FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IN A HISPANIC HOUSEHOLD: A CASE STUDY OF FAMILY EXPERIENCES, VALUES, AND CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATION

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2013

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Feild, Kelly A. Funds of knowledge in a Hispanic household: A case study of family experiences, values, and connections to education. Doctor of Philosophy (Curriculum and Instruction), December 2013, 117 pp., references, 61 titles.

Traditionally, the field of education has often adopted a negative perspective in their views of minority families’ contributions to the educational progress of their children. However, research embodying the theoretical framework of funds of knowledge attempts to counter that model through its assertion that all families possess extensive bodies of knowledge that have developed through social, historical, and cultural contexts. Teachers carry out studies of familial funds of knowledge in order to understand how family experiences shape the knowledge that a child brings to the classroom. There is then, the potential to use that body of knowledge to create meaningful learning experiences that connect prior understanding and experiences to classroom practice.

This research served as a case study of the funds of knowledge existing in the home of a Hispanic family and the connections that existed between that knowledge and literacy. The findings indicated that the family possessed extensive funds of knowledge that developed through their historical, cultural, and social experiences. They often used family networks, as well as formal and informal literacy experiences to share this knowledge with their children. A key component of the literacy value system that they communicated resulted from a desire to maintain aspects of their culture and heritage through maintaining and improving their children’s reading and linguistic abilities in Spanish. Furthermore, along with their emphasis on Spanish literacy, they held aspirations for their children related to familial and educational values that often stemmed from their expressed desire for their children to lead lives with greater opportunities and positive examples than they had experienced.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the many people who have supported and stood by me through this process. I would like to thank all of my committee members, who offered their constant guidance in order to help me refine what I learned and my application of that knowledge.

Special thanks go to my committee chair, Jeanne Tunks, whose support, kindness, mentorship, and constant willingness to answer questions and provide feedback, continues to help me become a stronger student, writer, and researcher.

I am grateful for my friends, who always listened and gave me much-needed time to laugh and relax.

Most importantly, my family deserves more gratitude than I can express. My parents prayed for, loved, and supported me in so many ways. They helped me to make this journey while knowing that they were there for me no matter what the circumstance.
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CHAPTER 1
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

During the years that I have served as a primary grade teacher, I have interacted with families with varying levels and types of involvement in the literacy development of their child. The consistent result that I have observed during these years is that school personnel often have only minimal understanding of what and how children are learning in the home. Over the years, child development research has supported the idea that parents serve a primary role in the learning development of their children. Scholars in this field often suggest that the early literacy skills identified as significant indicators of reading development and ability stem from parent-child interaction in the home (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Senechal, 2006; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). With an understanding of this connection and an increasing focus on academic performance, there is a corresponding focus in research on what factors affect parent involvement in helping their children learn in the home. Although many studies examine the reasons for parent involvement or focus on parent-child discourse that occurs specifically during reading activities (Cairney & Ashton, 2002; Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004), there is a limited amount of research on examining how aspects of family history, culture, and social interactions contribute as a resource of knowledge and strengths. There also exists a need for research that addresses family values and goals related to those funds of knowledge.

Approaching research from the theoretical framework of funds of knowledge reaches beyond reporting an empirical connection between parent involvement and school achievement or even reporting how parents are involved and what home literacy practices yield superior results. Rather, it challenges the deficit perspective from how many in the educational realm
have historically viewed minority families (Cairney, 2000; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992) and instead, explores the knowledge and experience that exists in the home and the values associated with how and why parents share that knowledge with their children. Related factors could include self-perceived ability, environment, resources, available time, cultural backgrounds, and social practices (Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzalez, & Amanti, 2005; Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). The purpose of this research was to understand components of the social, historical, and cultural resources of a family and parent perspectives on factors connected to those funds of knowledge. The resulting data were analyzed to understand how those aspects correspond to categories addressed in funds of knowledge research (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005) and how the activities and values of the family related to literacy concepts shared in the home.

Statement of Problem

The problem that this research addressed is the need to counter a deficit model that portrays minority families as lacking in knowledge that contributes to the education of their children (Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). In conjunction with this issue, schools often embrace a superficial view of culture as a collection of holidays, food, and celebrations. This view assumes that students of similar cultural heritages share the same practices and beliefs (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Culture is not a static concept and the practices of families within the same cultural group will differ based on a variety of factors and responses to circumstances (Amanti, 2005; Moll, 2005).

Because of the variance in a family’s cultural, social, and historical influences, funds of knowledge needed to be explored in an individual family setting, not merely assumed from the
findings of similar studies. In response to the issue of deficit models and culturally static perspectives and generalizations, this study explored the funds of knowledge in an individual family, how those factors related to literacy, and the perspectives of the families on their roles in that process. The use of a funds of knowledge framework allowed for an understanding of family structure and culture from a perspective that acknowledged its dynamic nature as well as the strengths that came from many sources of family knowledge. In this study, I explored funds of knowledge through inquiry into how current lived experiences, family history, and social structures affected family interactions and learning experiences.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of how the accumulated social and cultural knowledge of the family shaped what and how knowledge was shared with children in the home and how that shared knowledge connected to aspects of literacy. It also examined parent perspectives on their involvement role in the literacy development of their children. The funds of knowledge framework guiding this study provided an opportunity to counter deficit perspectives of minority families, explore funds of knowledge in the context of an individual family, and embrace a dynamic view of culture that counters the static perspective that schools often hold.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study include:

- What social, cognitive, and cultural funds of knowledge exist in the home?
- How do parents share those funds of knowledge with their children and how does that knowledge relate to concepts in literacy?
• How do parents conceptualize their role in the literacy development of their children in the home?

• What resources, instructional methods, schedules, or other tools are available and used by parents in supporting the literacy development of their children?

Assumptions

• Within the context of the family, an extensive amount of accumulated social and cultural knowledge provides a venue through which families informally share knowledge with their children (Ortiz & Ordoniz-Jasis, 2005).

• There are components of that shared social and cultural knowledge that help their children acquire skills related to literacy development (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997; Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). Their practice of involvement potentially incorporates literacy into typical familial tasks in the home (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzo, 2002).

• Parental self-concept, perspectives, and their resulting practices related to how they share learning with their children directly relates to their past and present educational experiences, educational background, available time, and resources (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). They also conceptualize and enact that role based on a system of values and goals often shaped by those backgrounds and experiences (Mercado, 2005).

• The families are likely to have time in the schedule set aside for their child to participate in some form of academic pursuit, but that time potentially lacks structure and formal adult guidance. The parents likely informally communicate literacy concepts through daily family tasks (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzo, 2002). Some educational resources, such as books, will be available in the home, but might not match the academic level of the child or children.
Terms

- Early literacy - the development of letter-sound relationships, experience with reading, and comprehension strategies
- Funds of knowledge – the accumulated social, historical, and cultural knowledge that families possess

Theoretical Rationale

Research has shown that educational institutions often adopt a deficit model of minority families, which assumes that poor student performance or perceived lack of parent involvement is due to a parental lack of concern or a deficit in the knowledge necessary to help their child (Cairney, 2000; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). However, Velez-Ibanez (1992) asserts that it is imperative to understand that learning can occur through interactions related to practical life experiences, along with elements of structured guidance. This transmission of knowledge is often weaved into the social structure of the family and can be shaped by factors such as ethnic background, familial roles and expectations, parental resources, and community influences.

In order to counter the deficit perspective and recognize that all families possess their own historically, socially, and culturally influenced system of knowledge, it becomes necessary to assert an alternative to negative perceptions of minority families. The theoretical framework of a funds of knowledge approach serves as this alternative by addressing family research through a perspective that explores multiple sources of knowledge in the home, viewing these sources as resources of learning for children, and acknowledging them as potential educational connections for the classroom.
The purpose of this study was to narrow the lens of parent involvement to explore family contexts related to culture, education, experience, and community, and how those influences affected how knowledge was shared with children in the home. This study stemmed from a theoretical framework in educational research that offers insight into these familial and cultural factors, which, following the data analysis, I compared to insights shared by the participant family. The use of funds of knowledge as a theoretical framework provided a foundation for that insight.

Some research couples a funds of knowledge framework with sociocultural theory (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) describe three ways in which the mediated learning components of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory connect to their study. While my research shared their first way, which asserted that family histories and networks serve as funds of knowledge that help to support and mediate the subsistence of the family, their other two connections with Vygotskian ideas related to the extension of their study into classroom practice. Time and situational constraints prohibited my ability to extend what I learned into classroom practice; therefore the focus of this study was in exploring familial funds of knowledge and its connections to literacy through discussions and observations of family values and practices. This resulted in limited overlap with the ways in which funds of knowledge research utilized tenets of sociocultural theory. Other funds of knowledge studies use an ecocultural framework to guide their study (Olmedo, 2003; Reese, 2002). Although understanding the ecological and cultural components of a family are informative, most research framed by this theory focus on a hierarchal organization of priorities in order to alter or improve the environment in which a family resides (Bernheimer, Gallimore, & Weisner, 1990; Weisner, 2002). This did not serve as a strong enough parallel to the purpose for this study.
The focus of this study on understanding the funds of knowledge in a family and its relationship to literacy necessitated that the theoretical framework of funds of knowledge serve as the primary framework for this study. The tenets of this theory communicate the significance and impact of familial, social and cultural attributes in the home environment and its effect on what and how the family shares knowledge.

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge is a theoretical concept described by Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, and Amanti (2005) as “…historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household’s functioning and well-being” (p. 91). Research by Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) served as an influence for that definition by asserting that historical, social, and cultural factors influence familial funds of knowledge.

This theory, refined by Luis Moll and his colleagues, suggests an alternate view of culture as a set of inquiries that embodies a process-focused approach, rather than a singularly defined entity (Gonzalez, 2005; Moll, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). Even within a community of similar heritage, each individual household encompasses its own social and cultural structure based on the lived experiences of those in the family, and parents communicate those structures with their children through various contexts (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). Funds of knowledge research focuses on the use of routine activities as a framework for understanding how the daily life of a family progresses. The activities in which a family is involved often reflect household funds of knowledge acquired through historical, cultural, and social influences (Gonzalez, 2005).
As an approach that entwines knowledge within action, studies embodying this theoretical framework often involve teachers serving alongside anthropologists as researchers and spending time in the homes of families in order to understand the historical, cultural, and social knowledge that they possess (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). Often, the studies extend to the classroom in order for the teacher-researchers to use these funds of knowledge to create meaningful learning opportunities across content areas (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Gonzalez (2005) describes this approach as focusing on “…‘practice,’ that is, what it is that people do, and what they say about what they do” (p. 40).

Funds of knowledge was imperative to the context of this study in order to broaden the frame of reference that defines what constitutes instruction in the home and how that instruction relates to literacy learning. Moll and Gonzalez (1994) assert,

One implication, and a most important one, is debunking ideas of working-class, language minority households as lacking worthwhile knowledge and experiences. These households, and by implication, these communities, are often viewed solely as places from which children must be saved or rescued, rather than places that, along with problems (as in all communities), contain valuable knowledge and experiences that can foster the children's development. A second implication is in understanding the concept of culture from a more dynamic, "processual" view, not as a group of personality traits, folk celebrations, foods, or artifacts, but as the lived practices and knowledge of the students and their families. (pp. 444-445)

A funds of knowledge framework lent itself to the ethnographic methods employed in the course of the study by supporting the notion that the social interactions through which parents transmit knowledge in the home can often be informal, environmental, and dynamic based on the historical, cultural, and social constructs of the family (Ortiz, 2000; Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). Consideration of these factors allowed for greater understanding of how parents transmit knowledge in the home and how those constructs shape that transmission.
Because of its broad and dynamic perspective on what constitutes knowledge, the concept of funds of knowledge is a viable theoretical framework for examining the how historical, cultural, and social influences of a family serve as resources for knowledge. This includes the motivations, support systems, activities, and goals that converge as tools through which families impart learning. By its use in the examination of historical, social, and cultural family influences, it provides an opportunity to explore the funds of knowledge that exist in a family, how they share that knowledge, and how those factors relate to literacy-related concepts. It also allows for the discovery of broader parent perspectives and values related to their own involvement practices.

A funds of knowledge framework suggests that there are familial resources and knowledge that can provide a foundational environment for developing skills in literacy and other academic areas (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Literacy practices in the home are often indicative of the current and future literacy knowledge that a child possesses (Haney & Hill, 2004). However, it is imperative that examining the connection between familial funds of knowledge and literacy perspectives and practices in the home encompass the potential for both formal and informal instruction in the context of historical, cultural, and social variables.

Synthesis

The prevalence of research embodying the theoretical framework of funds of knowledge indicates that this theory is pervasive in the field of education. Previous research indicates that families possess knowledge resources that inform and guide the ways in which they share learning with their children in the home. Findings suggest that family resources influence the funds of knowledge that children bring to the classroom and have the potential to serve as venues through which they experience meaningful educational encounters. The activities and actions of
a family often reflect these funds and provide a framework for understanding that knowledge. In order to broaden the perspective of what constitutes valid knowledge, it is imperative to understand that historical, cultural, and social influences often inform funds of knowledge, which can include values and goals related to how or why they provide literacy instruction in the home.

Some could consider it a common understanding to assert that families possess cultural, academic, social, and experiential knowledge that they formally or informally impart to their children. However, a thorough knowledge of a theoretical framework for that assertion is a necessary foundation to support research on the sources for that knowledge and its connections to literacy concepts. This theory served to provide a transition from merely acknowledging the importance of parent involvement in literacy to understanding the breadth of knowledge that families possess and its influence from their cultural, historical, cognitive, and social environments. Research founded on a funds of knowledge approach embodies that understanding and therefore provided a venue through which parents can share how they impart their accumulated knowledge through their daily, lived experiences and how those factors connect to literacy learning.

Limitations

Although data collection was initially planned for the fall semester, challenges in recruitment delayed this process until the spring semester of the school year. These time limitations could have potentially limited the breadth and depth of data procured through the observation and interview processes. In addition to these time constraints, the number of participants needed limitations in order for it to be a manageable task for an individual researcher. However, the sample size of a single family eliminated generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, as the majority of the research took place in the home of the participants,
and their familiarity with the researcher was limited, a possibility existed for reactivity to impact dialogue and interactions. Reactivity is behavior exhibited by participants that is out of character or normal routine due to the presence of a researcher (Bryman, 2008).

Finally, the impetus of most funds of knowledge research is for extension into the classroom so that the teacher can use what they learned in order to create meaningful learning experiences for their students. However, as a literacy coach, I do not have my own classroom of students and therefore due to that limitation and time constraints I had to limit the breadth of this study solely to the home visits and funds of knowledge interviews.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is that it allowed the participants an opportunity to express views and perspectives on their involvement role in the literacy development of their children. Furthermore, incorporating a funds of knowledge approach to the study allowed for an exploration of how social, cultural, and cognitive constructs of the family inform and shape the ways in which they transmit literacy knowledge to their children.

This study added to the body of current literature by focusing on understanding the range of knowledge that a family possesses as it relates to historical, cultural, and social factors. It also encompassed inquiry into the influence of those factors on their perspectives, values, and goals in how they share knowledge and create literacy experiences in the home. It employed an approach that explored familial funds of knowledge through historical, cultural, and social contexts, as well as self-perceived roles as it relates to the early literacy development of their children in the home.
Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of the funds of knowledge in a family. This was accomplished by exploring what aspects from their backgrounds, culture, and networks shape that knowledge, the value and belief system that they hold based on the influences of those aspects, and how or if components of that knowledge are literacy-related. The concept of funds of knowledge was the theoretical foundation for this research and other related studies. It served to communicate the significance of families drawing on their knowledge resources to help facilitate the sharing of meaningful learning in the home. However, it allowed the freedom for families to express what that meaningful interaction looks like in light of how they perceive themselves, as well as their role, culture, and environment in providing literacy instruction for their child.
CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review was to examine primary and secondary sources related to the historical, social, and cultural components of a family environment, how their knowledge resources influence what and how learning is shared with their children, and how that relates to the potential development of literacy skills. The literature presented was a sampling of studies related to a funds of knowledge framework in educational research that supported the position that families possess valuable and practical knowledge that affects how and why parents interact with their children over literacy-related activities. This synthesis elaborated on many of the ideas in current research and their correlation with the seminal concepts set forth in the theoretical framework of funds of knowledge. Research using this framework addressed how historically and culturally accumulated familial knowledge informed and influenced how families shared knowledge in the home (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and how that knowledge may relate to literacy.

Funds of Knowledge

Many existing studies using ethnographic methods explored the issue of parent involvement from a funds of knowledge perspective (Brendan, 2005; Gonzalez, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001; Hedges, Cullen, & Jordan, 2011; Hill, 2010; Riojas-Cortez, 2001; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). According to Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992), this is a set of familial knowledge and skills, which accumulate throughout their history and develop in the context of their culture and social interactions. These skills are those, which typically are essential for basic family functioning and survival. These funds often include knowledge
developed through cultural heritage, labor history, resources, coping mechanisms, household roles and structures, and social and community relationships.

