights into how written language works before they receive formal instruction as discussed by Goodman (1986, p. 107). Alicia’s family engages in several literacy practices in addition to schoolwork. These include reading novels, magazines, and comic books for pleasure. The girls also write stories, “historietas,” letters, greeting cards, notes, and e-mail messages. They also play board games and use the computer for pleasure and to help with homework. Aldo sometimes brings work home that involves reading and writing, and Amparo studies for her English classes.

Esaú’s father is able to spend more time helping the children with school work than his mother because of her work schedule. Marcelo helps them by reading stories with them and by reading their school books with them. Marcelo says he does exercises with the children that help them with spelling and pronunciation of words. He also goes over the alphabet with his daughter who is in the first grade, helping her to form the letters correctly. He says he also has them read signs and advertising when they are walking or driving down the street. This is an example of how community and school literacy practices can differ significantly (Smith, Jiménez, & Martínez-León, 2003), as the signs observed in the research site often exhibit alternative spellings. Zamora (2005, p. 51) interviewed a business owner in San Andrés and found that non-conventional

literacy practices dominated not only in signs advertising his business, but also in official documents that he uses in conducting his business. Esaú's father did not say that he uses reading signs and advertisements as a way to educate his children as to the differences in school and community literacy practices. A big part of the literacy practices that take place in this family seems to be helping the children with their school work and reading children's stories with them. However, Esaú says he does write letters and notes to family members and friends, and his parents leave notes for him while they are at work. Also, Marcelo and Marilú read magazines and newspapers.

Abril's father says that literacy activities in their household are pretty much limited to the children's homework. Nohemí told me that the children sometimes play a paper and pencil game called "Basta" with their cousins who live nearby. On the next visit I asked Abril and her older brother to teach me the game. (See section 4.12 of this thesis for a description.)

Three fathers indicated that they helped their children with homework only from time to time. The following paragraphs summarize some of the comments made by these fathers concerning literacy activities in the home.

Hector's father, Ricardo, told me on my first visit to the family's home that he requires his sons to read novels. However, when I asked him about that on a later visit he didn't seem as determined about this requirement, but he did say that they read children's stories everyday. He says that rather than working with the boys as they do their homework, he reviews it after they have finished in order to ensure that it is correct. He says his middle son, Alberto, has never liked to read in spite of the encouragement he receives from his parents. However, during the last couple of months Alberto has taken

an interest in a computer game that requires him to do a lot of background reading. Ricardo is hopeful that this will trigger a love of reading in Alberto. Ricardo does spend time with his younger boys teaching them English, although his own knowledge of English is limited. Literacy practices in this family include helping with homework and reading for pleasure. Ricardo brings work home from time to time and Alma studies for the high school classes she is taking. Hector writes letters infrequently and the whole family uses the computer for pleasure and school.

David's father says that he and his wife help the children with their homework when they have questions and then review it to see that it is correct. He says that he and Lila read extensively for pleasure, but that the children do so only occasionally. The children play board games from time to time and use the computer both for pleasure and for school work. The family sometimes writes notes to each other, but this is rare.

A study conducted by Senechal and LeFevre (2001, p. 50) showed the importance of parents being involved in their children's literacy development. One of their findings is that "children who are exposed to a variety of home" literacy activities have the highest probability of being successful in literacy acquisition. The families who participated in the current study range from families who engage in very few literacy activities apart from homework to families who read extensively for pleasure and who encourage their children to do the same. The four case study students, Alicia, Isela, Hector and Roberto, who in my opinion have the highest probability of being successful in their literacy acquisition, are all "exposed to a variety" of home literacy activities. At least one of their parents reads for pleasure and their homes have books, magazines, games, and three of the four have computers. All four of these case study students seem to have a passion for

literacy activities and it seems that being in this reading environment has fuelled this passion.

