Funds of Knowledge and Early Literacy: A Mixed Methods Study

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When teachers are charged with educating students who are racially, culturally, or economically different from them, they may have little information on the culture and the expectations for family involvement, of their students. This lack of information may lead to perceptions of working-class families, in particular, as socially disorganized and intellectually deficient. Research embodying the theoretical framework of Funds of Knowledge (FoK) attempts to counter this deficit model through its assertion that all families possess extensive bodies of knowledge that have developed through social, historical, political, and economic contexts. The purpose of this study was to carefully examine one Hispanic family's support of their young children's early literacy development in the home. Findings indicated that the family possessed extensive FoK, which proved useful not only at home but in the classroom through action research. Additionally, this study led to changes in my own perceptions of families' experiences and prompted changes in the way I, as an educator, utilized home learning in the classroom. FoK research, in conjunction with action research and autoethnography, is not extensively addressed in literature.

Throughout my time as an early childhood educator, prior to engaging in a university position, I interacted with many families. Oftentimes, I had the opportunity to teach multiple children from the same family, particularly in the Hispanic community. While interacting with these families, I observed differing types and varying levels of early literacy involvement. Through this observation, I came to recognize the importance of gaining firsthand knowledge of my students and their families, particularly those whose race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and life situations differed from mine. Gaining firsthand knowledge of students and their families improved my understanding of Hispanic family involvement and provided an avenue to develop dignified and respectful relationships.

Fostering such relationships with families and students was expressed as a goal by many of my colleagues. My consistent observation was that (predominantly) non-Hispanic school personnel often have only a minimal understanding of what Hispanic parents teach their children in the home and how that teaching occurs. Child development research suggests that parents serve a primary role in the learning of their children (Cairney & Ashton, 2002; Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Senechal, 2006). Because of this, it makes practical sense that teachers attempt to gain an understanding of the type and degree of learning in their students' homes. However, rarely challenged views of under-represented children's households as socially disorganized and intellectually deficit persist. Public schools often ignore the strategic and cultural resources, or funds of knowledge (FoK), that these households possess (Moll & Cammarota, 2010; Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992; Wood, 2016).

In this paper, I will discuss parental discomfort in the school, teacher involvement in the community, and cooperative learning. I will further explain how implementation of FoK research shifted my perceptions of teaching Hispanic children and strengthened the relationship between myself and the Hispanic population that attended the school. Importantly, I will provide a model for teachers who seek to: understand Hispanic families, apply the understanding to the classroom in an inclusive way, and improve teaching through reflection and analysis of the reflections.

Funds of Knowledge

Numerous studies have been conducted using the FoK framework (Auerbach, 2007; Brenden, 2005; Browning-Aiken, 2005; Buck & Sylvester, 2005; Hensley, 2005; Mercado, 2005) and provide a more nuanced understanding of parental support, particularly as observed in under-represented populations. The original FoK project conducted by Luis Moll and Norma Gonzalez (1992) engaged Arizona teachers as social scientists who identified resources, or "funds of knowledge," in predominantly Mexican, low-income families (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). The purpose of the project was to honor and draw upon these resources to improve the education of the Mexican-American school population.

Deficit Perspective

FoK represents a dignified view of Mexican-American households as sites of ample cultural and cognitive resources. The social context of the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the United States today often is hampered by a wide gap between home and school worlds (Messing, 2005). For example, Auerbach (1995) discussed some teachers' assumptions that language minority children reside in literacy-impoverished environments. The culturological deficit conceptions of how the "other" lives and thinks persist (Gonzalez, 2005; Valencia, 2010). FoK offers a method to integrate the home and school worlds by respectfully conceptualizing homes as knowledge sources.