In some studies, the purpose of the researcher was to help teachers understand the cultural, social, and cognitive potential of the families of their students. Their purpose was also to help them discover how understanding those funds of knowledge could alter their personal and instructional perspectives. Brenden (2005) conducted a study of the funds of knowledge in families of oil field workers in southern Louisiana. She recruited teachers with students whose families fit the criteria. After providing instruction in ethnographic research methods and in a typical funds of knowledge interview, the teacher-researchers spent time observing and interviewing their selected families. At the conclusion of the study, the teachers expressed that the process helped them understand the experiences and perspectives of the students and their families in ways that they had not envisioned due to barriers related to school culture, as well as economic and social barriers present in the community.

Also reflective of this research format was a study by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) in which they presented a series of transcripts from a collaborative study involving Neff, Amanti, and teacher-researchers in the field. This research also concluded with the teachers expressing a more comprehensive, holistic view of their student, which included a broader perspective on ways in which they could incorporate their funds of knowledge into classroom instruction. Hill (2010) conducted longitudinal case studies in collaboration with teacher-researchers to explore how 4 to 8-year-olds incorporated usage of electronic literacy in the home. They documented the funds of knowledge that children exhibited about their familiarity with electronic resources and used that to create technologically relevant components to their literacy curriculum in the school.
Other research that encompassed a funds of knowledge perspective focuses on parent involvement with Latino families. Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) presented case study research focusing on the need, from an educational perspective, to understand the funds of knowledge in U.S.-Mexican families. Their purpose was to use these data to counteract the deficit perspective commonly held by schools in their instructional approaches with multicultural students. In another study, Riojas-Cortez (2001) used socio-dramatic play as a venue through which Mexican-American preschool students could communicate funds of knowledge present in their households. She conducted parent interviews in order to confirm and elaborate on what the children expressed through play. The observed funds included components related to language, beliefs, traditions, and educational values. The author concluded that learning about the funds of knowledge that a child possesses was an integral component to targeting language and literacy instruction in content and methods that were meaningful to children and their families.

In a study by Gonzalez, Andrade, Civil, and Moll (2001), the authors discussed the need to apply the concept of funds of knowledge research and apply it to discovering mathematical learning in the home. They describe the BRIDGE project, which was created with the purposes of uncovering math practices in families experiencing economic difficulties, helping families view themselves as mathematicians as they implemented math into their daily lives and routines. However, as they engaged in dialogue with families about math, the authors discovered that while the families engaged in mathematically oriented practices, they experienced difficulty communicating about how math concepts applied to those practices. Because the authors then understood that the women’s knowledge was embedded in practice rather than theory, they changed their research approach and became involved in participating in a group of mothers that were discussing a tailoring project of making a skirt.
One of the researchers with a strong academic background in math discovered that as one of the mothers was explaining her procedures, she had difficulty understanding the explanations because it involved processes that were meaningful to the tailor and her background rather than theoretically or academically based. However, the other women in the group demonstrated a high level of understanding because their mathematical experiences and knowledge were also practical in nature. That experience clarified that the use of practical and academic math can be potentially intertwined and socially mediated in a classroom setting focused on meaningful experiences.

A common theme that is prevalent in current literature indicated that Latino families consistently demonstrate a high level of educational aspiration for their children. Hill & Torres (2010) conducted research examining the possible reasons behind the dichotomy between poor academic outcomes for Latino students and the high levels of Latino parent aspirations for the academic success of their children. They discovered through qualitative accounts of frustrations and discrimination in the school systems could account for the contradiction. Zambrana and Zoppi (2002) also did a study on academic achievement, though it focuses solely on Latinas. They presented research that suggested that there was a conflict between their family values and the competitive, independent value system in the United States. In a family that Browning-Aiken (2005) interviewed, she discovered the prevalence of goals and aspirations related to the concept of educación, which encompasses not only academic education, but moral instruction, as well.

Another niche of funds of knowledge research that is not extensive explores the connection between these familial historically and culturally developed skills and academic, as well as non-academic results. A study by Rios-Aguilar (2010) explored that connection in
Latina/o students through an academic focus on reading achievement and a non-academic focus on literacy practices. The researcher acquired data for this quantitative study from reading scores and survey responses. Findings indicated that factors such as social relationships, educational perspectives, literacy activities in English and Spanish, and daily activities in the home correlated significantly with home literacy practices. However, these funds of knowledge did not appear to correlate with academic achievement, although the author recognized the possibility that many reading assessments focus solely on classroom content and not on broader perspectives of literacy acquisition.

Summary

A multitude of factors related to the social and cultural environment of families are instrumental in shaping their daily lives and routines. Families possess a wealth of knowledge stemming from aspects of their individual backgrounds and experiences and often manifested through their perspectives and actions. These concepts are foundational in research using a funds of knowledge framework. Over the years, educational research has continued to explore the issues surrounding what constitutes parent involvement in supporting the literacy development of their children in the home and what factors influence the shape it takes. These studies reflected this theoretical foundation through the lived experiences and perspectives of the individuals involved.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The importance of educators gaining greater understanding of the familial backgrounds and perspectives of their Latino students is an extensively asserted concept in educational research (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Gonzalez, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Ramirez, 2003). Often, teachers or other school personnel adopt a deficit perspective that attributes a disconnect in Latino parent involvement to a lack of concern, inability, language barriers, or work hours (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Durand and Perez (2013) suggest that in order to understand Latino parent involvement from a positive perspective focused on family strengths, educators must become increasingly familiar with the cultural and social perspectives of the families of their students. This involves collaborating with families in order to understand their perspectives on education, socio-economic concerns, experiences, and their own perceived roles in supporting their child’s learning in the home.

The purpose of this study was to explore various aspects of familial funds of knowledge and to gain understanding of parent self-perceptions and perspectives on their involvement role in the literacy development of their children in the home. A guiding component to this research involved an inquiry into historical, cultural, and social components that inform the ways in which the family facilitated learning for their children in the home and how those ways contributed to early literacy support. The term ‘early literacy’ referred to activities involving the development of letter-sound relationships, experience with reading, writing and comprehension strategies. Furthermore, through observations and interviews, this study examined other definitions that
families have for parent involvement, how they conceptualize and practice those definitions in the home, and what resources they rely on to enhance those practices.

The research questions that guide this study include:

- What social, cognitive, and cultural funds of knowledge exist in the home?
- How do parents share those funds of knowledge with their children and how does that knowledge relate to concepts in literacy?
- How do parents conceptualize their role in the literacy development of their children in the home?
- What resources, instructional methods, schedules, or other tools are available and used by parents in supporting the literacy development of their children?

Over the course of my career as an early elementary educator, it became evident that the involvement levels of parents in the provision of literacy instruction for their children at home varied greatly. Families often expressed a range of reasons for the differing levels of involvement. The assumption of this study stated that the nature of parent involvement is often contingent on historical, social, and cultural factors such as family history, labor history, available networks, values and beliefs, perceptions of their involvement role, resources, and prior experiences with schooling. However, it also assumed that families possess funds of knowledge based on their social structures, cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. These factors influence the informal and formal methods through which they transmit literacy knowledge and possibly even affect whether literacy instruction is present in the home environment. As this study is descriptive in nature, it employed a critical case study design (Yin, 2009) in order to elicit depth of data through which the participating family expressed their perspectives and experiences.
Case Study Research

The theoretical framework of funds of knowledge in this study and the nature of the research questions, corresponded to a qualitative, case study methodology (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Olmedo, 2003). This typically correlates to a view of a socially constructed reality, a concern for understanding a phenomenon, the use of ethnographic tools, and a focus on immersion in the area of research (Firestone, 1987). Case study research involves an in-depth study of the specific aspects of a certain phenomenon and understanding how those aspects relate to another circumstance or theory (Stake, 1995).

Focusing on a single family for this research and using the chosen recruitment processes corresponded with Yin’s (2009) description of effective case study selection. He suggested that in a situation where there is access to many sources of data, the chosen case should be one that would “…most likely illuminate your research questions” (p. 26). This study focused on the cultural, historical, and social funds of knowledge that exist in a family, how knowledge transmission between parents and children occurs, and how those factors relate to literacy. It also examined how parents perceive their role in that knowledge transmission.

As a critical case study, this research examined how the experiences and actions of a family in literacy involvement correlated to existing theory. Yin (2009) suggests that this method requires that theory serve as a foundation to guide the study, after which the researcher can attempt to determine how the data collected in the case study correlates to or disconfirms the theoretical framework. This process involves pattern matching, which begins with theory and moves to determining “…the degree to which observations correspond to or ‘fit’ this theory” (Trochim, 1985, p. 575).
Setting

This study incorporated a single primary setting. The observations and interviews occurred in the home of the participating family. The first visit I made to the Velasquez home was to meet with both of the parents to answer any remaining questions they had about what the study would entail before we began. I noticed that everything in the home appeared to be very organized and tidy. Paulo welcomed me at the front door and as I looked to my right, I saw the staircase leading upstairs and I heard the sounds of their children playing. He explained that the children’s bedrooms were upstairs. I looked above me and noticed a crucifix hung above the front door. Isabel joined him and they led me into the living room, which had green carpet and a matching floral sofa and loveseat. I happened to glance to my left and noticed an intricate picture frame on the wall in a small alcove, although at that distance I could not discern what the frame held. The family showed me the rest of the downstairs area. To the right of the living room was the kitchen and breakfast room. In the breakfast room was a white door that led to the backyard and the top of the doorframe was decorated with a dried floral arrangement. In the breakfast room was an oval-shaped wooden table with poinsettias in the middle. The kitchen was split by an island, with the sink and stovetop on the right and counter space on the left. Through the kitchen was a dining room with a rectangular wooden table surrounded by six chairs. During the course of the visits I made to their home, most of our time was spent around the kitchen table or seated on the sofas in the living room.

Participants

According to Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990), educational researchers in the past several years have, rather than studying schools from a failure perspective, shifted their focus onto the factors that contribute to success in schools. Funds of knowledge research also refutes a
deficit perspective and supports that minority families possess and share an extensive wealth of knowledge that connects to their own backgrounds and experiences (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). Therefore, I chose to study a family whose child was experiencing high levels of reading achievement in order to understand what was occurring in the family to promote that level of success. Following the recruitment process, I chose participants who were the parents of a second-grade student reading above grade level in the school where I serve as a literacy coach. The data from the beginning-of-year developmental reading assessment (DRA) served as the determining factor of reading levels. The following section on participant recruitment outlines the specific reading levels that the school district considers to be on grade level for kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. The basis for determining this level is reading accuracy of a grade-level passage, as well as responses to pre and post reading questions. I also used demographic data to inform the recruitment process, as well. The selected participants were representative of the dominant school demographic, which was Hispanic. The determination for these factors came from student data files, to which administrators, teachers, and literacy coaches had access.

This research used pseudonyms for the names of all members of the participating family and the teacher of the family’s second grade child. The participants, Isabel and Paulo, were mother and father to the second grader, Lucas, and immigrated to the United States from central Mexico. They were married in 1989 when she was 19 and he was 21. Although Paulo has lived in the United States since he was 3 years old, Isabel lived in Mexico until she and Paulo married. They met in 1987 when Paulo was visiting his family who lived near hers. They wrote love letters to one another for the two years before they were married. They had five children: Pedro, who has graduated from high school and living in the home while he works; Ana, who was about
to begin her senior year in high school; Diego, who would soon begin his freshman year of high school; Lucas, the second grade student from the school in which I serve as a literacy coach; and Cristopher, the twenty month-old baby.

**Participant Recruitment**

I had recently joined this school community as a response to intervention (RTI) coordinator and literacy coach. RTI is a process through which teachers can refer students to various levels of intervention services based on their academic needs and progress. In this role, I served on the intervention team for several grade levels, I provided coaching for the teachers on literacy strategies to engage their students, and I coordinated the referral process for students who require additional academic intervention. This role in the school established me in a more objective position than if I was the teacher of the student from the participating family. It also communicated to the family that my role was connected directly to literacy support and lent validity to my research focus on the literacy component of understanding funds of knowledge.

The recruitment process proved to be more challenging than originally anticipated. Initially, the principal sent letters of interest on my behalf to families of first grade students in the school. A copy of this letter is located in the appendix. Participating family members could include the parents or guardians of the student. They could also include extended adult family members who live or interact daily with the child. The letter explained what the study entailed and included an initial interest form to return indicating if they wanted to learn more about involvement with the research. In the letter, I gave a date by which I would need a response. After that date had passed, only four families had returned letters and none of which fit the preferred recruitment criteria.
Following this roadblock, I submitted a revision to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which asked to extend recruitment to families of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students. After receiving approval, I sent out the letters of interest. Although more letters came back this time, I was still unsure why, since Hispanic families make up our dominant school demographic, the response from these families was so limited.

I assumed that the limited response from the school as a whole was due to my being a new staff member and relatively unknown by the school community. However, after speaking to a few trusted individuals connected to this study, they suggested that the lack of response from the Hispanic community could be due to their perceptions of what it meant for school personnel to visit their homes. In describing what home visits in their study would entail, Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, and Amanti (2005) asserted that their visits would not involve punitive issues or trying to teach the parents in any way. The authors mentioned that this was a significant shift from a traditional model of home visits.

In the process of discovering this conventional perception of home visits through research and discussion with professional peers, I began to realize that my recruitment difficulties with Hispanic families was likely a result of prior negative experiences involving school personnel visiting their homes. As a way to counteract that perception, I enlisted help, which is described below, from the teacher of the student whose family I chose to participate in this research.

Of those who expressed interest in participating, I narrowed the participant pool to include families whose children were achieving above grade-level scores on the DRA and who reflected the dominant school demographic, which is Hispanic. Kindergarten does not conduct the DRA at the beginning of the year, so had I chosen a family of a kindergarten student, the recruitment criteria would be adjusted to reflect a student that identified 50% or less of the letter
sounds on their letter/sound screener. At the beginning of first grade, the student expectation was to be reading at a DRA story Level 4. DRA story Level 16 was the beginning of the year expectation for second grade.

Following the collection of family responses indicating interest in the study, I also confidentially held a discussion with the teachers of the students in order to obtain their understanding of the family and if there would be any potential issues related to language barriers. By doing this, I was able to better determine my ability to communicate with the family since I do not speak Spanish.

After selecting the Velasquez family, I discovered from Maria, Lucas’ teacher that his father was proficient in English, but his mother spoke primarily Spanish. However, since they had returned the recruitment letter indicating their interest in participating in the study, Maria felt that as long as the interviews involved both parents or included assistance from siblings with translation, the family would feel comfortable meeting with a researcher who spoke only English. Since she spoke Spanish, Maria asked if I would like her to share the details of the study in Spanish. That would help to ensure that they were comfortable with the procedures and purpose of what we were doing.

After discussing the full details of the study with her, Maria conveyed what we had discussed to Paulo. She later told me that one of the questions that Paulo asked her was if I was coming into their home to tell them what they should be doing. She assured him that I was there to learn from them about the wealth of knowledge that existed in their family, what factors influenced that knowledge, and how they shared that knowledge with their children. That conversation not only affirmed that Paulo initially had concerns related to my previously described barriers in recruiting Hispanic families, but it was instrumental in helping to make the
family more comfortable since there was that potential for misunderstanding my purpose in the
home visits.

In order to establish rapport with the family, the first visit served as a way to get to know
them personally and begin to get an impression of the home environment. This was a necessary
step to the research process so that I was able to establish myself not only as a member of the
school community, but an individual who is interested and engaged with them on a personal
level. I had originally intended to meet with the family three times prior to beginning the
research with the intent of building a stronger foundation for rapport. However, due to the
difficulties experienced during the recruitment process, time constraints only allowed for one
prior visit.

The purpose of the initial visit was to establish rapport with the family in order to build
trust and reduce potential for reactive effects (Bryman, 2008). This effect suggests the
possibility of participants altering their behavior in response to observation. In order to do this,
my first time in the Velasquez home involved casual conversation and informal observation, to
understand any social or cultural nuances by which I should abide in order to blend into the
family environment. By making an effort to incorporate the culturally and socially appropriate
practices of the family into our interactions, they would be less likely to view me as obtrusive to
their daily lives and activities. The family was very relaxed and welcoming during that visit and
I did not observe any practices that would necessitate any significant adjustments or changes in
my typical behavior.

During this time, I also observed the mode of dress for family members. Isabel and Paulo
both were dressed casually. As a part of the administrative staff at the school, my work clothing
might have been viewed as more formal than that which exists in the home. Dressing in such a
way that is outside the family norm had the potential to make me viewed as displaced from their natural setting. Therefore, since scheduled family visits occurred soon after school, I ensured that I arrived dressed appropriately for the family setting.