5.2.4. Research Question #4: How do fathers' views of literacy tend to differ from mothers' views?

As discussed in Chapter One, much investigation into family literacy has focused on the mother's role in children's literacy development (Ortiz, 2004, p. 15). This is presumably because it is assumed that the mother carries the primary responsibility when it comes to helping children with their homework. The results of this study suggest that these seven families don't consider the children's literacy development to be primarily the mother's responsibility, with the possible exception of reading to the children when they are of preschool age. (See Chapter Four.) All seven fathers indicated that they read to their children when they were of preschool age, that they spent at least some time helping their children with homework, and that they bought reading materials for their children as a means of encouraging them to read. Some couples said that the mother spends more time helping the children with homework, not because she is primarily responsible, but because she has more time with the children. In fact, of the six families that included a father living in the home only two of the wives work outside the home. Thus, fathers are the primary source of workplace literacy that the children come into contact with. An example of this is Jaime's father, who has worked as a carpenter. He says this has helped him to have a good knowledge of basic mathematics and that he uses this professional knowledge to help his children with their homework assignments.

Of the seven fathers, four report helping their children with homework frequently. This includes Abril's father who works twelve hours a day, seven days a week. In Esaú's family it is his father whose work schedule allows him more time with the children; thereby, giving him more time to help the children with their homework. Isela's father indicated that the reason he helps the children with their homework only from time to time is because of his work schedule, which requires him to be away from home several weeks at a time. The data suggest that both the father and mother of the participant families view their children's literacy development as a joint responsibility. When asked how they see a mother's role as being different from a father's, the only difference the participants gave was the amount of time each parent has to interact with the children.

When asked their view of reading and writing, the fathers and the mothers gave similar responses. Both want their children to learn to read and write well so as to have a better future. They both mentioned learning about other peoples and cultures, communication, and reading and writing as the foundation on which human progress is based.

Three notable differences between mothers' and fathers' roles stand out when reviewing the data. It appears that the mothers in this study are more apt to express a passion for reading. David's mother: "I like to read everything." Alica's mother: "I have to read, because I very much like to read." Isela's mother: "I have many books; it doesn't matter if they're suspense, novels. I like all kinds of books." With the exception of David's stepfather, I did not notice this same enthusiasm for reading in the fathers who participated in this study.

Another notable difference between the mothers and fathers in this study was their view of the importance of reading to their children when they are of preschool age. As previously mentioned, five of the eight mothers report reading regularly to their young children and only 2 of the seven fathers reported doing so. It could be that the fathers tend to view reading to preschool age children as less important than the mothers do. However, as mentioned previously Karther (2002, p. 191) posits “men may still be working through their role definitions in regard to early literacy activities.” In other words, even though fathers believe they have a joint responsibility in their children’s literacy development, they may view storybook reading as “women’s work.” Ortiz (1996) found Mexican-American fathers “who share child care duties with their spouses, read and write more often with their children than parents who divide these tasks,” so it could be that the fathers in this study associate reading to their young children as a child care duty and not a way of teaching literacy.

The third difference between mothers and fathers participating in this study is that two mothers were involved in educational activities which would enable them to help their children with their literacy development. Roberto’s mother is attending informal classes with Roberto so they both can learn Nahautl, and Alicia’s mother says that one reason she is studying English is to be able to help her daughters to learn it. None of the fathers in the study indicated they were involved in similar activities. One might assume that mothers would be more apt to do this because they have more time with the children; however, Roberto’s mother works full time and still takes the time to attend educational classes.

5.3 Limitations of Study

This study focused on eight families in a small city in central Mexico. Because of the qualitative nature of the study and because of the small sample size the results are not generalizable to other populations. As stated in Chapter Two, the school from which the participants were selected claims to be based on an educational model which responds to the human potential of children and youth, so it could be that it appeals to parents who are atypically concerned about their children's education. For this reason the eight families may not be representative of the families living in the research site, many of whom send their children to public schools. Although the results are not generalizable beyond the participating families, certain implications result from the data which are discussed in the next section.

Although I visited each family eight times over the course of a year, I was not able to spend enough time with them to be able to confirm all the information they gave by observation. Because of this, at times I had to make a decision based on other information and on intuition. For example, Jaime's parents both reported that they buy reading material for their children frequently, but all three children reported that their parents never bought reading material for them. Since I didn't observe any reading material in the home other than school textbooks, and because I thought it possible that Jaime's parent were telling me what they thought they should do instead of what they do, I decided that the children's responses were probably more accurate in this case. I also based this decision on the fact that Jaime's parents stated that the literacy activities in the home were mostly limited to school work.