According to Moll et al. (1992), FoK is a set of familial knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being. A FoK mindset encourages teacher-researchers to recognize the multiple knowledges of a household-what people do in their everyday lives. By focusing on the home as a repository of knowledge, teacher-researchers resist the tendency to focus on perceived deficits. A critical assumption of FoK research is that a focus on the disadvantages or deficits of under-represented populations justifies lowered expectations and inaccurate portrayals of these families (Moll, 2005). In contrast, FoK draws on household knowledge, legitimizing student experience. Classroom practice builds on the familiar home knowledge bases that students incorporate to enhance learning in various content areas. Capitalizing on household and community resources, teacher-researchers organize classroom instruction that far exceeds, in terms of quality, the rote instruction Hispanic children commonly encounter in schools, and that challenges the "deficit" approach in education (Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Moll, 2005).

Basic Findings

Based on the work of teacher ethnographers, some basic findings emerged from initial FoK research (Moll, 1992). It was noted that home networks were flexible, adaptive, and active. These thick and complex networks fostered multiple relationships where the child assimilated information from numerous adults via multiple spheres of learning through social interaction. Children were viewed as multidimensional, in terms of their complexity and uniqueness (Moll, 2005). Reciprocal practices within these networks established obligations for both child and adult based on the assumption of *confianza* (mutual trust), established and reaffirmed with each subsequent exchange in a developing long-term relationship (Moll et al., 1992).

These relationships are important to understand because FoK takes a socio-cultural approach to instruction (Moll & Greenberg, 1990). Teacher-researchers studied households as socially or culturally organized settings, whose action mediates the learning children can achieve (Vygotsky, 1978). A focus on lived experiences is thus central to the FoK framework (Moll, 1992). Through a focus on action within established relationships, teachers retrieved firsthand knowledge about families instead of the more typical second- and third-hand knowledge from research and school administrators.

Method

The primary purpose of this study was to carefully examine parents' support of young children's early literacy development in a Hispanic home. A second purpose was to determine if the introduction of FoK ways of learning, when applied in the classroom, had an effect on early literacy skills. To achieve this purpose, this mixed-methods study was designed in two parts, with a third (autoethnography) ongoing throughout.

The first, a case study, informed me as an early childhood teacher as to how one Hispanic family supported their children. Home visits enhanced my understanding regarding how this family supported their children's early literacy development. The use of FoK served as the analytical tool through which my action research case study data were examined. FoK research established areas such as family history, family networks, educational history, labor history, knowledge transmission, literary resources, and values and goals as commonly explored categories (Gonzalez et al., 2005). These categories served as the analytical themes I initially used to code data. After this analysis, I sorted statements into relevant subthemes that served to provide greater specificity in understanding the data in relation to my research questions.

After examining the home to ascertain potential FoK relative to early literacy support, what was learned was implemented in the classroom, in collaboration with the parent-expert participating in the case study. This second action research component involved collaborating with this Hispanic family to incorporate their perspectives on early literacy, education, and their experience in the home supporting their child's early literacy into the prekindergarten classroom. The FoK way of learning implemented in the classroom was oral language practice between the parent-expert and the students that provided wide latitude for error and provision for experimentation within a zone of comfort.

Finally, prior to and during the study, I maintained constant records of my interactions, actions, and reactions to the research from a personal perspective. This journal was examined as an

autoethnographic study of personal transformation. According to Starr (2010), autoethnography is a valuable tool in examining the relationships between self and others from the perspective of self. Through this study, my professional transformation supported this concept as I examined myself in relation to the Hispanic population in my school. When autoethnography is added to FoK and action research, the teacher-researcher is forced to explicitly examine him or herself, reflecting on personal behaviors and beliefs. This part of the research proved to be important for me not only in terms of how I perceived the Hispanic families in the school but how I perceived the broader Hispanic community.

Autoethnographic examination of dialectical relationships in education, such as the structural relationships between teachers and students or parents and teachers, as well as the relationships between the individual and the collective or oppression and emancipation, have resulted in the collision of discourse and self-awareness with larger cultural assumptions concerning race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, and age (Spry, 2001, p. 711). In this way, autoethnography allowed me to broaden my lens from simply examining my relationship with my own Hispanic students to examining my perspectives of the larger Hispanic community and the ways families function.