This visit also served as time to get to know the family on a personal level, and allow them to get to know me, as well. We spent time discussing my interests and motivations as well as theirs in relation to the research. This conversation provided a venue to communicate and reinforce my belief that knowledge is imparted in many ways and through many means, and that the purpose of the study was to gain greater understanding of how historical, social, or cultural influences shaped their funds of knowledge and how that knowledge related to literacy.

Finally, before our first interview visit occurred, I offered to bring dinner for the family. Sharing a meal with the family in a familiar setting offers the potential for increasingly open and trusting conversation. Although they had already planned a dinner for all of us on that first visit, they allowed me to bring family meals on many of my subsequent visits.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

In case study research, Yin (2009) suggests the use of multiple sources of data. Some of those included in this research are participant observation, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. During the course of data collection, I met with the participants in the home setting six times in order to engage in participant observation and semi-structured interviewing.

Following the initial visit, I progressed to the stage of participant observation and interviews. The purpose was to observe the family in their natural setting and to be aware of any physical and verbal nuances when the parents engaged with their children in conversation or over literacy-related activities. Observation also included components of the environment, such as the presence of literacy materials in the home, and how or if the families incorporate these materials
into literacy interactions. Meals with the family and interviews with the parents were the activities that made up most of the time we spent together.

Conducting this aspect of the research in the home of the participants allowed for a more naturalistic approach to inquiry. Spradley (1980) notes that developing understanding requires that “…the researcher must become a student” (p. 4). Comfort levels increase in a familiar environment and therefore increase the likelihood that the behaviors of those observed will be less subject to issues related to the reactive effect (Bryman, 2008). Furthermore, participant observation provided a venue through which I could become involved in activities that defined the daily life of the family, such as setting up and sharing in a mealtime. This increased the potential for remaining attuned to actions and emotions expressed through those activities. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) assert that participation in family life enhances the ability to understand how the family implements problem solving approaches, how they use discussion and action to derive meaning, and how environmental factors could influence future actions.

Spradley (1980) suggests that there are three primary aspects to understanding the lived experiences of people. These include their knowledge, actions, and tools. To capture the nuances of behaviors, actions, and environmental components possibly missed through the sole use of field notes, I obtained permission to use audio equipment to record our interviews. The use of a digital audio recorder served as an unobtrusive format for obtaining audio recordings of the sessions. This tool allowed me to record and upload audio to my computer so that all relevant data are kept and organized in one source.

During the interview process, a way to establish trustworthiness of the collected data is through conducting member checks. In this process, the researcher shares their interpretation of the data with the participants in order to clarify, reflect perspectives accurately, and allow for the
addition of any new data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Throughout the course of each interview session, I restated any comments or ideas that I did not clearly understand to the family members, asking for member checks on my understanding of what they communicated. Furthermore, if a prior interview had ended at an unfinished stage, I would often reiterate what we had previously discussed at the onset of the next interview.

Member checks became an interwoven part of the interviews because of the process of translations that occurred between my questions, Paulo’s responses, his translations to Isabel, and her subsequent responses to the inquiry. In order to ensure that I had understood what had been relayed through translations, I would often restate what I understood them to communicate in order to provide them the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings. The purpose of this process was to provide an accurate reflection of their perspectives and to request their assurance of the validity of how I interpreted their responses. My intent was to communicate a sense of dedication to representing and relaying their views. In order to create a spirit of mutuality, I let Paulo and Isabel know that they could contact me with any questions or concerns before, during, or after the study in order to allow that sense of trust to continue to build throughout the course of our time together and beyond.

While observing the participating family, I used field notes as a tool to document actions, behaviors, emotional responses, and aspects of the environment, in addition to the digital audio recordings. These notes provided a detailed reference of events for use in data analysis. As an ethnographic tool, there is not one format to writing field notes. Depending on the level of immersion in an observed experience, one can take field notes during the experience itself, or once the event has concluded. Typically, the use of both formats is common in response to variables in the field that might determine the need for a certain level of participatory action
(Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Therefore, the format in which I incorporated the use of field notes remained flexible in response to familial situations, actions, and events. The flexibility in its implementation will also serve to reduce reactivity (Bryman, 2008) that might occur in response to discomfort caused by writing in situations where attentiveness or participation is expected. Typically, since the participatory component of my observations were taking part in family mealtimes, taking notes during the event would have been inappropriate, so notes were recorded after our visit.

Although I had initially intended for only five of the six established observational sessions to incorporate semi-structured interviews, some of the interviews branched into unexpected topics and therefore I had to use all six visits to complete the interviews. The semi-structured approach to the interviews was a vital component because, while providing some structure, guidance, and topical focus to the questions, there was still the freedom to extend the questioning in varying directions based on unanticipated responses. This type of interviewing also allowed the participant to express nuances of their thoughts and feelings that might not have emerged with a structured format (Glesne, 2011). I also intended for the flexibility in questioning to bolster the family’s understanding that I was interested in listening, understanding, and exploring the topics that were meaningful to them. These interview questions, included in Appendix C, addressed topics such as historical, social, and cultural factors that influenced family knowledge and experiences, the educational and labor background of the family, values and goals, self-perceptions of their role in sharing literacy experiences with their child, how they share knowledge with their children, and how or if these factors related to literacy.
Although the initial intent was to begin this research during the fall semester, the difficulties faced in recruitment extended the starting date into late spring. Based on the family schedule, one of the only days off that Paulo had from work was Thursday and the family typically asked that I arrive at 5:00 pm. Each of these sessions lasted about two hours, although based on the time we spent having dinner and the directions the interviews took, the visits occasionally lasted longer.

Data Analysis

When working towards identifying themes, different approaches are available based on the type of existing data. In this study, the use of an analytic approach of examining the data allowed the theory guiding this research to help inform and interpret themes and concepts yielded through the observations and interviews.

In a critical case study such as this, Yin (2009) suggests that the researcher explore the experiences and actions conveyed in the collected data at examine its correlation to existing theory. He asserts that this method requires that theory guide the study and analysis. Trochim (1985) explains this further by describing a process of pattern matching, which starts with theory and moves to analyzing data in order to understand to what degree did the data correspond with the original theory.

This study employed the use of tools such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and field notes to yield rich data that lent itself to conveying a depth of human experience, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) suggest that creating a concentrated analysis from an extensive gathering of collected data such as field notes and interview transcriptions involves a process of several specific practices. As I reviewed the data, ethnographic coding was carried out in two primary phases: open and focused coding.
In order to give a preliminary structure to the subsequent analysis process, I initially utilized broad categories of interview questions similar to those found in funds of knowledge research. The interviews encompassed a conversational structure, with the flexibility and freedom to go in additional directions. These categories included family history, labor history, educational history, literacy, values and goals, family networks, knowledge transmission, and resources in the home (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005).

Although these interviews did encompass direct questions related to literacy, they primarily addressed a broader view of familial funds of knowledge because of the potential for uncovering the presence of literacy-related concepts in the daily lives and activities of the family. Although her research was primarily literacy-focused, Mercado (2005) asserts that, “…funds of knowledge are not exclusively literacy-based. What is important for teachers to understand is that local literacies are not likely to be visible through typical questions about the uses of literacy, such as ‘What kinds of things do you read?’” (p. 242). Based on that understanding, this research addressed funds of knowledge in a variety of domains that I explored to understand if or how that knowledge related to literacy.

During the initial process of reading the collected data as a sequential set, open coding served as the method in which each line was coded into multiple ideas and themes, which are reflective of the data. At this point of analysis, these themes were recorded without regard to how their perceived relevance or how they will connect with other ideas throughout the notes. According to Emerson, Fritz, and Shaw (2011), by keeping a focus on processes, purposes for inclusion of an event, and participant perceptions of events and significance, coding can proceed toward further connection of ideas and themes. An additional element that further refines
potential connections between themes is taking memos on the coded data. These memos provide a way to elaborate on specific aspects that could further characterize a coded event or process.

As I read and initially coded the field notes and transcribed interviews according to general themes and categories, I continued to compare the resulting data to the funds of knowledge framework, which served as a foundation for this research. In order to incorporate this theory-driven approach to data analysis, I gathered data from the observations and interviews and had all content transcribed and translated by a court stenographer. Once transcriptions were complete, the use of NVivo 10 served to organize field notes and transcripts. I established seven categories of funds of knowledge that guided my interviews (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005) as thematic groups in the program. These themes initially encompassed the categories of family history, labor history, educational history, literacy, values and goals, family networks, and knowledge transmission. Although it served as an area addressed in Mercado’s (2005) study on literacy in Puerto Rican families, inquiring into the physical resources that a family uses related to literacy does not seem to be a common practice in funds of knowledge research. However, as this study examined funds of knowledge and its connection to literacy, one of my research questions specifically addressed literacy resources. The discovery of several references that the Velasquez family made to materials that they used in incorporating literacy necessitated its creation as an analytical theme. Although these topics encompassed the themes used during analysis, the coding process remained flexible enough to alter or incorporate additional categories if necessary.

The use of the charts and models tools in the NVivo 10 software provided visual representation of the data thematically. As I began to code into the funds of knowledge and
literacy themes, this allowed for an additional examination of how each category was weighted in order to further guide and shape the observed themes.

Following the NVivo 10 coding and initial analyses processes, I examined the data that were coded into each category of funds of knowledge and created subthemes based on the content. I formed these based on the parameters of my research questions, as well as additional subthemes based on the density of specific data from the interviews. As I broke down the major areas, ideas related to literacy became prevalent as subthemes of ‘knowledge transmission’ and ‘values and goals’. Because all the comments originally coded to the primary theme of ‘literacy’ were later categorized into literacy-focused subthemes, I removed it as a primary coding category and absorbed it into the subthemes. Following this process, I used the program to determine which funds of knowledge themes and subthemes were prominent according to the weight of the categorized data. This process helped me to employ analytic generalizations, which allowed for an examination of the findings of the study and their correlation to the theoretical framework that guided the study.

Methodological Limitations and Validity

In order to establish the validity of a case study, Yin (2009) suggests the use of data triangulation. In ethnographic research, this involves the use of multiple sources of data so that the researcher has the opportunity to compare observations with interview responses in order to determine the existence of any misunderstandings or inconsistencies (Bryman, 2008). Glesne (2011) suggests that using multiple sources of data supports the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research. In this study, I achieved this with semi-structured interviewing, participant observation, and field notes. I referenced and employed all three data sources in the analysis
process in order to determine consistency of what was observed and discussed and to help understand the connections between the findings and the originating theory.

While the use of a single case study in this research served to reveal data that reflected personal perspectives, self-perceptions, and other culturally and socially related influences, there proved to be barriers in gaining access to a family in their home environment that stemmed from concerns regarding the purpose for my presence. Furthermore, there was the possibility that once I was offered the opportunity to visit with, observe, and interview the families that they could feel pressured to make preparations, arrange the environment, or behave in a way that would not have occurred had I not been there. In order to counteract these potential limitations, I had Lucas’ teacher establish initial communication with the family in Spanish so that they would be aware of the details of the study and my intentions in order to alleviate their concerns. I also emphasized my neutral role as a literacy coach and established rapport by structuring a personal visit prior to the study.

An additional methodological limitation in this study was in the sole reliance of one person to translate for another. If there were any existing issues of a dominant personality or one voice privileged over another, this single perspective in translation could have resulted in communication skewed to the views of the dominant individual. A way to counteract that would have been to have their eldest daughter serve as a co-translator in order to allow for the representation of multiple voices and perspectives.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore historical, social, and cultural components of a family through a funds of knowledge perspective. This approach allowed for an exploration of how lived experiences shape familial and cultural strengths and how those strengths related to literacy practices or perspectives in the home. The participants were a Hispanic couple who immigrated to the United States from central Mexico. They had five children, all born in the United States, and ranging in ages from 20 months to 21 years old. The research questions guiding this study addressed the general funds of knowledge existing in the family, how that knowledge related to literacy, and parent perspectives on their roles in sharing literacy concepts with their children.

The research questions included:

- What social, cognitive, and cultural funds of knowledge exist in the home?
- How do parents share those funds of knowledge with their children and how does that knowledge relate to concepts in literacy?
- How do parents conceptualize their role in the literacy development of their children in the home?
- What resources, instructional methods, schedules, or other tools are available and used by parents in supporting the literacy development of their children?

The concept of funds of knowledge served as the theoretical framework for this study. Examining the historical, social, and cultural context of a family through the guiding structure of funds of knowledge provided an opportunity to view their backgrounds and experiences as assets...
in what and how knowledge is shared with their children. This serves to counter the deficit perspective through which educational literature commonly represents minority families (Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzalez, & Amanti, 2005; Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992).

Based on the parameters of a critical case study that Yin (2009) outlined, this study utilized an analytical approach in which existing theory provided the structure and guidance for analyzing the data. Eight major topics that were common in funds of knowledge research provided the initial themes into which I coded the data. They included family history, labor history, educational history, values and goals, family networks, knowledge transmission, and literacy resources (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005). As I continued the coding process, I created subthemes that narrowed the scope to areas addressed in my research questions, although based on the data I incorporated additional subthemes, as well.

Themes

Family History

In order to counter the deficit perspective that educators commonly apply to minority families, it is necessary to understand the social, historical, and cultural environment of families as sources of knowledge through which they influence their children (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Exploring family history offers an opportunity to understand what a family has experienced along the timeline of where they have been to where they are now. It also provides an informational baseline from which other questions can stem (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Gonzalez (2005) refers to funds of knowledge as “historically accumulated” (p. 41), which further grounds the idea that when seeking to understand family strengths through their
activities, perspectives, and experiences, exploring aspects of their history is a key component to that process. After later reflecting on what we discussed during our conversations about their past, I realized how much those experiences influenced the perspectives and values that they have regarding family, culture, and education. Based on this understanding that family history can shape values, goals, and knowledge, it therefore served as a foundational component for preparing to address my first research question regarding the funds of knowledge that are present in the family.

*Paternal Family History*

Although the Velasquez family discussed events in their family history in the majority of our interviews, most of what they shared occurred during our first and last visits. When Paulo first moved to the United States at the age of three, he and his family lived in Chicago. After his father passed away, his mother and brothers began working, but eventually had difficulties finding jobs.

Because his family worked, he had minimal supervision, although his mother relied on the landlord to watch the children when she could. In our final interview, Paulo shared about one of his frightening experiences in Chicago when he was about eight years old.

Paulo: Yeah. And then once we were playing in the alley baseball and some, some guys went and trick us telling that we were going to some nice place. They were church, a church group. They took us to Gary Indiana. There's a small town nearby and they, they send us to their church. My brothers also went and we all got separated and I was crying. I was lost.

Kelly: But where did they say they were... where did they say they were taking you?

Paulo: To a park or something. And we spent all day without food no nothing.

He also expressed that he feared gang-related issues due to racial neighborhood divisions. They later moved to Texas to be closer to extended family. Because his brothers were already
working, Paulo eventually dropped out of school after the tenth grade to get a job to help support the family.

Paulo: I dropped out of high school because I like to work better and…

Paulo: Yes. Yes, 'cause we barely had moved here to Fort Worth. We were paying rent and most of my brothers and sisters were helping out too with the... paying the bills.

Isabel: But you also had to go help you mother and you had to drop out of school.

Paulo: That also helped. Yeah, that’s why I help them…got out of school. Pay the bills.

Maternal Family History

Isabel experienced her childhood and adolescence growing up on a farm in a rural area of central Mexico. She attended school through the sixth grade. In her community, the school she would attend if she continued her education was in another town and her mother would not allow her to go. Isabel and Paulo shared that she felt that her parents did not trust her because she had heard about situations about the daughters of other family members deceiving their parents when they were supposed to be in school (May 9, 2013).

Isabel: Uh, well, I don't know because I would see that others from my group would be able to stay and like they would practice dancing [at school] and I, I couldn't do any of that, and then back then over there the type of mentality you couldn't even wear shorts or anything of that. Then the school was behind my house. So they were just spying on me to see how short I would wear my shorts.

Paulo: She said that her house where she lives... well, it's beside the school. And her parents would spy her... spy and then whether she was neatly dressed 'cause on her times the girls always have to wear always long skirt...

Isabel: And then on the someday of physical education one would have to wear a short, and so they were just, they were just watching me through the corral.

Paulo: Their parents always were watching...

Isabel: To see how...

Paulo: ... how short she wore.
Paulo: And then my uncle told...my aunt told me that they saw her daughter instead of studying in one city she was with her boyfriend on another city. And there was a problem over there because they send their children to study in one, on one place and they see them on another place. Yeah. And her [Isabel’s] parents thought that she would be not studying or should be somewhere else.

Paulo: [To Isabel] What did you feel when your parents would tell you that you're not, you're not going to keep studying?