As mentioned in section 4.7 I found differences between what the participating parents said about their views of literacy and what their actual practices in the home were. This could be because their responses were reflecting community values, because they were not aware of the importance of their own role in their children's literacy development, and/or because they told me what they thought I wanted to hear as a researcher. Efforts were made to minimize this observer effect by making several visits over a period of a year, by using quantitative instruments in addition to qualitative interviews, and by triangulating data from multiple sources.

Another limitation is that I was able to get to know some families better than others. One of the reasons for this is because some family had more time available to talk to me than others because of work schedules and other obligations. For example, I talked with Isela's father only four times, because his work schedule requires him to be out of town for several weeks at a time, six weeks at one point, so it was difficult to arrange appointments. Another reason that I got to know some families better than others is because some of the families are naturally more hospitable. It could be that some families were more open and willing to participate in a research study conducted by a non-Mexican than others were. For example, in addition to the "official" visits to Jaime's family home, they also invited me to dinner three times and we took an excursion to the mountains one day, something that did not happen with any of the other case study families. This could be because Jaime's father, who has lived in the United States for an extended period of time, is very accepting of people from the United States. This extra time with the family helped me to develop a closer relationship with them.

Since the families tend to de-value non-school literacies, I was not able to document this aspect of home literacy as much as would have been desirable. Also, as Ortiz (2004, p. 14) points out, family literacy is an “activity continually in flux,” which is particularly true of non-school literacies. The home literacy inventory showed that these families have a variety of literacy documents in their homes, but because of time constraints I was not able to thoroughly document their uses.

5.4 Implications for Practice.

I have tried to look at the literacy practices of the eight participant families “with a theoretical perspective that seeks to understand the ways in which people make sense of” literacy “in their everyday lives (González & Moll, 2002, p. 625).” Doing so has helped me to see how the results of this have implications for practice. Nagle (1999, p. 183) reports that the working-class participants in her study were often frustrated because their literacy practices had little connection with the middle-class literacy practices which were valued by their schools. Much of the literature reviewed in Chapter One points to the need for the schools to incorporate working class families’ literacy practices in their curricula. The parents in this study seem to believe they have to change their literacy practices to match those of the school. I believe the need for a two-way communication should be acknowledged. The schools and the parents have much to learn from each other and they need to be aware of this.

Based on the data of the current study it appears that reading for pleasure is a middle-class literacy practice. When parents read for pleasure, their children have a “more positive attitude” and have “better reading skills” (Britto and Brooks-Gunn (2001,

p. 76) and their way of viewing reading is “appropriated by their children” (Baker and Scher (2002, p. 265). The results of this study suggest that those children whose parents read for pleasure have a better chance of succeeding academically. Teachers need to be aware that children are influenced by how their parents view reading. Since not all students are encouraged to read by their parents, teachers need to be aware of the importance of encouraging students to read for pleasure. Along the same lines, Teague (2004, p. 133) reports that the teachers in his study did not take advantage of contacts with parents to find out what their students’ “reading habits and interests” were, so that they could use this information in planning literacy activities in the classroom.

Children learn to read by a variety of what Rockwell (1991) refers to as “extra-instructional activities.” One of these activities is reading magazines which are traditionally discouraged by schools, such as TVNOTAS (a popular magazine in México similar to the National Enquirer in the United States). Alicia’s father made this comment regarding this type of literature:

Si entonces pus yo se que es un son revistas vacías que son muy frívolas pero les digo a mi mujer, “prefiero que lea eso a que no lea nada, o sea, que se atrofie su mente.” (I know that this type of magazine is without value and frivolous, but I said to my wife, ‘I’d rather my daughter read this type of magazine rather than not reading anything so that her mind doesn’t atrophy.’)

As Alicia’s father says it is better to read something that has no academic value, than not to read at all. Like any skill reading requires practice, and the best way to get students to practice is to give them the opportunity to read materials that interest them and are part of their home literacy practices. Comic books and magazines such as “Conozca Más,” a magazine with very short articles, are other possibilities to help students develop an

interest in reading. Providing access to this type of reading material would be a way for the schools to help students develop the “reading habit.”