Data Sources

I studied one Hispanic family that had a child in my prekindergarten classroom. Because I wanted to learn as much as possible about these families, who made up the majority of the school population, I chose a family that seemed ethnically, socially, and educationally representative and that I could easily communicate with because of their fluency in English and Spanish. The Rodriguez family (all names are pseudonyms) consisted of the mother (Tania), the father (Cristian), a four-year-old son (Juan), and a nine-month-old daughter (Gabby). The family lived in a two-story brick home in a subdivision. Both parents had full-time jobs but were highly invested and involved in their children's lives. Cristian immigrated to the U.S. at the age of eight but Tania was born in the U.S. While both parents participated in the home visits, only Tania was able to engage in classroom action research. Cristian's work hours did not permit him to enter the classroom during school hours. However, both Tania and Cristian participated in interviews and I observed interactions between both parents and their children in the home.

I also chose the Rodriguezes because they had extended family. Based on my experience teaching Hispanic students, many of the households were nested within extensive kinship networks that actively engaged them in the lives of relatives on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. The majority of the students in my school came from low-income, working-class homes. I choose the Rodriguez family because it reflected these characteristics and they exhibited a willingness to participate in classroom action research as well as a willingness to discuss their history, education, and the activities that commonly take place in the home.

Data Collection

During the course of data collection, I met with participants in the home setting six times for approximately one to two hours each time in order to engage in participant observation and conduct semi-structured interviews that focused on the lived experience of the Rodriguez family.

Observations and interviews occurred at times requested by the Rodriguezes. Although I did not use an observation protocol, I used interview questions as a guide when observing actions and resources in the home (see Appendix). Themes common in FoK research (family history, family networks, educational history, labor history, knowledge transmission, values and goals, and literacy resources) influenced the semi-structured interview guide used to examine early literacy support in the home. Interview topics, in sequential order, were general family background, Cristian and Tania's work history, child-rearing experience and the experience of being a parent, FoK and early literacy, and home literacy instruction. To fully document our conversations, field notes and audio-taped transcripts were used. I obtained permission to use audio equipment to tape each interview. This tool allowed me to organize and maintain large amounts of data and further allowed me to corroborate evidence from field notes with transcripts. Field notes were used to document actions, behaviors, responses, and aspects of the home environment. At times, I took field notes during my time in the home. I always wrote memos after each observation/interview.

To ensure the participant's lived experience was fully accurate, I member-checked written memos after the third, fourth, and fifth semi-structured interview. During the course of interviews, I also member-checked ideas and comments not clearly understood to make sure I comprehended what the participant intended to communicate. I wanted to convey a sense of appreciation and dedication to the perspectives of the participants by ensuring I correctly understood and communicated their perspective.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed and uploaded into the NVivo 10 program. Nodes representing elements of the FoK theory were created and served as categories for sorting observation and interview data. To analyze these data, I continually referred to the FoK theoretical framework to allow the theory to inform and guide interpretation of themes and concepts yielded. I also used pattern matching as advocated by Yin (2009) to determine the degree to which the data I collected corresponded to FoK theory. Pattern matching started with FoK and moved to analyzing the additional data that was collected, seeking patterns that revealed information about the lived experience of the participant.

Open coding involved the use of broad categories imposed on semi-structured interview questions. These broad categories were elicited from FoK research (Mercado, 2005), as discussed earlier, with a focus on early literacy so as to remain attuned to the early literacy focus of the research. The nature of the questions remained open-ended, however, to allow flexibility and to foster a relaxed, conversational experience.