Isabel: No, well, bad because it's like if they didn't trust me.

After her family insisted that she quit school before the ninth grade, Isabel spent her time at home helping her mother with house chores. When I asked her about the people in her community, she mentioned that many of them were family. Her family would bring in community and family members to help with the October harvests. When I asked if her other family ever requested her help on their farms, her response suggested that her responsibilities kept her on their own farm (May 30, 2013).

Isabel: There, there was who to go with, you know, but most of the time, we did everything with our dad and that was enough.

Paulo: Um, she only helped her dad 'cause with what they...when they sold those beans they had food enough for themselves.

Although her brothers started coming to the United States to work when they would turn fifteen or sixteen, her mother would not allow Isabel and her sister to do the same until they were married. Paulo and Isabel met in 1987 when he was visiting his aunt in central Mexico. He and Isabel wrote letters to one another for two years before they married in 1989, which is when she moved to Texas (April 18, 2013). I asked her how that environment was different from her life here in Texas and over the course of the interviews she commented on that twice.

Isabel: Yes. Because all of a sudden I would feel like, like I would suffocate here because where my mother lives you can see the mountains (April 25, 2013).
Isabel: Well I saw it very different because I would see in a small town, I lived in a small town where everything was smaller and coming here well there are different things here. But I adapted quickly (April 18, 2013).

She became a United States citizen thirteen years ago and after doing so, proceeded to help several family members become citizens, as well (April 25, 2013). Only her parents still live in Mexico, and they typically come to the United States once a year to visit (April 18, 2013).

Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) suggest that learning about the history of a family can be foundational for other areas of discussion such as “…literacy, parenting, attitudes toward school, and funds of knowledge” (p. 78). The conversations held with Paulo and Isabel seemed to support this concept. The experiences and perspectives that they shared in this initial theme provided the data that often served as an initial glimpse into their lives and the components that were most salient in influencing their current environment, beliefs, and practices.

**Labor History**

Understanding the labor history of a family encompasses both formal occupations and informal work in which they participated. In a study on funds of knowledge in Latino families, the researchers suggested that when addressing familial labor history, discussing only formal work experiences limits understanding and could hinder the discovery of knowledge through other practices (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Exploring this aspect offered depth of insight into the skills that they had developed over the course of their lives, as well as further clarifying certain reasons for how they established their current perspectives and views on issues such as education and family values.
Paternal Labor History

Paulo has been a mail carrier for the United States postal service for fourteen years, but prior to that served in several other positions. Isabel mentioned that his first job when they were married was making tortillas in a factory, but she expressed concerns about his lifestyle at that time (April 18, 2013).

Isabel: When he was in, in the tortillas he have friends that were… [made a hand signal indicating that they drank a lot]. I no like it. He says come on out, come on out.

Paulo: She, she, she forced me to quit that job in front of them.

Paulo: Because it was a night job, a night shift job and…I use to come out at four, five in the morning drunk.

Isabel: I’d tell him, this no good.

Paulo: And we had by that time we had Pedro small.

He also had other jobs while he worked at the tortilla factory. After asking him about it, he described it as doing woodwork in construction areas (April 18, 2013). He later shared about another position that he had taken doing tile work before he was hired at the post office (May 30, 2013).

Paulo: I had my normal job. I was working... it was a very, very dusty place, and I was working the nights sometimes. Making ceramic tiles. Out of the dust and form the squares and I used to paint them. And they put them in a big, a big, um, like to make them hard, you know. Oh, like a furnace, furnace thing. Yeah. That was a tough job because I had to load them and they were heavy boxes and stuff. And then I was working only Saturdays at the post office. But I was temporary carrier. I started as temporary carrier, and they used to call me once every week. And then I took the test two times and the third time I passed it. That's when they started to hire me to go every day.

Maternal Labor History

During her childhood and adolescence, Isabel primarily assisted her family with the farm work and helped her mother with chores in the home. After her family insisted that she quit school after the eighth grade, she continued this work until she was married in 1989. Paulo had
been living with his mother to save money, but she felt that he needed to become more independent once he was married.

Paulo: 'Cause I was living with my mom and there was a house next that was for sale. A duplex. My mom say, "I don't want your wife with me. So you need to buy a house". Yeah. So I had to work two jobs and buy a house.

Isabel: And when we used to live there and we were mowing the lawn remember I would tell you we need to buy a house and you would tell me that I was crazy.

Paulo: Yeah. When we were living there we tried to buy another house and she was pushing me to buy another house 'cause she didn't want to be with my mother... close to my mom.

After she married Paulo and moved to Texas, Isabel initially worked as a caretaker for her sister-in-law’s three children while they were living in the duplex (May 30, 2013).

Isabel: No, well, they would make me the cook. Everyone would go to work and I would cook for everyone.

Paulo: And babysit all my nephews and nieces.

After having her daughter Ana, Isabel began to seek out other types of employment.

When Ana was young, Isabel found work with a tailor. I asked if she sewed as part of her job, but she said that her main work there was ironing the clothes. She worked there for one year while her sister helped them take care of Ana and Pedro. After that year, she decided to stay home and take care of her children and home. Several years later however, she sought employment at a fast food establishment.

Isabel: I making the salads and… I making the chicken.

Paulo: Or the biscuits. Last two years she was working at [fast food establishment]. Before he [Cristopher] was born.

Once Cristopher was born, Isabel decided that she would no longer work in a formal job outside of the home (May 30, 2013). I asked her to describe some of the work she does at home.
Isabel: Oh, well, I go out to take Diego and Lucas, and then I come back and change Cristopher. I give him his, his breakfast and then I go and take Ana... are you going to translate?

Paulo: Yes

Isabel: And then I come back and fix all the beds, throw out the trash, sweep, mop, and then I see two shows on TV [laughs]. (May 9, 2013)

Shared Labor History

Although Isabel and Paulo both have extensive work and home responsibilities, they also have an additional source of income that often requires both of their contributions (April 18, 2013).

Isabel: But I, I, I, I help for my husband. I have three house for rent. And I clean and make them... put the doors in and all.

Paulo: We bought some properties. And, uh, when something breaks she helps me, helps me out.

Isabel: That I help you put the toilet seat in and the flooring...

They shared a story about a time that they needed to place a water heater in a house but the door of the closet was too small. To solve the problem, they decided to approach it through the attic and ended up cutting a large hole in the attic in order to drop the heater into the room. They laughed while they shared that story and I asked them how they learned to do all of the building and maintenance work that was required with their rental properties and they indicated that they were self-taught (April 18, 2013).

Kelly: So how did you learn to do all of that, like the floors?

Paulo: Yeah, by ourselves.

The idea that it is imperative to explore all types of labor experiences as valid funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005) illuminated what conversations with the Velasquez family needed to entail. By incorporating this concept in the questions that we addressed, I learned
about influential family labor experiences that not only enhance their family income, but their set of skills, as well. The information shared related to these funds of knowledge also served as a foundation for additional inquiry into topics of subsequent interviews.

*Educational History*

Research focused on understanding funds of knowledge commonly acknowledge that understanding the educational history of families can provide valuable insight into their current values and goals regarding the education of their children (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Suizzo, 2007). The history shared by the Velasquez family in this domain supported that concept through its direct reflection, shared in a subsequent section, on their own system of educational values. Because of that connection, the data in this theme contributed to the overall understanding of the funds of knowledge in the family, which further assisted in addressing my first research question.

*Paternal Education*

Over the course of several conversations, Paulo shared about his educational background as well as his perspectives on what influenced his decisions regarding his academic path. Although he was born in central Mexico, he moved to Chicago when he was three years old. When he later moved to Texas, he continued to attend school, but decided to drop out after the tenth grade. I inquired into what led to that decision and he shared several contributing factors.

Paulo: Something else… I probably want to independence myself, some kids want the independence when they’re teenagers they want to buy a car.

Paulo: Well sometimes the other students they bullying. They don’t like, they don’t like, some kids didn’t like me or something.

Kelly: Is there something the school could of… is there something the teachers could have done to help fix that?

Paulo: Yes. Mm. Just, just keep the other kids in line.

Isabel: But you also had to go help you mother and you had to drop out of school.
Paulo: That also helped. Yeah, that’s why I help them, got out of school. Pay the bills (April 25, 2013).

Paulo: Yes. Yes, 'cause we barely had moved here to Fort Worth. We were paying rent and most of my brothers and sisters were helping out too with the... paying the bills.

Paulo: 'Cause when I was in [high school] they, they didn't teach me well.

Kelly: What didn't you like? What was it like there?

Paulo: Well, most of us. My rooms were outside and...

Paulo: They [the teachers] didn't help out the kids that, um... well, I saw one student smoking. In class. And they didn't like focus on us like...They didn't focus on our work. If we had questions they didn't care (May 9, 2013).

Although he left high school after the tenth grade, Paulo attempted to obtain his GED two years ago but he experienced some difficulties in the process. He was taking the reading portion of the test, which included an essay section. It was a timed exam, but Paulo believed that the test administrators timed the multiple-choice section on which he was working separately from the essay. Therefore, he was not concerned about the essay and used all his time for the previous portion of the test. When his time was over, he indicated that he was ready to begin the essay, but they told him that his time had elapsed and he could not finish (May 2, 2013). He did express, however, that the required passing score was a 225 and even without the scored essay, he only missed passing by a minimal amount (May 9, 2013). His goal is to take the exam again now that he is aware of how the administrators time the test (April 25, 2013).

Maternal Educational History

The educational path that Isabel experienced growing up in Mexico was due to the circumstances, influences, and values of her parents. She had to leave school after the eighth grade and she shared many of the reasons that this occurred.
Isabel: And I, and I studied up to junior high and I wanted to keep studying but I would have had to go to a different town and my mother didn’t let me.

Paulo: What did you do after getting out of, of middle school?

Isabel: Well nothing just stayed home helping my mother with the chores around the house (April 18, 2013).

Isabel: Well, I don't really have anything to say about school because I went, as one would say, by force because since my father and mother always had us working in the fields or just... they, they wouldn't even allow me to do my homework or...

In the earlier section addressing family history, Isabel offered additional insight into the decision her parents had made. The high school was in another town and her parents knew of family members that were supposed to be attending school, but instead spent time with friends or boyfriends. She felt that her parents did not trust her to make appropriate choices. When she continued to ask them if she could continue with school, her mother did not change her mind.

Isabel: And, and my mom said no because my diploma was going to be a pregnancy... a guy.

After she shared about this part of her life, I asked Isabel to tell me about some of her encounters while she was in school. The way she described her time in school indicated that she had very positive experiences in that environment.

Paulo: How were your classes in school?

Isabel: Um, well, they were good because they were fun. There was one or two teachers that would joke around. And, and since everyone knew each other from all over the place unlike here that some come from somewhere and others from somewhere else. There it was kind of like a family since it’s a small town everyone knew each other (May 9, 2013).

The idea that the educational background of a family can influence their current perspectives and values (Suizzo, 2007), was demonstrated when Isabel communicated that her parents insisted that she quit school and work in her home, although she wanted to continue her
education. In subsequent interviews, she and Paulo discussed how that situation affected their current goals and beliefs regarding the education of their own children.

*Family Networks*

One of the areas identified in research as a significant source of funds of knowledge is the networks to which a family has access (Browning-Aiken, 2005; Gonzalez et al., 2005). Moll (1992) expressed that networking is a means through which families share knowledge with one another in order to provide assistance and support. Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) suggest “…networks are important sources for the diversity of funds of knowledge to which children are exposed” (p. 12). Based on this concept that networks are both sources of knowledge and a means through which to share acquired learning, the content in this theme assisted in addressing my first and second research questions regarding familial funds of knowledge and knowledge transmission.

Although Paulo’s and Isabel’s families grew up in central Mexico, all of their siblings now live near them in the same area of Texas. Her parents still lived on their farm in Mexico, but they come to Texas about once a year to visit (April 18, 2013). Through the course of our conversations, they discussed several sources of networking for which I created subthemes in order to understand what types were utilized most in their family. Although I had initially established ‘social networks’ as a subtheme after three potentially relevant comments in our third interview, no other statements necessitated coding to that domain. Since the three existing comments related to casual neighborhood interactions and were not characteristic of ecological or cultural family knowledge or influences, I eliminated ‘social networks’ as a subtheme.
Community or Organizational Networks

The family did not extensively rely upon this area. There were, however, instances in which it was useful to them. When Paulo was sharing about his experience trying to pursue his GED, I asked him how if there were classes he had to take to prepare or if there was an organization that helped him navigate the process. He told me that he saw a commercial from a church group that was advertising their services to help people obtain their GED and he used that as a source of information.

During a conversation about Ana’s plans for college, I asked Isabel and Paulo about the application process and how they might choose to explore scholarship options.

Paulo: Well, she needs to look for which school she wants to go for.

Kelly: Mm-hmm. And what about with the application process?

Paulo: Like financial aid stuff? We never been through those things. Ana is the the one who knows the computer more.

Isabel: And at school they have that there as well. There are some ladies that...

Paulo: There are counselors in [the high school] I think that can help.

Isabel: Well, we haven't gone there yet but they have the ones that help out fill out the applications.

Paulo: There’re several people that help, help the students get the aid (May 30, 2013).

Isabel and Paulo also shared about a negative networking experience that her brother had when pursuing scholarship opportunities for his daughter.

Isabel: He told us to be ready because when ‘Eduardo’ was starting out they told them if they would pay six-hundred dollars they would help them more and he went to conferences at hotels and they just stole from him.

Kelly: Yeah. What were the conferences for?

Paulo: To get scholarships or something like that. And they charged him six-hundred dollars and they just took the money.
Isabel: Yeah. He told me to be careful because there are people who steal (May 30, 2013).

Prior to discussing Ana’s college preparation plans, Isabel smiled and showed me Ana’s grades. Because we had previous conversations about how they helped Lucas with his homework and reading, I planned to ask about their involvement in Ana’s schoolwork. However, before I could ask, Isabel spoke with an expression of pride in her daughter’s accomplishments.

Isabel: And she don’t, she never requires our help. She does everything on her own.

Paulo: But she talks to her friends over the phone.

I was unclear as to what Paulo meant, but since his statement followed one about Ana’s academic independence, I asked for clarification. I inquired if he meant that she called her friends for any help with her schoolwork, such as physics or another course. He responded that she did utilize the help of friends for any homework-related questions. He followed that with a statement that seemed to convey Ana’s perspective on her networking resources related to her high school classes (May 2, 2013).

Paulo: She [Ana] say, “Why should I ask my parents if they don’t know nothing?”

Extended Family Networks

As I coded data into this subtheme, I defined it as networking from any family member that does not reside in their home. The first occurrence that Paulo mentioned of extended family networking was when he shared that one of the reasons his family moved from Chicago to Texas was so that they would have other family members nearby to help them if needed. During that same interview, he also discussed how he initially received assistance from family ten years ago in the process of owning rental properties.
Paulo: Well we got that from my other family members ‘cause they start doing the same and we said, why not we, we could also can do the same. See when we started when I was started making the tortillas when I meet her… my mom helped me out buying a house…beside her. And it’s a duplex so my sister and me we live one side of each and the… when we paid it off we moved to another house a bigger home.

Kelly: But kept that one?

Paulo: Yeah, kept that one rent, rent that one and that help us, um, um, pay the other house (April 18, 2013).

Isabel had also been a provider in several occurrences of extended family networking. After she became a United States citizen, she assisted several family members in navigating immigration processes and obtaining their visas. One instance involved her helping her father clear his deportation records from twenty-five years prior in Louisiana. He had initially gone to Baton Rouge for agricultural work in order to send money home to his family. However, since he did not have the necessary paperwork, he was arrested and deported back to Mexico.

Kelly: Now did you, did you…when you got the visas did you do all those at the same time for mom, dad, and brother? Or did they...

Paulo: No, that's separately.

Isabel: But supposedly my mom and dad were going to fix their papers together, but they found that my dad had a deportation that's why my mom was the only one that fixed hers.

Paulo: And he was in Louisiana and they deported him. 'Cause he got in here illegal and they, they got him. They arrested him. After twenty-five years, his record was still on the computer. His record was still on. And we had to go to Louisiana for a pardon.

Isabel: And so then when they asked my dad if he has had problems he said no because he couldn't remember since it had been twenty-five years ago.

Paulo: Yeah, and then when they asked him questions on the consulate. They say, "Have you been here before?" And he said, "No, I haven't." And then they checked out his record and they knew that he was deported.

Isabel: But once they, they told my dad to tell the truth and so then my dad recommend that he was deported and they gave him another chance... if he would get his papers then they'll give him another chance to fix his papers.
Paulo: Yeah. They gave him another chance, but he needed to get the pardon. Like a... go to... well, they took him to Louisiana and he went to the jail over there. And they released him a letter saying that has been cleared. And we took that letter back to the, to the border and they took out the record off.