Allowing materials traditionally discouraged by the school would be a way to bridge the gap between home and school literacy practices (González & Moll, 2002, p. 624). If a student comes from a home where materials discouraged by the school are the norm, the mismatch affects the student’s ability to learn (Nagle 1999, pp. 174,175). Teachers need to know what kind of reading materials their students are familiar with and build on these (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003, p. 35). This is a way of making schools more like the homes of their students (Laosa, 1982, p. 824).

Laosa (1982, p. 824) also says there is a need to help parents to “better prepare children for school.” Although all of the parents expressed the belief that it is important to help their children with homework, some said they mainly reviewed it after their children finished. This is in line with what Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (1991, p. 127) report. As Snow et al. point out it would be beneficial for all parents to be educated as to the importance of their role as supplementary teachers.

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Ortiz (2004, p. 15) posits that it is not known to what extent fathers contribute to their children’s education. The data from this study suggest that fathers play a significant role in the literacy development of their children. This is consistent with Ortiz’s (2004, p.16) findings that Mexican-American fathers do participate in their children education because they view it as important. This supports Karther’s (2004, p. 191) conclusion that “early childhood teachers should not exclude or underestimate fathers,” pointing to the need for schools to communicate with both the mother and the father regarding their children’s learning. One way to facilitate

this would be to have scheduled meetings with parents after work hours so the fathers could more easily attend.

A major concern of all the parents was that they want their children to learn English and computer skills, as they see these as important for finding good employment. The middle class families can afford to have computers in the home and to send their children to bilingual schools; however, those of limited resources cannot. The family with the most limited resources was concerned about art and music classes for their children. Although the families with limited resources who participated in the present study do send their children to English and computer classes a couple hours a week, this is not enough, especially for English, and probably there are families in the research area who cannot even afford two hours a week of English instruction for their children. The public schools in Mexico need to be more responsive to this need, so that children from families with limited resources can have the same opportunities as children from middle- and upper-class families.

The results of this study suggest that children in San Andrés would benefit if their fathers (and mothers) would model reading for pleasure. Of course, parents would need to understand the importance of this and may need to improve their own reading skills. Since the results of this study show that most fathers in San Andrés only read to their children from time to time during their preschool years, children would probably benefit by being read to by both their fathers and their mothers regularly. Two of the mothers in this study are taking classes in order to help their children with their literacy acquisition. Based on this study, I believe that their children would benefit if the fathers also did this.

The parents in the current study possess untapped Funds of Knowledge that the schools could take advantage of. For instance, Jaime's father could talk to classes about what it's like to live in the United States as an undocumented worker, and how this has affected him and his family. Would he have had to have worked in the United States if he had continued his education past middle-school? Isela's father spends considerable time driving a semi-truck between his home and Laredo, Texas. He could also explain to students what it is like to do this kind of work and how it affects his family. Does he regret having quit veterinary school after completing three years of the four years? David's step-father is from Cuba, so his life experiences would be a valuable addition to the students' education. How do literacy practices differ between Mexico and Cuba? These are just a few examples of the Funds of Knowledge that the case study families possess and that they could be asked to share in a school setting.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Because of the limitations of the study as discussed in section 5.2, other questions arose during the investigation period. This section discusses some of these questions.

Although this study suggests that fathers in the research site are interested in and have a role in their children's education, it would be beneficial to see how this sample compares to other families in the research area, such as those who have always sent their children to public schools. As previously stated, the parents in the current study may be more interested in their children's education than parents who send their children to public school. Although three of the participant families were working-class families, it is not clear from the present study how well the results apply to other working-class

parents in the area? Do other working-class parents in the research context spend time helping their children with homework, and do they have similar expectations for their children, such as wanting them to attend college?

It would be beneficial to study the effects of implementing a two-way communication about literacy in which both the school and the parents take advantage of the opportunities of learning from each other and of adopting each others' literacy practices. Much of the literature reviewed in Chapter One points to the needs for this type of relationship between home and school, so there is a need to investigate just how it would affect children's literacy development.

One of the issues that the current study did not look at is the quality of help parents give to their children. It would be useful to study how parents' socio-economic class, education, prior learning experiences, etc. affect their ability to help their children with their schoolwork. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (1991, p. 127) posit that parents can play an important role as supplementary teachers, so it is also important to study ways to help parents improve the quality of help they give their children.