Analysis began with open coding, line by line, of all field notes, transcripts, and memos. Following open coding, focused coding was conducted with the assistance of NVivo 10. As I moved from open to focused coding, I created subthemes that narrowed the scope to areas addressed in my research questions. Maternal educational history, paternal educational history, and shared educational history were developed as subthemes for educational history. Maternal family history and paternal family history were developed as subthemes for family history. Extended family networks, immediate family networks, and community/organizational family

networks were developed as subthemes for family networks. Cultural knowledge transmission, early literacy knowledge transmission, and transmission of values were developed as subthemes for transmission of knowledge. Maternal labor history, paternal labor history, and shared labor history were developed as subthemes for labor history. Cultural values and goals, educational values and goals, family values and goals, and religious values and goals were developed as subthemes for values and goals. No subthemes were developed for literacy resources. Family networks, knowledge transmission, and values and goals gleaned information pertaining to the purpose of the study and will be discussed below.

Findings

Within the context of the Rodriguez family, an extensive amount of accumulated social and cultural knowledge was shared both formally and informally with the children. Additionally, components of that knowledge related to early literacy development. As I matched data from home visits to FoK theory, through application of themes common in FoK research (Gonzalez et al., 2005), I found ample knowledge resources relative to early literacy development. Additionally, I found that the Rodriguez family incorporated early literacy into some daily tasks in the home. FoK embodies an extensive list of topics. However, family networks, knowledge transmission, and values and goals gleaned information relative to this study and warrant further discussion below.

Family Networks

During the course of interviews, I discovered a system of networking within the family and between the family and its extended networks that was reciprocal and often understated in nature. The impact that family networks had on social forces and social needs was evident in the emergence of these domains in nearly all conversations with the family. This suggested that the FoK were extensive and had accumulated over time. Through the process of assimilating a coherent picture of these social forces and social needs, I became aware of intrinsic family ties and how they functioned to create a system in which family members shared responsibilities to accomplish their overall goals.

The Rodriguez family used extended family for childcare. Because Tania and Cristian worked, they needed a nanny for their two children. They used an extended family member, (Teresa) for this purpose, one who spoke Spanish and provided quality childcare that reflected shared values and goals. Teresa made frequent visits to Mexico and often returned with books and other items for Juan to teach him about his cultural heritage. The Rodriguez family also frequently attended extended family functions where they enjoyed fellowship and food. Overall, the children were generally surrounded by many English and Spanish speaking adults and children. This evidence suggested, as Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) found in their work, that extended family clusters provided Hispanic children like Juan with a social platform in which they internalized thick social relationships and learn to have analogously thick social expectations.

These thick social relationships provided a venue through which knowledge was shared. Children benefitted from the experience of interacting with and learning from adults and older children whom they trusted. These conclusions were supported by descriptions of the extended

family interactions in which the children were often observers and participators. For example, Tania described how Juan learned active listening skills at family functions. Tania explained that adults would ask Juan questions while he listened to their conversations, providing a safe environment for Juan to practice listening skills. They also used immediate family networking in ways that served to exemplify some of the social FoK that they possessed. Tania seemed to be the immediate family resource upon whom Cristian relied. Cristian reciprocated by being available for Tania. An example of this was the couple's decision not to assign daily and weekly tasks but instead to work together to accomplish them.

Knowledge Transmission

According to Moll (1992), FoK are shared in different ways within different families through unique strategies. Thus, gaining an understanding of how knowledge transmission functioned in the Rodriguez family provided additional insight into how the family supported early literacy development. Moll, Tapia, and Whitmore (1993) suggested that knowledge is socially distributed from adults to children through a variety of activities and settings. In the Rodriguez family, the venues through which they shared early literacy knowledge involved strategic early literacy instruction, experiences that focused on maintaining oral language skills, and informal activities that involved the use of environmental print.

Language is an essential tool through which families communicate social and cultural concepts to one another. Activities that are socially facilitated by language often served as a venue for transmitting early literacy knowledge (Mercado, 2005). Cristian and Tania demonstrated this through shared reading experiences with Juan in which they would engage Juan in retelling a book's story. This served to sharpen his acuity in listening skills, in retelling a story, and in oral language skills. The Rodriguez family consistently demonstrated determination to help their children maintain and improve their ability to speak and read in both English and Spanish. Tania expressed throughout multiple interviews that she was in the process of revamping Juan's personal library. She regularly purchased books and other literacy tools, such as phonological games and tapes, in both English and Spanish for him.