Isabel and Paulo hired an immigration attorney to assist them with the paperwork for each family member that they helped to obtain visas. However, they experienced another difficult situation when she assisted one of her brothers in that process. Paulo shared that the immigration office sent a letter to Isabel’s brother requesting that he come to their office. Although he had none of his required papers, they did not arrest him. The immigration officer informed them, however, that they would be sending a deportation letter. The letter never arrived and Isabel was able to help him obtain his visa two years ago (May 30, 2013).

Obtaining visas for family members was not the only way that Isabel and Paulo provided extended family networking. The brother, who she helped with the concern over possible deportation, also came to live with them for a year. Paulo mentioned that her brother created a great deal of trouble for himself and Isabel’s other brothers refused to offer their assistance.

Paulo: And he dropped out of school. He got out of school. He didn't show up to school. And we...since she took care of him he started changing and that's when he started working and...

Isabel: And tell her that he would leave to the lakes and not go to school. And I would say that I would tie the bed to the truck.

Paulo: She said she's going to tie up the bed and take him to school. We helped him financially...buy him a car. And when he got married we helped him bring his wife to the house.

Isabel: Yeah, because he got his woman pregnant.

Paulo: The girlfriend was eighteen and she got pregnant and they moved to our house.

Kelly: How long did they live with y'all?
Isabel: One year because, tell her that I can't stand them. Tell her that I told him that while the baby was born, and once the baby was born he didn't want to go, so I asked him to loan me all his money and we could buy another house.

Paulo: Just borrow money. And they started paying that house. That house belonged to us. And they started paying rent and then he wanted to buy the house and he started paying the house. Yeah. He, he wanted to buy the house so we, we just...um, we didn't finance it. Just pay us whatever amount for many...about in six years he paid off all the the money.

This situation occurred while they were living in their second home and renting out the duplex that they lived in when their eldest son was a baby. During the years prior to obtaining his visa, Isabel shared that her brother would do lawn maintenance or work in fast food restaurants. However, after his paperwork was complete, he started his own company doing electrical work. As Paulo and Isabel continued acquiring their second and third rental properties over the years, they occasionally relied on the skills of other family members to help them with renovations that they were unable to complete. I asked them about how their family was able to help.

Paulo: Well, um, most with my uncle right now. He always helps me when I don't know nothing, something...to fix something he helps me. And like in my duplex sometimes I hire him to put, to put a wall...’cause I don't know how to do that.

They also occasionally rely on Isabel’s brother to assist them with electrical work on the properties since he attended school to receive training in that field (May 30, 2013).

Immediate Family Networks

The Velasquez family not only relies on extended family for support, but they provide assistance for each other, as well. Although some of their comments for this subtheme related to family chores, the majority of discussion in this domain involved support between siblings. Their high school daughter, Ana, seemed to be the immediate family resource upon whom they
primarily relied. An example of this was in the way that Diego showed admiration for his sister, Ana because of her positive influence in pursuing educational endeavors.

Kelly: Now what about Diego, you know with school…what do you think is motivating to him?

Isabel: Well I see Diego that he is going to keep going because he even if he is slower but he is interested in…

Paulo: He’s a little less learner but he’s catching up. He’s following Ana’s steps also with the music.

Isabel: And because Ana…they put things in charge. Diego says Ana’s Diego’s hero. Uh, I don’t know why but he like sees her that, that…he, he, wants to follow what Ana does.

Kelly: What do you think it is about Ana that made him feel that way?

Isabel: She [Ana] says she doesn’t know why she came out so smart. In a, in a project that assigned to him [Diego], and they told him that he had to write about his stuff, his parents, of his…who is his…

Paulo: Oh, he made a school report and he started writing about his sister. Telling how she’s important to him and all the stuff that she does for him…

In addition to her family status as a positive role model for her sibling, Ana also has served as a resource for advice when her parents have been concerned about the future of their two eldest sons, Pedro and Diego.

Paulo: You see my fear, my fear is ‘cause we had one my older son [Pedro] and then her. But since they were difference… separated…he does his thing and she does her thing. She started to do, do homework and…they both didn’t get along very well. That’s our thing that sometimes kid like my oldest son he never liked the school and my daughter does.

Isabel: Because I, I tell him he should of looked for a job like… study and work in an office and he said he doesn’t like that.

Paulo: He [Pedro] likes, he likes the outside work, work.

Isabel: Mm. Because like I told you to me, I say why don’t we push Ana…Pedro in studying more? And Ana told me that there are people who like to work with the brain and people working with their hands.
Their questions to Ana regarding their second eldest son, Diego were in response to their concerns about his motivation level to continue his education.

Paulo: That was her most important how to, how can we motivate Diego so he can do whatever he wants to do when he grows up.

Isabel: Because I told Ana that, that if you have to be very smart to go to the university? And Ana said, “You don’t have to be very smart, you just have to want, because the schools have the help”. Like if they need to do extra work and stuff.

Paulo: If… is that motivation of the child if he wants really to learn, the school can help out (April 25, 2013).

Ana also serves as an academic resource for her siblings. Isabel and Paulo mentioned that when the children have questions about homework, that they primarily ask Ana for assistance. She has helped Diego with his math coursework and she and Diego have both helped Lucas with questions about his reading assignments.

Isabel: But, but they, I don’t know why but they run to Ana then come to us.

Paulo: They have more confident with Ana like… (May 16, 2013).

Paulo and Isabel also seem to trust Ana to have control over her college pursuits. They shared that she has also come to them for money in order to pay fees to take online tests that will exempt her from certain classes once she is at the university.

Isabel: Well, we're just kind of following Ana because she knows more than us.

Paulo: That we're just following her. She has more knowledge on how to work those paperworks (May 30, 2013).

The funds of knowledge in a family are diverse in nature and networking with those within and outside of the family serves to expand that knowledge pool (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The Velasquez family illustrated this through their demonstrated ability to use
community, extended family, and immediate family networks in order to achieve goals and provide support for one another.

Values and Goals

In research examining familial funds of knowledge, the area of values and goals is commonly addressed (Mercado, 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). The cultural and structural influences of a family often emerge as sources of strength and knowledge, and frequently serve to shape the beliefs and values that they hold (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Olmedo, 2003; Riojas-Cortez, 2001). One of the purposes of this research was to explore the values and goals of the Velasquez family through the funds of knowledge framework, and subsequently, based on the data analysis, explore which factors are most influential in shaping their perspectives and practices and their potential relationship to literacy. Exploring familial goals, values, and perspectives related to my third research question, which inquired into parent conceptualizations of their perceived role in providing literacy support for their child.

This theme encompassed thirty percent of all coded statements from the Velasquez family. Due to the volume of content, subthemes served to provide additional insight into the nature of their values and goals in order to understand the potential family hierarchy in this domain. I had initially established a subtheme for the specific topic of literacy due to comments connected to language use; however, the educationally related statements made by the family were primarily general in nature and their comments regarding linguistics bore a stronger connection to the subtheme on cultural values. Therefore, the final collection of subthemes linked to culture, religion, family, and general educational values and goals.
Cultural Values and Goals

Although the values that the Velasquez family held related to all of the subthemes likely had some relevance to influences from their respective cultural histories, this domain encompassed only those statements directly referring to the value they place on aspects of linguistics and their Mexican heritage. Paulo and Isabel shared that they would like their children to have exposure to their cultural heritage and they often used books as a venue through which to share these parts of their Mexican culture and history.

Paulo: Yeah, we always get him books from our culture like, how to make a piñata and… so he can learn about our, our backgrounds. We like…well this kind book was with some words and a picture so he will know what’s the book is telling…

Isabel: And, and whenever I see history books I bring them so that they can learn about what’s happened, like that one about Cesar Chávez.

Kelly: What other, like are there any other historical topics that y’all like for them to read about?

Paulo: Maybe like warriors normally heroes from our past. Have you ever heard of Pancho Villa?

During my observation of a reading experience with Lucas, they had chosen books that reflected this value of reading about culturally relevant topics. One of these stories was from Latino folklore and was about the ‘cucuy’. Paulo translated this term as a ‘boogieman’ and described it as a legend about a monster that would take children away if they did not behave well. They also showed me another book that they had chosen for Lucas about a ‘chupacabra’. I asked about this term and Paulo told me that it was a story about a monster that ate goats. He mentioned that the word ‘chupacabra’ means something similar to ‘goat biter’. The basis for the story was a Mexican legend about a creature that would kill and suck the blood from goats and other farm animals. He said that this legend eventually became the subject of movies, but changed so that the monster was an alien (May 16, 2013).
Paulo also shared about a celebration that they enjoy attending so that the children can continue to learn about their heritage.

Paulo: We, we have a tradition… Mexico every year we throw celebration and we always take them so that they can understand what’s going on over there. And they have like a, like a little carnival stuff. In my home town every March. Well they celebrate a saint over there. ‘Cause more saints are over there…they celebrate saints over there. We go and take so they can know our background.

Another traditional celebration that they discussed was the quiñceanera that they held for Ana when she turned fifteen years old. Paulo and Isabel described it as a traditional celebration that commemorates the transition of leaving childhood and becoming a woman. At the celebration, there was the symbolic presentation of a crown, earrings, and high heels. The church ceremony involved the priest offering communion and presenting Ana with a Bible (April 25, 2013).

When I asked them about any other cultural practices that they wanted to communicate to their children, Isabel mentioned that she would teach Ana how to make dishes such as tamales and homemade tortillas because she learned those things from her mother when she was young and she would like to share that experience. However, during our conversations, she talked about how Ana enjoyed being more precise when she cooked.

Paulo: [to Isabel] What does your mom like to cook?

Isabel: No, well, the same as us. Enchiladas, chiles rellenos, gorditas. What else? Well, the same thing, meat, potatoes, rice…

Kelly: And did she teach you how to cook all those things when you grew up?

Isabel: Yes.

Kelly: Yeah. Now does Ana, does Ana cook any of those now?

Isabel: Ana likes more to follow recipes on books.
Kelly: Now, when you cook do you use cookbooks and recipes or do you just kind of cook from memory?

Isabel: No. All from memory. And Ana no, she's there needing measurements, and the measurements and I'm not…like “nah” (May 2, 2013).

The Velasquez family had also expressed a desire to maintain and enhance their children’s knowledge of their native language. They used tools such as books, television, school courses, and interaction with the older and more Spanish-fluent siblings as a way to achieve that goal.

Paulo: When, when, when…we get them books with words English on top and Spanish on the bottom. That way he’s understanding both parts what it say (April 18, 2013).

Isabel: But he prefers everything in English so I asked the teacher. I told her he wants to read in English but I told him no, that at school he can read in English, but here at home whatever he is going to read I want him to always read in Spanish. And I asked the teacher and she said it was fine (May 16, 2013).

Religious Values and Goals

The Velasquez family has attended a Catholic church in the area for the past twenty-four years. Although Paulo and Isabel primarily spoke Spanish, the younger children understood more English, so they attended mass in English (April 18, 2013). Over the course of our discussions, they communicated why it was an important part of their lives. I asked if they went to church while they were growing up. Paulo responded that he had attended and then he turned to ask Isabel.

Paulo: Did you go to church when you were younger?

Isabel: No, they wouldn’t take me. That’s why I take them.

Kelly: Now, why did that become important to you to start taking your children to church?

Isabel: Um, well so that they believe, believe in God and for them to be…to have good habits, um…well to be, to be a good Christian and to think of the other that, that…
Paulo: Help other people.

Isabel: To believe especially in, in, in the elderly people and those who don’t have anything. And sometimes, sometimes they… like they say that, that…Lucas and Diego sometimes tell me that rice isn’t food because they want pizza every day. And I tell them that there are kids that don’t even have this.

*Family Values and Goals*

The conversations with the Velasquez family encompassed several references to values and goals that related directly to their family and the ideals that they want each other to uphold. During one of our interviews, they discussed having gratitude for living where they do now, and their concerns about what life Ana might have led if they had stayed in a different environment.

Isabel: Because when recently we have gone to the [their former neighborhood] and I have heard that majority that are over there…turn out pregnant.

Paulo: They don’t, they don’t graduate. And there…they…since we moved here it helped her out.

Isabel: Yeah. It’s different the…the neighborhood is different.

Paulo: I got one niece that already has two child. And she’s about to graduate from high school.

Isabel: And she is older than Ana by a year. It’s bad for one, tell her, to see them so young and with that kind of responsibility.

Paulo: Well we think that, that come from her mother ‘cause my sister…her mom…”cause my sister had the same problem she had. She had them when she was separated. And then her daughters came that way too. ‘Cause they saw their mom that she wasn’t married herself.

Kelly: And they just kind of…

Paulo: Followed.

During several interviews, we discussed topics related to the values that they would like their children to have. I asked them if they had any specific household rules or routines that helped them encourage their children to make good choices. Initially, they talked about general
household expectations such as following schedules and ensuring that the children cleared the table after breakfast, brushed their teeth, and cleaned their rooms. When they finished those activities, they could play or watch television (April 25, 2013). Weekends were the time that Isabel and Paulo expected household help from the children (May 9, 2013). They continued to share about what motivated the children to make good choices, as well as some strategies and expectations that they had regarding behavior.

Isabel: And they love going to [the convenience store] and when they misbehave I just tell them that they aren’t going to [the convenience store] and they do it.

Paulo: What if they got mad and said they don’t want to do…that…

Isabel: No. Because…no because they are kids with good feelings and they…if a commercial they see a person is sad you can tell it affects them. Yes, because like if there is like a mess or whatever and they see me like I am sad or mad, like Lucas and Diego advise each other and say, “Let’s do this because mom is sad or mom is mad.”

Paulo: They look at mom always when they see her sad or angry that’s when they get motivated and start helping out.

Isabel: Because, because…tell her that I have a sister that has kids that they see her crying out of sadness or because of anger and they don’t have interest.

Paulo: She has a sister with, with rebel sons…that they never pay her attention and, and they’re always against her.

Isabel: But I say that she also had the fault because when they do something to me I do spank them when they were younger. Now I don’t, but when they were younger I did spank them.

Paulo: See the problem…the point is when a parent doesn’t discipline their children right…they, um, they started to say, “well my mom is not doing nothing…” That’s why they start being more rebellious (April 25, 2013).

Paulo and Isabel also shared about the importance of spending time together as a family. Along with Sunday trips to the mall and other outings, they incorporated other opportunities to spend time with one another.
Isabel: Tell her they like to be together. When they played and Diego sang, Lucas sang, Ana sang, and we all had to go see them sing.

Paulo: And then my Ana played the flute and she always want us all to go see her (April 18, 2013).

Isabel: And, and also the life here is always a hurry I teach them to eat together at the table at least the weekends because it’s very rare when they are all together.

Paulo: We all share the same table and eat ‘cause this…in this United States life every time were rushing and going to work and…when to school and stuff and we never get out together. And, and she wants to be with everybody so even if they’re not hungry they’re still at the table (April 25, 2013).

One particular area that Isabel and Paulo discussed extensively was regarding their pride about still being married after nearly twenty-five years. Isabel talked about the time when she was in the hospital giving birth to Cristopher. The nurse asked how many children she had and was surprised when she learned that this was Isabel’s fifth. She expressed surprise that Isabel was still married because she felt that it was rare for a marriage to last. During one of our interviews, Isabel shared about some conversations she had with Ana regarding the longevity and quality of their family life.

Isabel: Yes. Because Ana sometimes has told me that why didn’t I study? But she gets back and says…she has been to other houses and says, “Mommy they don’t live like us…like they all go their separate ways.”

Paulo: Uh, my Ana’s proud of her ‘cause sometimes when she go visit her, her friend’s house their parents never, they’re never together…

Isabel: And Ana gets home, mm… tamalitos, mm, enchiladas.

Paulo: She always knows that there is food in the table.

Isabel: Sometimes she says, sometimes she gets mad because we don’t buy her everything she wants, but I tell her that family is more important than the material stuff. Yeah. Because she has a friend that is by herself and sometimes she comes to, to, to invite her to the movies and I tell her she should be thankful of her family that she has. Tell her that we like to have a lot of jokes.
Paulo: But the most important that we will trust. And we really like to share stuff like we just knew you were telling you stuff. And we like to share (April 25, 2013).

A value that the Velasquez family also addressed was their desire for the children to be mindful of the needs of others, especially those that are elderly or disabled. During our conversations, they discussed some specific situations in which the family exhibited that trait.

Isabel: Like if you see a person that needs...that's disabled or something and if you have...even though you have a little bit of money to share with him if you notice that he really needs it.

Paulo: To help the, the poor and, um, the other day she was talking to me, and she said that she went to, to the store...and she saw a man who had an accident. He had a...his foot was cut or his toes...and she gave him five dollars. She said well I'll give him the money and with her heart she gave him all the five dollars.