Another important issue is encouraging children to become readers. Some of the parents in the study seemed to believe that ensuring that their children completed their homework was their major responsibility regarding their children's literacy acquisition. Further research needs to be conducted as to how parents can be encouraged to help their children read for pleasure. Since the results of this study suggest that many children in the research site do not read for pleasure, research is needed in regard to how teachers can help their students in this respect. For example, if the teacher reads to the students for 15

minutes to a half-hour a day, does this whet their appetite for reading as entertainment? Does organizing “*Círculos de lectura*,” where a group of students analyze a book they have all read, stimulate an interest in reading?

Results of this study also suggest that many children have not learned to express their own ideas in writing. Research is also needed as to how teachers can encourage their students to write. For example, do children tend to write more if they are in the habit of reading for pleasure? Also, if the teacher assigns them to keep a diary of their daily activities and thoughts, does this stimulate a desire to write?

Also, much could be learned about the population living in the research site if a longitudinal study were conducted. If case studies families were studied over a period of several years, more in-depth information could be obtained as to how parents’ attitudes and practices affect their children’s literacy acquisition. Are parents becoming more aware of the need to help with homework, to read to school age children, to foster a love of reading in their children over time? A follow-up study could compare the progress of the case study students during their fourth or fifth year of grade school with those of the current study. The parents of the case study students could be re-interviewed to see if/how their beliefs and attitudes about literacy acquisition have changed and if this has affected their children’s progress. Changes in the fathers’ employment could also be tracked to see how this affects their children’s literacy acquisition. In this study there was a father from Cuba. It would be useful to study how fathers’ trans-national status and the literacy practices they learned in their home countries affect their attitudes toward their children’s literacy.

The current study was not able to examine non-school literacy practices in detail. How these non-school literacy practices impact children's literacy acquisition is an important topic for future investigation. Along the same lines, because of the various backgrounds and occupations of the participants of the current study, it was evident that they possess Linguistic Funds of Knowledge (see section 1.1.1 of this thesis) that could be studied along with how these funds of knowledge affect their children's learning of literacy. Computer use is another area this study was not able to address in depth. Whether or not a family owns a computer is partially dependent on their economic situation. It would be useful to investigate how having a computer in the home influences a child's literacy acquisition. Payant (2005) did a short study on computer use in San Andrés. She did a case study of one university student and found that he was willing to take the initiative in learning computer skills. He learned certain software packages, such as Word, through formal training, and he learned to use the internet "from his own trial and error." She posits that it would be beneficial to investigate how these digital practices are used by the residents of San Andrés. This might help educators interesting in integrating computer literacy into the classroom. The results of the current study show that middle-class families are apt to have computers in the home and that families without computers go to internet cafes from time to time.

5.6 The Researcher

Doing this study was a learning experience for me since this was the first in-depth study I have done. When I first approached the parents at the school in order to make arrangements to visit them in their homes, I was very nervous, mainly because of my

non-native Spanish. However, since the parents were always very kind and accepting this nervousness soon abated. I found them to be willing to speak with a person who doesn't speak Spanish natively. Because of stereotyped images that some Americans have of Mexicans I didn't necessarily expect the fathers in my study to show so much interest in their children's education. Talking in-depth with Mexican families about educational issues reinforced my belief that it is important to look beyond stereotypes. I soon learned that before every visit it was essential to review notes from prior visits. This helped me remember the names of all the family members and also helped to refresh my memory as to the individual family members' interests and concerns. I also learned the importance of patience and perseverance. One of the fathers seemed irritated during my visits at the beginning, but by the end of the study he spoke freely and treated me hospitably, showing that it takes some people longer than others to open up. Always treating the participants with respect and not being irritated if they were not at home for a scheduled visit also paid off, in that it allowed us to build mutual respect and confidence.