Another means through which the Rodriguezes transmitted early literacy knowledge to their children was through informal or environmental exposure to print. Mercado (2005) suggested that Puerto Rican families participated in literacy through reading the words on television, newspapers, and local signs. These practices served as sources for building FoK. Tania relayed experiences of having Juan identify letters in local signs and on items in the home. Cristian similarly relayed experiences of having Juan read street signs and addresses during bike rides.

Through my exploration of how the family supported early literacy development in the home, I discovered a deep commitment to culture, language, and family. I also discovered a spirit of resourcefulness through Tania's and Cristian's use of formal and informal opportunities to share early literacy skills with their children. Through conversations with the family, I came to understand that early literacy did not have to conform to school-oriented practices in order to have value and meaning in the lives of parents and children. The ways in which the family supported early literacy development not only reflected the need for their children to acquire

early literacy skills to function in school, but also the desire to instill cultural and linguistic heritage in their children.

Values and Goals

The family often used books in both English and Spanish to convey values and goals to their children. Tania was revamping Juan's personal library to provide reading material that was suited to his interest and ability level. She and Cristian did not, however, want their children to grow up without gratitude and appreciation for the things they received. Tania expressed a concern that because she and Cristian did not have a lot of material goods growing up, they perhaps tried to give their children too much. She felt that trips to Mexico were important because they provided Juan with first-hand glimpses of poverty that would assist him in understanding and appreciating his own life.

Both Cristian and Tania also believed it was important for their children to attend mass each Sunday. Because this was an important value for the family, it was part of their weekly schedule. Tania described how, through church attendance, Juan learned children's songs and that he also enjoyed learning Bible stories and completing a coloring sheet each week. The family often discussed Biblical stories with their children during the drive to and from mass. Although the family spoke English, they attended mass in Spanish to appease Tania's mother. After mass, the family regularly spent the afternoon eating lunch with extended family.

Tania and Cristian conceptualized their roles based on a system that highly valued cultural knowledge, higher education, family, and religion. They further asserted goals for their children, such as graduating from college and becoming respectful and grateful citizens, which were based on their own experiences. This reflected the assumption suggested by research that families conceptualized their role based on a system of values and goals often shaped by their backgrounds and experiences.

Practical Application

The role of FoK research is transformative in working towards building relationships with families, implementing meaningful curriculum into the classroom, and progressing towards becoming a culturally relevant educator. However, this endeavor would likely be most efficient if modeled after the approach taken in the original FoK Project (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Working with other teachers who embrace a similar focus when meeting families in their homes and sharing experiences and ideas in community learning groups-as happened in the original study-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. According to Gonzalez et al. (2005), making the connection between learning about FoK and finding meaningful ways for their application is not a simple task. Linking students' prior knowledge and values to content learned in the classroom, however, has the potential benefit of building relationships that allow students, parents, and teachers to understand that there does not have to be a dichotomy between home and school learning.

After conducting this research, I realized that there were three areas that, when addressed, could potentially improve the school experience for parents and children served by my school. Parental discomfort in the school setting, teacher involvement in the community, and cooperative learning are further three areas where I shifted my perspective as an educator. I will briefly describe each below.

Parental Discomfort in School Setting

All classroom practitioners should be spending time getting to know their students, especially when the students' backgrounds are different from their own. Most previously published studies involving the exploration of FoK in homes have relied on data gathered in the southwestern part of the United States (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). However, other states such as Texas, Maryland, and Rhode Island have a growing Hispanic population (U.S. News, 2020). Given this reality, we would be remiss not to support this type of research.

Administrators should be involved in these efforts as well. The Rodriguez family did not feel welcomed in the school, especially when they approached the front office for assistance. Through FoK research, all school personnel, including administration and secretarial staff, have the potential to improve the home-school relationship and to develop a mutual support system with families. All school staff need opportunities for learning what FoK exist among their students. Cultural knowledge and local resources provide a viable alternative to deficit models of education and are essential resources, particularly when the teacher does not speak the primary language of the students, when available textbooks and other formal resources are limited in that language, and when teachers have limited understanding of the culture of the students.