She continued by telling me that the next day, Lucas needed money to buy a book at the school book fair. However, because she had given her cash to the injured man the day before, she did not have the money to give him. Their eldest son, Pedro arrived at home later and gave her the money that Lucas would need to buy a book. Paulo then indicated that it was a cyclical situation, in which Isabel gave her money away, but another family member contributed to help provide what she needed (May 2, 2013).

In one of our interviews, Paulo and Isabel told me about some of the obstacles that they experienced when Pedro was a child. He was born with curvature in his spine, which resulted in three corrective surgeries. He underwent four years of physical therapy, during which the Velasquez family worked with him at home. The doctors provided Pedro with crutches and a brace because one leg was shorter than the other one. Paulo and Isabel used materials such as a small set of stairs to work with him on walking. They now order him special shoes to compensate for the difference in leg length.
Isabel: But explain that the doctors told us themselves that he got better because of all the
time we put into it because there are some kids that were born like him and everything
and they're not like Pedro because if you see Pedro he doesn't have anything.

Paulo: Like if you look at him...he wouldn't come because he's shy, but he's a normal
person. He walks normal. Yeah. 'Cause we always...when he was a little baby he
always looked for him and we always cared for him...and, and we think that God was
good to us and helped us for him to, to be, to walk. To be able to walk. Many people
don't pay attention to their children and that's why some kids don't get motivated and then
they're...they like use the wheelchairs 'cause their parents didn't help them to walk (May
9, 2013).

During our final interview, I asked Paulo and Isabel if they would discuss their influences
and how they developed their system of family values. When Isabel shared her thoughts, she
suggested that she partially developed her value system through familial examples of what she
did not want for her own marriage and parenthood experiences.

Paulo: [to Isabel] How did your parents teach you how to treat others?

Isabel: Well, what I think is that over there, they really didn't show us anything.
Everything we learned is on our own. Yes, because if I start seeing what they...my mom
and dad would fight a lot. So what, what I...since I was very young I would say that if
ever had a family of my own I would try to not fight that way.

Paulo: No, her parents never, never teach them what...how to do things. She learned it
from other people. She, she learned from watching stuff or hearing people talk. But not,
not from our parents.

After this conversation, Isabel began telling me that when she had a discussion with her
sister about Ana wanting to continue her studies, she told her that it was impossible to have a
family and pursue education, as well. Isabel informed her that she did not hold those same
beliefs.

Isabel: Yes, because I'm telling you that she says that is not possible to have an education
and have a family, and I tell her that it is possible and that if Ana wants to have a family
and wants to pursue an education, I'll take care of them (May 30, 2013).
General Educational Values and Goals

This subtheme consisted of comments made by the Velasquez family that related to values they hold regarding their education and the education of their children. Within the overall theme, thirty-eight percent of their statements were relevant to this subtheme. Our conversations primarily focused on their desire for their children to have more educational opportunities than were available to them. In one interview, Isabel expressed that the one thing she would change about her life was her inability to continue her education. Supporting her children was important and she was adamant that her priority is for them to obtain an education, even if she had to continue to support them while they pursued that goal. Paulo shared that same goal and wanted them to be able to have the careers and futures that they wanted (May 2, 2013).

Isabel: And that’s why I will let Ana go up to wherever she wants [for college]. Yes. Because now I still tell my mother, “Why didn’t you let me go study?” And I don’t want Ana to say the same thing to me (April 25, 2013).

Paulo: Like nowadays, Ana, she’s not going to tell us, ”Mom, are you going to let us...let me go to college?” She will decide it by herself to go to college. And back then, her [Isabel’s] parents would say, ”No, you're not going to college, to college. You're going to stay here” (May 9, 2013)

Kelly: What is important to you about education?

Paulo: For, for them to learn stuff. And to know things about life.

Isabel: Well, the importance is that they continue their education and try to support them the best we can so that they can reach their dreams.

Paulo: Yeah. But there’s also many dropouts in high school that they end up working dead end jobs like…’cause they, they didn’t have no education to get good jobs and…because when I dropped a school I went to one dead end job to another dead end job. But I, but I do really want to go learn something.

Kelly: What do you want to learn?

Paulo: Well at least get the GED. To show, show my daughter that I can learn something (April 25, 2013).
Paulo: And we don't want us for them to tell us though, like saying, "I'm going to drop out, Dad, 'cause since you didn't finish school I'm going to do the same thing." And that's one thing that we're afraid that someday Diego or Lucas will tell us. Say, "How come I'm going to...why are you pushing us to go to school if you didn't?"

Kelly: How do you, I guess encourage them to continue that path in school?

Isabel: Oh, well, yes. To try to keep them unlike us that we couldn't accomplish either because we had to work and to give them the opportunity. To try to give them all we can so they wouldn't go and work at a restaurant or this or that and not study.

Paulo: We want us for them to have a good future and for them not to work in restaurants like we did (May 9, 2013).

The Velasquez family also discussed the value they held in participating in and supporting the academic endeavors of their children in any way that they are able. Paulo offered an example of his efforts to ensure that the children had necessary materials for school projects or activities. Providing this support was of utmost importance to them. They expressed that a potential repercussion of failing to provide their assistance whenever possible, was that their children might feel unsupported and subsequently give up on their studies (May 16, 2013).

Research using a funds of knowledge framework communicates that the values and goals significant to a family are valuable sources of knowledge, which often shape perspectives and actions (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005; Mercado, 2005). The Velasquez family communicated their system of values and goals, which corresponded to a variety of domains such as culture, family, education, and religion. Because the findings from each subtheme conveyed varying concentrations of their related coded comments, this supported the influential nature of values and goals on familial perspectives in a variety of areas.

Knowledge Transmission

When examining the funds of knowledge in a family, a component of understanding the transmission of that knowledge in the home is in the emphasis of meaning residing in the actions
surrounding daily routines and activities (Gonzalez, 2005). According to Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore (1993), funds of knowledge are shared in different ways within different families through their “…unique strategies and arrangements to subsist and progress based on their personal and labor history, current conditions, and options for the future” (p. 159). Gaining an understanding of how knowledge transmission functions in the family provided insight into my second research question, which addressed how families share funds of knowledge.

Throughout the course of the interviews, the Velasquez family shared their perspectives and practices regarding the transmission of knowledge in several categories. This overall theme represented nineteen percent of all coded data. Although I had initially established a subtheme related to general and occupational knowledge transmission, the comments coded into this area reflected a stronger relevance in other subthemes. Therefore, following this finding, I disseminated it into other areas. The final categories involving the transmission of cultural knowledge, values, and literacy served as the subthemes for this domain.

*Cultural Knowledge Transmission*

During conversations with the Velasquez family, they often described books as a medium through which they shared aspects of cultural practices, history, and legends. When they helped the younger children choose items from the library, they checked out books about making piñatas or the process of making tamales. They also valued books about historical figures such as Cesar Chavez and Pancho Villa. They utilized Mexican folktales to incorporate traditional fictional literature, as well. One book that they discussed was about the legend of the ‘chupacabra’. In this particular version of the ‘chupacabra’ tale, Paulo compared it to the story of the three goats trying to cross a bridge and the troll that hindered their passage.

Paulo: It’s in an English version, it’s an English book. They make it like it Spanish, it’s a Spanish book. It’s about the three little goats and the troll, right? But instead of the troll,
the author of this book put this monster in for the ‘chupacabra’. And they don’t let him pass. They have to play, like this one has to play the violin. And they put like a piñata in it. Just for like, culture…(May 16, 2013).

In a previous conversation, I asked Paulo and Isabel about the other ways, besides books, that they shared aspects of their heritage with their children. They indicated that they share their histories through stories about what life was like growing up in Mexico. Isabel mentioned that she would like her children to understand how their lives and practices were different now than they were for them as children. She offered examples of making tortillas and having to wash clothes by hand. Paulo shared that he felt much had changed in the years since he and Isabel were children and that Ana would have a difficult time picturing the realities of their past (May 2, 2013).

Transmission of Values

Within the context of our several conversations related to values, there were components of the perspectives and experiences that Paulo and Isabel shared that communicated their need to instill those values in their children. The primary mode in which this occurred was through modeling actions and behaviors that exhibited their desired value system. One such incident, relayed in a previous section, described a situation in which Isabel gave her last five dollars to a disabled man she encountered at the store. Sharing this money left her without the necessary funds for Lucas to purchase a book at the book fair. Her eldest son echoed the value that Isabel exhibited through her act of provision when he offered to give Lucas the money that he needed (May 2, 2013).

An example of negative modeling, one that I described in the section on family values, involved experiences Isabel had growing up with parents who often fought with one another.
Isabel expressed that because of those encounters, she wanted to set a more positive example for her family.

Isabel: So what, what I...since I was very young I would say that if ever had a family of my own I would try to not fight that way.

Paulo: She... when she sees her parents fighting she saying she, she had a good... she wanted good things for her family, for her children. She don't want us, she don't want us to be fighting, me and her.

They shared another example of negative modeling that involved their eldest son, Pedro. He had received a letter summoning him to jury duty. Paulo and Isabel initially wondered if he should attempt to avoid serving, but they eventually saw value in this experience for him. After he had been selected, they had discussions with him about how he needed to view this in cautionary terms and recognize the situation as an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of another (May 30, 2013).

**Literacy Knowledge Transmission**

This subtheme represented 59% of comments coded within the theme of ‘knowledge transmission’. The Velasquez family discussed several formal and informal activities that were relevant to literacy concepts. Many of these activities involved working directly with their children on their daily reading assignments from school. Although they often discussed this in general terms, they shared one particular illustrative example. Because Lucas was stronger in English, he preferred to read in English. However, Isabel wanted to ensure that he retained and strengthened his Spanish and often did this by having him follow and read along quietly while she read the text aloud. During this activity, she attempted to ensure that he was attending to the book by occasionally inputting an incorrect word in Spanish to see if he noticed.

Isabel: I change his words and then he says, “That’s not what it says.”

Paulo: And since he knows they’re, they’re not there he says, “You making those things.”
Isabel: Like there was a part that said, ‘que la abeja’…the bee. I put ‘the woman’ (May 16, 2013).

Another area in which the Velasquez family discussed the transmission of literacy knowledge involved the children’s ability to speak and understand Spanish. Paulo and Isabel expressed concerns that while their two eldest children, Pedro and Ana, were highly proficient in Spanish, Diego and Lucas were not at that same level. They attributed this to differences in schooling. On several occasions, they mentioned that Pedro and Ana grew up in Spanish-dominant schools in their former neighborhood. However, the other two have had more exposure to English in the schools where they currently attend (April 18, 2013).

Paulo: Yeah, but they have more difficult understanding us in Spanish when we talk to them. They know how to read it but they don’t understand most of…

They shared about ways in which they counteract that concern. During our conversations, I asked about the school dual language program in which Lucas participates and if he had participated in that class structure in other years.

Isabel: Yeah, English, Spanish. And pre-k, too. Either way…talking he does know more than Diego because Diego, Diego didn’t go to bilingual. Because they still didn’t have the bilingual program when we moved here (May 16, 2013).

Paulo: Yeah. Diego, when he gets to high school he's going to start getting in Spanish classes so that he can improve his Spanish (May 2, 2013).

Another means through which the family helped the more English-proficient children acquire their skills in Spanish was in their purposeful selection of and deliberate practice with books that incorporated both languages (April 18, 2013). Although Isabel preferred primarily working with the children on Spanish texts, Paulo shared that they shared the responsibilities so that he participated more when they practiced reading in English (May 16, 2013).

An area of knowledge transmission that I explored involved Isabel’s acquisition of English. She asserted that she understands more English than she speaks, and was not afraid of
attempting to use the English that she knows. I asked her to tell me about an experience that helped her acquire more English.

    Isabel: But that's how I learned because when I used to work at the cleaners and I would hear of a word and I would come to you [Paulo] and you would, you would translate so I would remember that, and so that's what I've learned because I haven't gone to school (May 30, 2013).

    Although the Velasquez family participated in formal literacy experiences with their children, such as scheduled reading practice and work on decoding skills for both Spanish and English words (May 16, 2013), the family also shared literacy through informal means, as well.

    Isabel: Yes, when I have... like when I open those peppers and I put them so they can read the bottle when we're reading.

    Paulo: Yeah. Sometimes we let them read the labels from the cans. The jalapeño cans.

    Isabel: But in any way Lucas is the most sharpest because if he's going to get a cookie...last time I was laughing because he was going to get some cookies and he was reading to see how many calories it had (May 2, 2013).

    Isabel: …if I put something on the table boxes of cereal or the ketchup they like to read what it says.

    Paulo: They’re both in English and Spanish now, the labels too (May 16, 2013).

    Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore (1993) suggest that families communicate funds of knowledge in a variety of ways, and that family background and current circumstances can affect what and how transmission of knowledge occurs. The responses from the Velasquez family reflected this concept through their utilization of family communication, school communication, and other strategies in order to share knowledge about culture, values, and literacy.

    Literacy Resources

    Resources are part of the integral components of activities in the structural, social, and cultural environment of a family. They can also be material or intellectual in nature and are a component of the knowledge that families possess in order to fulfill various purposes and needs
(Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). In her research on the local literacies, the families that Mercado (2005) visit discuss resources in various forms such as reading materials, language use, and networking opportunities.

For the purpose of this study, the statements coded into this theme related primarily to reading materials or tools and places where the family obtains reading material. This theme represented seven percent of all coded statements, however, much of these data were in other locations, as well. This indicated that while it was not one of the more dominant categories independently, the data were relevant and supported other themes. The comments from the Velasquez family in this theme provided the necessary data to answer my fourth research question related to the resources, tools, and other instructional means utilized by the family in providing literacy support for their children.

Many of the resources mentioned by the Velasquez family related to books that they encouraged their children to read. Many of them related to topics connected to their cultural heritage such as historical figures, making traditional Mexican dishes (April 18, 2013), or traditional folktales (May 16, 2013). However, they did mention that Ana preferred to read the ‘Twilight’ series and her Bible (April 18, 2013). Diego preferred books such as ‘Diary of a Wimpy Kid’. I asked if he read those in Spanish, but Paulo said he would read that in English and would read the Spanish books that Lucas checked out (May 16, 2013). When they shared about the types of books that they like the children to read, I asked Paulo and Isabel where they found most of the books in their home.

Paulo: Uh, we go to a public library. Yeah, we always get him books from our culture like, how to make a piñata and… so he can learn about our, our backgrounds.

Kelly: How often, how often do y’all go to the library?

Paulo: Every time they finish. I think it’s every two weeks (April 18, 2013).
During our conversations, Paulo and Isabel would discuss some of the non-traditional forms of reading or learning that the children enjoyed. Although they briefly mentioned learning tools such as computer games, dictionaries, and the use of internet search engines for words they do now know, Paulo and Isabel described other resources in more detail. When they shared about the Catholic mass that they attended, Paulo mentioned that they like to read the pamphlets during the church service (April 18, 2013). Another way in which they used resources to incorporate literacy experiences is by having Ana and Diego watch television in Spanish to get more exposure to the language. They would also have the younger children read labels from jalapeño cans, cereal boxes, or packages of cookies (May 2, 2013). They talked about another activity that Lucas especially enjoyed. Paulo described it as an activity book where they looked for and form words as well as unscramble letters. He only referred to it as a crossword puzzle, but his description could also be indicative of a word search or word scramble (May 16, 2013).

Funds of knowledge research describes the roles of resources as tools through which a family can interact with one another through activities designed to accomplish a variety of purposes or goals (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). The information that the Velasquez family shared about their own resources reflected that understanding, as well. The statements from Paulo and Isabel revealed that the nature of their activities included a variety of resources and were often interactional in nature. The purpose of the resources shared in this theme centered on the idea of literacy and their incorporation in ways that were meaningful to their children.

Conclusion

The use of funds of knowledge as a theoretical framework served to create a foundational understanding which established familial perspectives, practices, and experiences as sources of knowledge and strength (Gonzalez et al., 2005). These tenets of this theory further served as an
analytical tool through which I could filter the data. Funds of knowledge research establishes areas such as family history, labor history, educational history, values and goals, family networks, knowledge transmission, and resources as commonly explored categories (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005). These categories served as the analytical themes into which I coded interview content. I then sorted the statements into relevant subthemes that served to provide greater specificity in understanding the data in relation to my research questions. The purpose for this chapter was to present the data thematically in order to communicate the experiences and perspectives of the Velasquez family according to funds of knowledge domains. The following chapter will provide a venue through which I discuss the findings from the data analysis as they relate to the questions that guided this research.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose for this research was to explore the funds of knowledge in a family, understand how they share that knowledge, and determine if or how it relates to literacy. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) describe these funds as the knowledge and skills that a family develops through their backgrounds, experiences, and cultural influences. Families often use this knowledge in their efforts to function and subsist in everyday life. Funds of knowledge research focuses on the idea of countering a deficit model in education, which commonly views minority families from a perspective that minimizes or negates the educational contributions they make to their children (Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). In order to remain consistent with the idea that understanding familial funds of knowledge helps to counter a deficit view of minorities, the participating family reflected the school’s dominant Hispanic demographic. Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) discussed how recent years of educational research has shifted from studying school failure to studying school success.