5.7 Conclusion

This study has tried to develop "new understandings of the local and distinctive meanings and uses of literacy in the lives" of the residents of San Andrés and San Pedro Cholula (Taylor, 1983, p. 89). By visiting and interviewing eight families from these communities over a period of a year I have found that the fathers participating in the study are interested in the literacy acquisition of their children, despite popular beliefs to the contrary. I also found that they are aware of the benefits of spending time with their children in literacy activities. I have also shown that there is a range of awareness among

the participant families as to the importance of encouraging their children to read regularly, not only by making reading materials available, but also by their own example of reading for pleasure as defined in section 4.1. Some of the families reported that the main literacy activity in their homes is school work. It has also been shown that both fathers and mothers are willing to share the responsibility of helping their children learn to read and write. Also, I have outlined educational implications of the results and suggestions for future research on the topic. It is my hope that the results of this study will help educators in Mexico and the United States to see the importance of encouraging parents to act as supplementary teachers and to help them understand that it is important that their children learn to read for pleasure. I also hope that both parents and teachers will take advantage of the funds of knowledge that both possess, and thus be better able learn from each other. To this end, I have given the school from which the case study families were selected a copy of this study. I have also written an executive summary of this study in Spanish which I have shared with the families and the teachers in the school. This summary includes the findings which I believe will help both the teachers and the parents understand how they can be more effective in guiding the literacy development of their students and children.

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Appendix A Letter to Families



10 de septiembre de 2004

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Departamento de
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Muy apreciados Padres de Familia:

Durante el pasado año escolar profesores y estudiantes de la Universidad de las Américas, Puebla han llevado a cabo un proyecto de investigación relacionado con la lectura y escritura de los niños de varias escuelas de San Andrés Cholula. Este estudio cuenta con el apoyo del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT), ya que la habilidad de leer y escribir es de suma importancia para el desarrollo del país.

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 estudiantes del grado 1º de primaria fueron observados en su aprendizaje de la lectura y escritura en el salón de clase, siempre con la aprobación de su maestra del Centro Educativo Ixtliyollotl. En este año escolar, y a pesar del cierre del Centro, el estudio se seguirá llevando a cabo en el entorno familiar del niño por medio de visitas al hogar y entrevistas con padres de familia y niños. Por lo tanto, el investigador Christopher Vance estará visitando sus casas para hablar con ustedes sobre las prácticas de lectura y escritura de sus hijos.

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,


Dr. Patrick H. Smith


Christopher Vance, tesista

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."

Appendix B. Linguistic Census

Censo Lingüístico para Padres de Familia

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

Hijos/Hijas en esta escuela Nombre (s) Salón (es)

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)?

¿Hemos observado que muchas personas en San Andrés tienen familiares que hablan o entienden un idioma como mexicano, totonaco, u otros idiomas de México. Saber más de estos idiomas es muy importante para el país y también para nuestro proyecto. Favor de anotar aquí quién en su familia habla o entiende el idioma. Si podría proporcionarnos el nombre de esta persona y su dirección, estaríamos muy agradecidos.

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:

<i>Segunda Lengua</i>	<i>Tercera Lengua</i>
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:

<i>Segunda Lengua</i>	<i>Tercera Lengua</i>
Leer _____	Leer _____
Hablar _____	Hablar _____
Escribir _____	Escribir _____
Escuchar _____	Escuchar _____

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

<i>Segunda Lengua</i>	<i>Tercera Lengua</i>
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?

Ficha Sociofamiliar

Nombre completo del niño de caso estudio: _____
 Dirección: _____

Investigador: _____
 Fecha: _____

Teléfono: _____
 Correo electrónico: _____

<i>Nombres de familiares</i>	<i>Fecha y lugar de nacimiento</i>	<i>Nivel de escolaridad</i>	<i>Escuelas asistidas</i>	<i>Actividades económicas</i>	<i>Actividades familiares</i>	<i>Usos de la lectura y la escritura</i>
Padre/Tutor						
Madre/Tutor						
Hermanos						

<i>Nombres de familiares</i>	<i>Fecha y lugar de nacimiento</i>	<i>Nivel de escolaridad</i>	<i>Escuelas asistidas</i>	<i>Actividades económicas</i>	<i>Actividades familiares</i>	<i>Usos de la lectura y la escritura</i>
Otros miembros del hogar						

Lenguas indígenas

Transnacionalidad

Observaciones

Appendix D. Questionnaire for parents and children

CUESTIONARIO PARA PADRES E HIJOS

Padres

- 1 ¿Te gustaba la escuela cuando eras niño?
Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____
- 2 ¿Tus padres te ayudaban con las tareas de la escuela?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 3 ¿Tus padres te leían cuentos cuando eras niño?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 4 ¿Se preocupaban tus padres porque no faltarás a la escuela, sin causa justificada?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 5 ¿Leías libros, revistas, etc. cuando eras niño?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 6 ¿Tus padres te compraban libros, revistas, etc. cuando eras niño?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 7 ¿Querían tus padres que estudiaras la preparatoria?
Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____
- 8 ¿Querían tus padres que fueras a la universidad?
Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____
- 9 ¿En tu opinión, cuál es tu nivel de lectura?
Alto ____ Medio ____ Bajo ____

1 ¿Les gusta la escuela a tus hijos?