In order to transfer that trend to examining the life of a family, I chose a family whose second-grade child was reading above grade level in order to understand more about the values, perspectives, and practices that might be contributing to his success. However, to understand the funds of knowledge within a family, it is necessary to learn the context in which they exist or occur. This research encompassed an emphasis on the values and goals that a family holds and how those values affect their actions and decisions. Often, the values that are meaningful to a family develop based on influences from past and present experiences (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Ramirez, 2003; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). Therefore, the domains that researchers often
address in funds of knowledge studies are family history, labor history, educational history, values and goals, family networks, and knowledge transmission (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005). Although addressed in Mercado’s (2005) study on literacy funds of knowledge in Puerto Rican households, physical resources for literacy are not a commonly explored domain in many funds of knowledge studies. However, as this study examined familial funds of knowledge and their relation to literacy, I did inquire into the literacy resources utilized by the family. Therefore, due to several related responses indicating that the Velasquez family utilized multiple resources in that area, it was evident that it served as one of their funds of knowledge, and became a theme for analysis.

In order to understand the funds of knowledge in a family, how they share that knowledge, and its relevance to literacy, I developed four questions to guide my research. These questions included:

- What social, cognitive, and cultural funds of knowledge exist in the home?
- How do parents share those funds of knowledge with their children and how does that knowledge relate to concepts in literacy?
- How do parents conceptualize their role in the literacy development of their children in the home?
- What resources, instructional methods, schedules, or other tools are available and used by parents in supporting the literacy development of their children?

With establishing these questions as a guide, I developed interview questions and subsequently analysis themes based on those previously described areas often addressed in funds of knowledge research. These included family history, labor history, educational history, values
and goals, family networks, and knowledge transmission, (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Mercado, 2005), with literacy resources added as theme connected to the literacy focus of this study.

In the previous chapter, I presented data from the six interviews with the Velasquez family in the context of the analysis themes and subthemes. The findings from this theory-based analytical approach were relevant to the specific questions guiding this study. As I examined the data in light of those questions, it was imperative to also explore them from a perspective of pattern matching in order to understand the degree to which the findings connected to the theoretical framework for this research (Trochim, 1985). Since occasionally more than one theme addressed a research question, I organized this discussion by research question and embedded the themes within.

Research Question 1

In the first research question, I asked about what social, cognitive, and cultural funds of knowledge existed in the home. My assumption stated that families possess extensive social and cultural knowledge, accumulated over time, which they share with others through informal means (Ortiz & Ordoniz-Jasis, 2005). Researchers exploring familial funds of knowledge suggest that sources of knowledge often derive from the past and present experiences of the family, formal and informal labor histories, and the ways in which networks function within and outside of the family (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994).

Although the theme related to their educational history offered additional insight into aspects of family background, the data yielded from this domain served as a significant factor in shaping the values and goals that the Velasquez family held. Therefore, in this discussion of findings, I addressed that theme in the context of the third research question addressing family
perceptions and values related to their educational and specifically literacy-related role with their children.

Gonzalez (2005) suggests that funds of knowledge are “historically accumulated” (p. 41). This gives credence to the idea that exploring the historical influences of a family through the framework of their activities, perspectives, and experiences is a key component to understanding how that framework contributed to familial knowledge and strengths. The conversations that I had with the Velasquez family served to support this notion because their familial and labor histories, cultural influences, and networks often shaped the activities and values, which they shared as significant to them.

Family History

The Velasquez family communicated a rich family history that included background from Isabel’s rural and Paulo’s urban upbringing. The funds of knowledge that they brought forward from their own heritage often related to lessons that they learned through personal experience. Many of those experiences were positive, such as Isabel’s desire to teach Ana the culinary skills that she had learned during her childhood or the experience of sharing oral histories so that their children would know about their own cultural and historical heritages. They also told about taking the children back to central Mexico to their grandparents’ farm and allowing them to experience some of the activities that Isabel had during her childhood such as feeding the livestock, riding the donkey, playing with the wheelbarrow, or driving the tractor. However, family histories are not always positive. Isabel often discussed her parents and implied that their relationship provided an example of what she did not want when she had a family of her own. She expressed that when she saw the discord in her parents’ marriage, she knew that she would not make those same choices.
The funds of knowledge that both Paulo and Isabel took from their own family histories often related to lessons learned from experience. As part of the approaches taken in the Funds of Knowledge project, the researchers inquired into family histories as a venue through which they could learn about labor and networks. However, they discovered that after asking only one or two questions about the topic, that families would share extensive information about not only their lives, but the lives of their parents, as well. Their stories often included experiences of resourcefulness, endurance, and family movement (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

I found that my conversations with the Velasquez family reflected the experience of historical discovery that Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) described in the Funds of Knowledge project. After reflecting on the interviews, I returned to my original interview questions and discovered that there were only three that specifically addressed family history. However, the information that Paulo and Isabel shared about their own experiences from childhood to adulthood weaved through nearly every conversation that we had. While some were responses to initially unplanned historical questions, they often shared beyond what the inquiry entailed. Their stories of perseverance through parental and sibling immigration issues, values that they adopted in response to their own prior circumstances, and lessons learned from family discord reflected sources of experiential knowledge that they endeavored to model for their own children.

Labor History

In their research on funds of knowledge in Mexican-American families, Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) suggest that the labor history of a household is a key element in understanding what contributes to shaping their knowledge resources. The labor experiences that exist in a family often extend beyond what some might regard as traditional forms of employment. When
exploring the funds of knowledge stemming from a family’s labor history, discussing only formal work experiences limits understanding and could hinder the discovery of knowledge through other practices (Gonzalez et al., 2005). The data that emerged from interviews with the Velasquez family supported the notion of using a broad perspective of what constituted labor experiences. Both Isabel and Paulo were involved with informal work opportunities that provided sources of knowledge to which their children were exposed.

Labor history is a topic that often flows naturally from dialogues about family history (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The Velasquez’s experience reflected this, as well. Our conversations often imperceptibly shifted between family discussions to how they connected to their own labor-related opportunities. When Isabel shared about her childhood labor experiences with cooking and farm work, she would share about how her family had experienced her agricultural lifestyle firsthand when they traveled back to central Mexico to her family’s farm. Moll and Gonzalez (2002) acknowledge that the accumulated labor experiences of a family can serve as a significant resource of information. Circumstances often require families to expand their knowledge and skills to a variety of marketable venues. This ability to make tactical alterations in approaches for meeting family needs is, in itself, a fund of knowledge to which children receive exposure. They assert that children who have access to this source of knowledge “…are keenly aware that survival is often a matter of making the most of scarce resources and adapting to situations in innovative and resourceful ways” (p. 631).

This concept was embodied in a labor experience that Paulo and Isabel undertook in order to expand their financial resources. Early in their marriage, they began the process of owning and maintaining rental properties. It required knowledge of electrical work, plumbing, woodwork, flooring, and other maintenance tasks. Although they relied on certain family
members with expertise in some of those areas, they did most of the work themselves and expressed that they learned it through their own experience. There had been many occasions where they took the children to the properties while they worked. During this time, they had the opportunity to observe their parents attending to those tasks. These types of experiences not only expanded the knowledge that Paulo and Isabel possessed, but their children’s observation of and participation in these tasks provided an opportunity to expand their knowledge, as well.

The labor history of the Velasquez family demonstrated what Gonzalez and Moll (2002) described as “…rich sources for the funds of knowledge that a household possesses” (p. 631). Their ability to use information that they acquired in order to participate in opportunities that contributed to the economic sustenance of the family (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992) served as a source of knowledge for themselves and their children in skill, flexibility, and resourcefulness.

Networking

In the Tucson project, Velez-Ibanez (1996) discovered that many Mexican-American families who are recent immigrants to the United States form extensive familial networks to assist one another with social or financial pursuits. Their relationships were often multi-faceted in their roles in kinship, labor, exchange, or as participants in cultural or family-based activities. It was rare that families relied on those outside of the kinship network. Paulo and Isabel, both immigrants from central Mexico, followed a similar pattern of operating in modes of family connection and reciprocity. Over time, most of the family members had converged in the same general area of Fort Worth in order to offer support to one another. Although Paulo spent his childhood in Chicago, his mother eventually moved the family to this area in order to be close to their kin and their ability to offer assistance. Isabel’s family also moved to the same mutual area.
Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) suggest that support through networking is often such a routine occurrence that the family scarcely notices that it happens. Over the course of my conversations with the Velasquez family, it appeared that these gradual family-centric migrations and exchanges supported this concept by reflecting their networking endeavors as an intrinsic value rather than an overt or strategic plan.

Although Paulo and Isabel often served as the family’s resource for assistance in acquiring visas, those actions served to meet temporal instances of need. The primary nature of the relationships that they shared through our dialogue revealed that the longevity of these networks connected to, as Velez-Ibanez (1996) found in his study, the proximity of family and the multiple ways in which they participated in the lives of one another. Because of variations in types of education and experiences, Paulo shared about situations in which his uncle would help him with some of the necessary maintenance on the rental properties, while Isabel’s brother assisted them in the electrical work. This was the brother, who in years past, lived with Isabel and Paulo while he was going through a rebellious phase of life. Isabel served as his source of encouragement in obtaining his education and supporting his family independently. This situation, in which one member’s encouragement of another to finish school resulted in a beneficial exchange of the electrical skills which he acquired through his education, further reflected the cyclical, reciprocity-based nature of kin networks.

Velez-Ibanez (1996) and Tenery (2005) also suggest that Hispanic families often employ the use of older siblings as caretakers for younger ones. Although Tenery (2005) does indicate that they provide homework assistance, as well, she discusses this primarily in the context of English homework. While other funds of knowledge research also discusses sibling support within a family, it typically addresses the topic in relation to the caretaker role (Gonzalez, Moll,
& Amanti, 2005; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). However, the comparatively minimal references to older siblings providing academic support for younger children in the family does not necessarily negate its existence in the homes of those families; it could have been an area that the research did not intend to address in a significant manner.

The Velasquez family, however, demonstrated an extensive use of this type of networking resource. They verbalized a strong reliance upon their eldest daughter Ana as a source for academic assistance with her younger brothers. Paulo expressed that Ana was very independent with her studies and that Diego and Lucas often sought her help when they had questions about their reading or math homework. Furthermore, when her family had concerns about the academic motivations for two of their sons, they relied on Ana to advise them regarding their potential futures.

Moll and Greenberg (1990) imply that the networking system in which a family operates provides members with practical exchanges of skills, interactions, and experiences. However, it also serves to provide a venue through which knowledge is shared and children can benefit from this through the experience of interacting with and learning from adults or older siblings whom they trust. While the experiences of the Velasquez family support this notion through their descriptions of the extended family interactions to which the children were often observers and participators, they used immediate family networking in a way that extended beyond what many funds of knowledge studies address. They demonstrated this through their extensive reliance on Ana for sibling academic support and their own guidance in unfamiliar domains. These networking experiences, combined with the labor and family-related knowledge that they obtained and shared with their children through observation and participation served to exemplify some of the social, cognitive, and cultural funds of knowledge that they possessed.
Over the course of nearly two months with the Velasquez family, I discovered a system of networking between and within families that was reciprocal and often understated in nature. Although our conversations only initially encompassed specific questions regarding themes related to family, labor, and networking experiences, the impact that these areas had on the family’s funds of knowledge were evident in the emergence of these domains in nearly all of our dialogues. This suggested that not only were there funds of knowledge extensive, but they had accumulated over the course of time. Through the process of assimilating these periodic comments into a coherent picture of their social, cognitive, and cultural resources, I became aware of the intrinsic ties between these themes and how they functioned to create a system in which the members shared responsibilities to accomplish the overall goal of family subsistence and enduring relationships.

Research Question 2

My second research question addressed how parents share their funds of knowledge with their children and how that knowledge relates to literacy. The assumption was that aspects of the funds of knowledge within and between families have the potential to assist children with literacy development and that family members often shared these through informal interactions (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzo, 2002; Moll & Gonzalez, 1997; Ortiz & Ordonez-Jasis, 2005). The analytical theme that related to this question, addressed the issue of knowledge transmission. Although the volume of content made it necessary to divide that theme into subthemes, the comments related to literacy transmission made up nearly 60% of the data that encompassed the overall theme. Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore (1993) suggest that knowledge is socially distributed from adults to children through a variety of activities and settings. In the Velasquez family, the social venues through which they shared literacy knowledge involved strategic literacy
instruction, literacy experiences that focused on maintaining their Spanish language skills, and informal activities that involved the use of environmental print.

**Literacy Knowledge Transmission**

As part of the interview process, Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) describe the need to discuss with families about the routines and activities that are part of their daily lives and how literacy “…might be embedded in these practices, making the leap from informal out-of-school knowledge to formal academic knowledge” (p. 13). Language is an essential tool through which families communicate social and cultural concepts with one another. Therefore, activities that are socially facilitated by language, often serve as a venue for transmitting literacy knowledge (Mercado, 2005; Perry, Kay, & Brown, 2008). Paulo and Isabel demonstrated this through shared reading experiences with Lucas in which they would use strategic replacement of words to sharpen his acuity in identifying its correct alternative.

In his connection of language and literacy, Velez-Ibanez (1992) discussed the concept of language ‘fracturing’. This is an occurrence that he found common among Mexican-American families who were attempting to negotiate English-dominated requirements of economic, legal, and academic domains. Because those areas often precluded the need for Spanish, their linguistic abilities often diminished to general household use. Furthermore, parents who are Spanish-dominant experience difficulty with helping their children learn the required elements of English literacy curriculum. As their use of Spanish continues to diminish in an effort to adjust to English-dominated domains, this additional ‘fracturing’ hinders their ability to communicate the nuances of Spanish literacy to the next generation.

The concept of ‘fracturing’, however, was not present in the ways through which Paulo and Isabel communicated Spanish literacy in the home. They possessed a consistent
determination for their children to maintain and improve their ability to use and read the Spanish language. On several occasions, Isabel discussed her insistence that the children practice reading in both languages, but that her preference was for them to read in Spanish. They accomplished this through reading to and with their children in Spanish and asking them comprehension questions to assess their understanding.

Another means, commonly dismissed by educators, through which parents transmit literacy knowledge to their children is through informal or environmental exposure to print. In Mercado’s (2005) study of literacy in Puerto Rican households, she observed that families participated in literacy through reading the words on the television screen, newspapers, and local signs. These practices, which she refers to as “everyday literacies” (p.241), can serve as sources for building funds of knowledge. Isabel relayed experiences of having the children read print on grocery items such as the labels on jars of peppers or bags of cookies.

In the process of exploring literacy knowledge transmission in the Velasquez home, I discovered a deep commitment to culture and language, as well as a spirit of resourcefulness in their utilization of formal and informal opportunities to share literacy. The time I spent with them reinforced my understanding that literacy did not have to conform to school-oriented practices in order to have value and meaning in the lives of the parents and children. The ways through which the family communicated literacy knowledge demonstrated not only an acknowledgement of the need for the children to acquire the literacy skills necessary to function in school, but also their desire to instill a cultural and linguistic heritage that they desired for their children to maintain.
Research Question 3

My third research question addressed how parents conceptualize their role in the literacy development of their children in the home. My assumption stated that parents’ perception of themselves in that role directly relate to their educational background and to the literacy values and goals that they hold (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Mercado, 2005). During the course of data analysis, it was evident that the educational history Paulo and Isabel experienced affected the way in which they perceived and enacted their role in sharing academic knowledge with their children. However, analysis of the subthemes showed that while their active role in transmission of literacy knowledge played a significant part in family interactions, the values and goals that they held connected to their family and to general beliefs about education were more prominent in our discussions than values specific to literacy.

The family often discussed educational goals for their children related to college attendance, focusing on school, obtaining good careers, and the need for them to learn about making wise decisions in life. Other ideas that reoccurred in many of our conversations were beliefs about family that reflected their willingness to support them in any circumstance in order to help them continue their schooling and their desire for the children to think of the needs of others before themselves. Their nearly equally weighted system of values and beliefs regarding family and education seem to correspond to a concept described by Reese, Balzano, Goldenberg, and Gallimore (1995) as ‘educación’. This Latino perspective encompasses an inextricable link between academic and moral goals which parents support for their children in order to help them along the path toward “…becoming a good person” (p. 64). Along with a system of values and beliefs that shape perspectives on education and family, there are also actions that define that conceptualization of involvement.
Auerbach (2007) discusses various types of roles that parents serve in the educational lives of their children. One of the groups that she describes in length consists of parents she refers to as the “Moral Supporters” (p. 260). The parents who typically fit this category are immigrants who likely had limited opportunities for education. They have a high level of confidence in the abilities of their children and they motivate through stories from their own histories. These parents work to create a clear path for their children to pursue additional education.

Auerbach’s (2007) description of the parents fitting the role of “Moral Supporters” (p. 260) aligned with the type of involvement role demonstrated by the Velasquez family with their older children. While they often engaged in literacy-related activities with their second-grade son Lucas and even their baby Cristopher, that type of interaction did not appear to be present in their academic involvement with Ana, Diego, or Pedro. They even expressed an explicit belief that Ana knew more than they did when it came to her own schoolwork and in navigating the necessary organizational hurdles in pursuing college applications and scholarships.

Auerbach (2007) describes the nature of this type of involvement role through activities such as parents sharing ‘consejos’ with their children, which are often culturally based accounts of their own history and experience with education. These ‘consejos’ accounts often take the shape of cautionary tales that warn against the potential results and future possibilities that exist without the benefit of an education. These families often express a sense of remorse and even cite their lack of education as a reason for their inability to be more involved in the academic pursuits of their children. Paulo and Isabel shared about conversations they had with their children that nearly mirrored these same types of activities. They both spoke of regret over not
continuing their education and expressed fear that the children might use their example as an excuse for not continuing their own schooling.

During my weeks with Paulo and Isabel, our conversations often consisted of the perceptions and beliefs that they held regarding an involvement role in their children’s education. My third research question was intended to determine the existence of literacy-related values and goals. However, through examining the data, I learned that the Velasquez family, while active in sharing literacy knowledge with their two youngest children, expressed a value system deeply connected to their own educational histories and focused on beliefs they held about family and education in general, rather than encompassing a specific focus on literacy. Although they were proud of the cohesiveness in their family, they wanted the children to experience a better life than they had through persevering in their educational pursuits and having the benefit of careers reflective of the education they received.

Research Question 4

In the fourth question that guided this study, I inquired about the resources, instructional methods, schedules, or other tools that were available and used by parents in supporting the literacy development of their children. I assumed that while the family would allot time for homework or other academic practices, it would lack formal adult guidance or would occur through interactions over daily tasks (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzo, 2002). The analytical theme of literacy resources served to address this question.

Mercado (2005) implies that limitations to the access that a family has to literacy materials often relates to financial and accessibility concerns. The families in her research shared about their lack of ability to afford books and the sparse presence of libraries in their community. They would, however, read the Bible with their children or borrow reading
materials from school. During the course of our interviews, it was clear that books served as a significant tool through which the Velasquez family communicated literacy, language, and culture. Because the area in which they live had nearby library locations, they were able to make trips there at least every two weeks. The books that they chose often had the same text in both Spanish and English on every page and in many instances incorporated topics that Paulo and Isabel felt related to aspects of their cultural heritage.

Another tool that the families in Mercado’s (2005) study used extensively was environmental print. This encompassed experiences involving reading from the television, novels from Mexico, magazines, newspapers, calendars, and schedules. Although the Velasquez family used different materials, such as food labels and pamphlets from church, they incorporated the use of environmental print in creating literacy opportunities for their children, as well. Along with print in their surroundings, the children also received literacy exposure through computers and games. Paulo described activities that involved them building or finding words, using computer search engines to look up unfamiliar words, and using computer-based learning games in order to incorporate play with learning.

The Velasquez family demonstrated resourcefulness in their use of a broad spectrum of literacy-related tools. I did observe, however, that interactions with their children over books involved material orchestrated to accomplish goals that were meaningful to them. In the course of our conversations, I learned that improving their children’s skills in Spanish, sharing aspects of their cultural heritage, and communicating literacy skills were meaningful values that existed in the home. Paulo and Isabel, through their selection of material that was appropriate, challenging, culturally themed, and written in Spanish and English, found a way to use books as a mediating tool through which they shared meaning with their children.
Implications for Practice

The role of a teacher-researcher is powerful in working towards building relationships with the families of students. The opportunity to explore how historical, cultural, and social influences and experiences accumulated throughout the lives of a family and formed funds of knowledge from which they draw allowed me to understand how strength, values, and perseverance shape the lives of families across generations. Although time and situational constraints did not allow me to do what other funds of knowledge studies have done by extending what I learned into classroom practice (Moll, Amanti, & Neff, 2005), it was evident that the potential to do so was extensive. That extension is the recommendation that I would make for classroom practitioners exploring the funds of knowledge of their students.

However, this type of endeavor would likely be most efficient if modeled after the approach taken in the Funds of Knowledge project (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti 2005). Being with other teachers who embrace a similar focus when meeting families in their homes and sharing experiences and ideas in community learning groups would not only support a spirit of collaboration between teachers, it would also provide a venue through which they could generate ideas for classroom application. Making the connection between learning about funds of knowledge and finding meaningful ways for their application in the curriculum is not a simple task (Gonzalez et al., 2005). However, linking students’ prior knowledge and values to content learned in the classroom has the potential benefit of building trust, relationships, and learning experiences that allow students to understand that there does not have to be a dichotomy between home and school learning.

Practitioners, however, should be aware of the potential challenges in gaining entry to a household. As I relayed in more detail in the third chapter, I experienced difficulty recruiting a
family willing to participate due to possible prior conceptions of what home visits from an educator entailed (Gonzalez et al., 2005). However, enlisting the communication assistance of school personnel connected to the recruitment process was instrumental in gaining family permission for the study and could likely prove a beneficial practice in future studies.

Implications for Research

Most previously published studies involving the exploration of funds of knowledge in families have occurred in the southwestern part of the United States (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). However, other states such as Texas are also host to a constantly increasing Latino population. According to the United States Census Bureau (2012), the Hispanic or Latino population in Texas was slightly over thirty-eight percent in 2012. This is an over six percent increase since 2000 (United States Census Bureau, 2000). This suggests that there is great potential for similar studies in these other areas of the country. This could help determine if variations in regional influences affect the types of knowledge accumulated and how they are applied.

During the process of visiting with the Velasquez family, I discovered a component of family networking that is not extensively addressed in literature. They relied heavily on their eldest daughter Ana to support her siblings academically, serve as an occasional caretaker for her younger brothers, advise the family about the academic paths of her older brothers, and take a leading role in navigating the institutional and technological requirements of pursuing college applications and scholarships. If this type of within-family networking is present with the Velasquez family, it possibly exists in other families, as well. There is research potential to explore the reasons for this occurrence, the extent to which it occurs in other families, and how the sibling feels about that role of responsibility.
Additional possibilities for extending this research could also include a study on the perspectives that teachers hold regarding minority parents’ funds of knowledge. Based on those potential findings, educators in a campus leadership role could further extend that by studying the changes that occur in attitudes and perspectives through coaching volunteer teacher-researchers in funds of knowledge studies with families of students in their classrooms.

Another factor that could benefit future studies is the involvement of multiple English-speaking family members for translation needs. This use of additional perspectives allows for a more compelling level of confirmation in interpreting the conveyed message. An additional method to achieve greater depth of perspective is to incorporate opportunities to interview family members separately. This could reduce the possibility of changes in a participant’s behavior or responses that might stem from their perceived belief of what the family expects them to communicate.

Conclusion

In their discussion of the implications of funds of knowledge research, Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore (1993) assert that “…it facilitates a critical redefinition of these children’s households as settings than contain ample cultural and intellectual resources” (p. 160). Although I was conceptually aware that all families have developed funds of knowledge on which they rely to subsist and thrive, the experience of spending time with the Velasquez family brought that conceptual understanding to a multi-dimensional view of how it was developed and enacted in a family setting. I initially approached this study inquiring into the factors that contributed to the development of funds of knowledge, how the family shared them, parental values and perceptions connected to their involvement role, how their funds of knowledge related to literacy, and what literacy-related tools they used to support learning in the home.
What I found was a family that had developed a system of values, goals, and networking based on the knowledge they had acquired through their historical, cultural, and social experiences. Literacy practices and tools were extensive for their children in elementary school and younger. However, due to their self-professed uncertainty in how to help their older children academically, they fostered a home environment, which supported independence as well as practices of sibling cooperation in order to support academic goals. Although parent-child literacy interactions with the older children were minimal, Paulo and Isabel actively promoted the acquisition of Spanish literacy with all of the children through practice, encouragement of supplemental classes, and its consistent use between family members in the home.

Shibutani (1955) asserted that, “Culture is not a static entity but a continuing process” (p. 564). In order to avoid a static perspective of culture, funds of knowledge research focuses on actions, which encompass what families do and how they describe it (Gonzalez, 2005). Research on the benefit of activating prior knowledge in order to create connections and meaning in learning is pervasive in literature (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012; Pressley, Wood, Woloshyn, Martin, King, & Menke, 1992). However, it is difficult to truly understand and apply opportunities to activate a student’s prior knowledge unless teachers become aware of how it developed in the context of family background and practices.

This calls for a perspective shift from a ‘one size fits all’ curriculum to embracing learning that not only includes required learning standards but is steeped in opportunities to incorporate personal and historically acquired knowledge into the application of their learning. The use of a funds of knowledge framework to pursue these types of opportunities not only creates a venue through which relationships are forged, but establishes the opportunity to negate
the deficit model which privileges school learning over what occurs in the home and minimizes the educational contributions of minority families.
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER
Dear ********** kindergarten, first, and second grade families,

As a doctoral student at the University of North Texas and a literacy coach at ********** Elementary, I believe that there are many ways in which families share literacy concepts with their children and I am interested in gaining a better understanding of how parents implement literacy instruction in the home. For this study, the definition of literacy includes the relationships between letters and sounds, experiences with reading, and reading comprehension.

You are being asked to participate in a study, which involves the researcher meeting with you in your home for observations and interviews about how you share literacy knowledge with your children. In these meetings, you and the researcher will talk about issues related to the study. These could include how you define parent involvement, what literacy resources you have or use with your child in the home, how you view your role in their literacy development, and what cultural and social influences shape the way you share literacy with your child.

The study will include participation in observations, interviews and time with the researcher in your home so that I can learn how your cultural, social, and academic knowledge influences the ways in which you share literacy with your children. These sessions will take place at dates and times that you choose during the early part of the spring semester. There will be six interviews and/or observations and they will be one to two hours per session. I would also like to set up three visits prior to the study in order for us to get to know one another. Therefore, your total time commitment will be between 9 to 18 hours throughout the course of the study.

Every family has a set of knowledge and skills that influence what and how they share concepts related to literacy learning with their children. I hope that this will allow you to share your unique perspectives on home literacy involvement and how factors related to home and family influence the way you and your family communicate about literacy.

If you would be interested in learning more about participating in this research, please detach the following form and return it to me at ********** Elementary by (insert date here). You are welcome to either drop it off at the school office or send it back in your child’s school folder in the attached envelope. Please feel free to call me with any questions.
You can reach me at ***-***-****. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kelly Feild

I am interested in learning more about participation in this study on family involvement in early literacy.

Parent Name: ______________________________ Phone Number: ______________________________

Your child’s name: ___________________________ Your child’s teacher: ___________________________
APPENDIX B

IRB CONSENT FORM
Title of Study: Family Connections in Early Literacy

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jeanne Tunks, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Teacher Education and Administration.

Key Personnel: Kelly Feild, UNT Curriculum & Instruction doctoral student

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a study, which involves the researcher meeting with you in your home for observations and interviews about your family’s cultural funds of knowledge, how that knowledge is shared with your children, and how that knowledge could relate to literacy learning. In these meetings, you and the researcher will talk about issues related to the study. These could include family history and how your family’s cultural funds of knowledge influence what and how you communicate with your children. We could also discuss how that communicated knowledge relates to literacy and how you view your role in their literacy development.

Study Procedures: The study will include participation in observations, interviews and time with the researcher in your home. The purpose is to share how your cultural, social, and academic background and practices influence the ways in which you share knowledge with your children and how that knowledge relates to literacy. These sessions will take place at dates and times that you choose during the spring semester. There will be six interviews and/or observations and they will be one to two hours per session. I would also like to set up three visits prior to the study in order for us to get to know one another. Therefore, your total time commitment will be between 9 to 18 hours throughout the course of the study. These observation/interview sessions will be audio and video recorded so that you and the researcher can review and reflect on the recorded activities.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: Every family has a set of knowledge and skills that influence what and how knowledge is shared with their children. We expect the project to benefit you by providing an opportunity for you to share how the cultural wealth of your family influences the knowledge you share with your children and how that knowledge relates to literacy.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: In order to maintain the confidentiality/anonymity of all participants, any interview transcripts will be stored in a locked location separate from the location of the signed consent forms. The audio and/or video tapes of interviews will be maintained and stored in a locked location for three years following the study. The investigator and key personnel (Kelly Feild) will be the only audiences to hear or utilize these recordings in the context of the study. Following the three years after the study, the audio and/or video tapes and transcripts will be shredded. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Jeanne Tunks at telephone number 940-565-3284 or Kelly Feild at telephone number ***-***-****.
Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants’ Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- *Kelly Feild* has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand that the observations, interviews, and literacy interactions may be audio and/or video recorded.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

______________________________
Signature of Participant

______________________________ Date

For the Student Investigator or Designee: I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

______________________________
Signature of Student Investigator or Designee

______________________________ Date
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Parent Interview
(The five different subsections to these interview questions will serve as the topics for five separate interviews over the course of the study)

Funds of Knowledge Background

1. Can you tell me about your family background? (How did you and your family come to live in TX? How long have you lived here? What did you think about the area when you moved here? Did you have family or friends that already lived here?)

2. (If needed) Where did you live before you came here? Tell me about that…

3. (If needed) How was day-to-day life different here than where you came from?

4. (If appropriate), inquire as to the family’s dominant home language. What about the children’s dominant language?

5. What were your educational/schooling opportunities like when you were growing up? What did you like or dislike about school?

6. Tell me about your family’s work opportunities. What types of work are the members of your family involved in? (If family is from country other than U.S., inquire as to the differences between the type and opportunities for work here as to what was available in their country of origin)

7. What does a typical day look like in your home?

8. What about the evenings? What are the routines once the kids come home from school?

9. What are some things that you do together as a family?
Connecting Funds of Knowledge to Literacy Practices

1. Could you tell me about what is important to you when it comes to raising your children? (cover topics related to ideas of discipline, education, sharing cultural practices)

2. Tell me about the community where you live. How do you interact socially with others in your community?

3. Are there any kinds of shared responsibilities that the community (neighborhood, church, family, etc.) has? If so, what are some of those responsibilities?

4. What are some things you and your family do in the home or community, that you feel relate to or communicate aspects of your cultural background? (this could address topics related to family celebrations, religious practices, meal preparation, activities with extended family, etc.)

5. What cultural practices are important for you to communicate to your children?

6. Are there any of the cultural knowledge or practices that we discussed that you feel like influence how and/or what you communicate to your child involving literacy concepts?

7. What potential ways do you share literacy with your children that relate to your work history or family’s work history?

8. How is literacy shared through interactions in daily household routines and roles?

9. How do your views on raising children affect how you communicate with your child about literacy learning?

10. In what ways do the social relationships that you have with others in your community help contribute to sharing literacy concepts with your children?

11. How do your children’s personal interests relate to things that you’ve shared with them in your home (parent interests, work experiences, family experiences or outings that sparked an interest in a topic)
Self-Perceptions of the Parental Role in Home Literacy Instruction

1. Tell me about household roles. What are the primary responsibilities of each family member?

2. How do you feel that your educational background influences the ways in which you interact with your children regarding literacy?

3. What is your definition of parent involvement?

4. How do you feel about the role you have in supporting literacy learning for your children in the home?

5. Tell me about your literacy background growing up. Was your family involved in your literacy development or was it mostly something you learned from school?

6. Are there aspects of your cultural background or history that influence your perception on what or if literacy practices are implemented in the home?

7. What aspects of your cultural, social, or academic background affect how you view yourself in the role as a teacher for your children?

8. Are there other factors that influence how you view yourself in that role?
Resources in the Home

1. What types of literacy related materials do you have in the home?  Where do they come from? (store, library, sent home from school, etc.)

2. How does your child use those materials?

3. What guides your decision in what literacy materials to have available for your children?

4. How do you or other members of your family and your child interact with those materials together?

Practices in Home Literacy Instruction

1. Tell me about some of the things you and your child do together or with other family members at home to help them learn literacy concepts?

2. In what other ways do you and your child communicate ideas and learning about literacy?

3. When your child struggles with a word that he or she is reading, what do you feel is the best way to help them solve it?

4. Why do you feel that doing these things is important?
APPENDIX D

HOUSEHOLD FAMILY TREE
References