_____ Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____

_____ Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____

_____ Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____

_____ Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____

2 ¿Ayudas a tus hijos con las tareas de escuela?

Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____

3 ¿Lees cuentos a tus hijos durante su niñez?

Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____

4 ¿Te preocupas porque no falten a la escuela tus hijos, sin causa justificada?

Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____

5 ¿Tus hijos leen libros, revistas, etc.?

Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____

6 ¿Les compras libros y revistas a tus hijos?

Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____

7 ¿Quieres que tus hijos estudien preparatoria?

Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____

8 ¿Quieres que tus hijos vayan a la universidad?

Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____

9 ¿En tu opinión cuál es el nivel de lectura de tus hijos de acuerdo a su edad?

_____Alto ____ Medio ____ Bajo____

_____Alto ____ Medio ____ Bajo____

_____Alto ____ Medio ____ Bajo____

_____Alto ____ Medio ____ Bajo____

Hijos

- 1 ¿Te gusta la escuela?
Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____
- 2 ¿Tus padres te ayudan con las tareas de escuela?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 3 ¿Tus padres te leyeron cuentos cuando eras muy joven?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 4 ¿Tus padres se preocupan porque no faltes a la escuela, sin causa justificada?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 5 ¿Lees libros, revistas, etc.?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 6 ¿Tus padres Te compran libros y revistas, etc.?
Frecuentemente ____ De vez en cuando ____ Nunca ____
- 7 Quieren tus padres que estudies preparatoria.
Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____
- 8 Tus padres quieren que vayas a la universidad.
Mucho ____ Regular ____ Poco ____ Nada ____
- 9 ¿En tu opinión, cuál es tu nivel de lectura?
Alto ____ Medio ____ Bajo ____

¿Te gustaría agregar algo más en cuanto a la lecto-escritura cuando eras niño?

¿En qué es diferente el aprendizaje de la lecto-escritura para _____ de tu aprendizaje cuando eras un niño?

¿Cómo varían las formas de ayudar a los hijos en lecto-escritura entre el padre y la madre?

Appendix E. CASE STUDY STUDENT INTERVIEW

ENTREVISTA PARA ESTUDIANTE DE CASO DE ESTUDIO

I. Experiencia personal

1. ¿Qué te gusta más hacer en tu escuela? ¿Por qué (no)?
2. ¿Qué te gusta menos en la escuela? ¿Por qué?

II. Lectura

1. ¿Te gusta leer? ¿Por qué (no)?
2. ¿Tienes un horario para leer en casa?
3. ¿Con quien compartes tu lectura?
4. ¿Qué temas te gusta leer?
5. ¿Te gusta leer con tus hermanos?
6. ¿Lees regularmente alguna revista de historieta?
7. ¿Lees rápido? ¿Entiendes todo lo que lees? (ejemplo)
8. ¿Qué más aparte de los libros de texto lees en clase?
9. ¿En qué otros lugares practicas la lectura? ¿Cuándo?
10. ¿Cuándo disfrutas más la lectura, cuándo lees tu mismo o cuándo te leen?

11. ¿Tienes un lugar favorito para leer?

12. ¿Te gusta leer algún contenido del Internet?

13. ¿Crees que sea importante leer? ¿Por qué?

14. ¿Qué pasa cuando alguien no sabe leer bien? ¿Y cuando alguien sí sabe leer bien?

III. Escritura

1. ¿Crees que es fácil escribir?

2. ¿Te gusta escribir? ¿Porque (no)?

3. ¿Crees que tu letra esta bien trazada?

4. ¿Acerca de qué te gusta escribir?

5. ¿Has escrito cartas? ¿A quién(es)?

6. ¿Has escrito recados? ¿A quién(es)?

7. ¿Has escrito mensajes en el e-mail? ¿A quién(es)?

8. ¿Escribes mucho o poco? ¿Alguien te ayuda?

9. ¿Dónde escribes? ¿Dónde más te gusta escribir?

10. ¿Tienes buena ortografía?

11. ¿Qué escribes fuera de la escuela?

12. ¿Te gusta escribir cuentos?

13. ¿Por qué crees que es importante la escritura?

IV. Fondos de conocimiento lingüístico

1. ¿Fuera de la escuela lees tus libros de texto o prefieres otro tipo de lectura?

2. ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre lo que lees en la escuela y fuera de ella?

3. ¿Lo que lees fuera de la escuela, crees que sirva para algo dentro de ella?

4. ¿La práctica de lectura dentro de la escuela, crees que te sirva fuera?

5. ¿Te gusta más escribir dentro de la escuela o fuera de ella?

6. ¿Qué te gusta más, escribir o leer?

7. ¿Si podrías ser un lector(a) como cualquier persona en tu familia, quién te gustaría ser (hermano, hermana, papá, mamá, etc.) ¿Por qué?

8. ¿Si podrías ser un escritor (a) como cualquier persona en tu familia, quién te gustaría ser (hermano, hermana, papá, mamá, etc.) ¿Por qué?

9. Un día, si tú tienes hijos, ¿cómo ayudarías a tus hijos a leer y escribir?

Appendix F. Literacy Inventory

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 _____						
Libreta de cuentas						
Libro de adulto						
Libro de de consulta						
Libro de niño de actividad						
Libro de niño de lectura						
Literatura religiosa: Biblia						

Estampa						
Libro						
Libro						
de oraciones						
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						
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						

Appendix G. Structured In-depth Interview

Formato de Entrevista COSOLEM para padres de familia

Nombres de los padres _____

Nombres de estudiante de caso de estudio _____

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 que actividades económicas se desempeñan ustedes actualmente?

¿Colaboran sus hijos con los trabajos que ustedes realizan o trabajan por dinero en otros lugares?

Aspectos educativos

¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuáles ustedes están llevando sus hijos a la escuela?

¿De que formas se relacionan ustedes con las escuelas a donde asisten sus hijos?

¿Cómo aprendieron ustedes a leer?

¿Cómo han aprendido los niños a leer?

¿Cómo les ayudan ustedes a los niños a leer en la casa?

¿Ustedes consideran que la lectura es importante? ¿Por qué?

¿Cómo aprendieron ustedes a escribir?

¿Cómo les ayudan ustedes a los niños a escribir en la casa?

¿Ustedes consideran que la escritura es importante. ¿Por qué?

¿Qué cosas escriben ustedes cotidianamente?

¿Cómo consideran ustedes que leer y escribir va a ayudar a sus hijos en el futuro?

¿Si usted tuviera la oportunidad de regresar a la escuela a que le dedicaría mayor atención a la lectura o a la escritura? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué piensa usted que sucedería si viviéramos en un mundo donde nadie leyera o escribiera?

¿Le gustaría poder leer, hablar o escribir otra lengua. ¿Por qué?

Appendix H. Permission Letter



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Estimado Participante:

Por este medio recibe un cordial saludo de mi parte y a la vez el recordatorio de que participaste en un proyecto de investigación de las practicas de lecto-escritura dentro del seno familiar; como recordarás fuiste co-participante en mi estudio de tesis proporcionando información de las actividades de lecto-escritura que realizas en casa con tus hijos. Considerando que toda la información proporcionada es confidencial, solicito tu AUTORIZACIÓN para publicar esta información (1) en mi tesis de maestría en la Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, (2) en revistas y/o libros, (3) y en congresos, talleres, y reportes para propósitos académicos y no comerciales, utilizando pseudónimos para preservar esta confidencialidad y mantener el anonimato de cada participante.

Esperando contar con tu autorización para la publicación de la información, considerando que será de gran utilidad para mejorar la enseñanza de la lecto-escritura en la educación básica, te anticipo las gracias.

Investigador
Christopher Vance

Director de Proyecto La construcción social de lectores y
escritores en México

Dr. Patrick Smith

Autorizo:
Fecha: _____

Nombre Completo: _____

Firma: _____