Communication. As I learned about Tania's perceptions of the school, which included her perception of a lack of appreciation for diversity and a lack of communication, I began to look more closely at the treatment of parents in the school myself. I also came to value the extent and delivery of information provided to them, but was dismayed to see the lack of information available to non-English speaking parents in the school. I took it upon myself to provide information to the Rodriguez family and in doing so recognized the importance of informing Hispanic parents through the use of translation. As a result, I began to translate classroom newsletters into Spanish. On two occasions, Tania assisted in reading the translated versions to ensure the translation software was accurate.

In addition to translating newsletters, I developed a parent group for my class. The parent group met in my classroom one morning each month to discuss curriculum and progress. The parent group served not only as a way for parents to network and learn about their child's school but as a way for me to learn about the parents themselves. The parent group was specific to my classroom, approved by my school principal but not required or school-sponsored. During these meetings, I began to explore the FoK in other students' homes and through a unit on cowboys brought one family's FoK into the classroom in the form of a reverse field trip. Importantly, the more I came to value the parents, the more they contributed to the classroom.

Advocacy. As I continued to deepen relationships with my students' parents, I moved beyond simply informing them to advocating for them. I observed covert ways in which families were

marginalized, through lack of communication to and subsequent exclusion of families in various school functions. Instructions for scheduling conferences with administration were posted in English only. All reading material in the main office, as well as in the library, were in English only. A lack of resources in families' native language seemed to communicate low expectations of parental involvement to the large Hispanic population. To combat this exclusion, I posted Spanish translations beside the corresponding English materials in the front office every Friday afternoon.

I had learned that many Hispanic families purchased what they called "authentic jewelry," such as custom-fit gold bracelets, for their children as a result of religious celebrations. The school's dress code prohibited any type of jewelry and therefore communicated a lack of appreciation for familial traditions to the community. It also became apparent that hosting school functions in the cafeteria provided minimal space and ultimately discouraged large extended families from attending school ceremonies. These quiet, yet meaningful obstacles conveyed a distinct lack of understanding and appreciation of the Hispanic population served by the school. It was only when engaging in FoK research that I identified these acts as marginalizing the Hispanic population within the school. To advocate for these families, I forwarded the issues to my school administrator and the school board.

By intervening to advocate for Hispanic parents to have the same provision of accessible school information that was provided to White parents, I moved toward merging pro-diversity perspectives with my teaching philosophy. My evolution from passive awareness toward advocacy illustrated that reflective teachers experience a reconsideration of their own previously unacknowledged assumptions about their students (Messing, 2005) and families. My personal growth fostered relationships with the Rodriguez family and, in turn, the larger Hispanic community. These progressive relationships provided an avenue for families to actively participate in the school community while connecting with an educator within the school system. FoK research suggests that a similar process of growth in school staff has the potential to limit barriers between personnel and parents, paving the way for families to feel welcomed and valued in their local school communities and improving the way families are treated within the school setting.

Teacher Involvement in Community

Teachers need to become invested in the community in which they teach. Prior to this action research, I had little interaction with the families or community where I teach. For teachers who do not live in the community, it is beneficial to use this sort of research to learn about individual families', as well as communities' FoK. I have come to understand that the broader community has ample human and cultural resources that are readily available to include in the school, classroom, and teaching. These cultural resources were available prior to my undertaking this research; however, I did not yet recognize their value.

According to Tenery (2005), the experience of interacting socially with minority families provided teachers with an appreciation of cultural systems from which Hispanic children emerge. She goes on to assert that oral histories and narratives told by family members, in combination with expressions of cultural identity, build an appreciation for these individuals and what they

have endured. My experience seemed to support this concept. I developed a more caring attitude for the Rodriguez family and transferred that attitude to the other Hispanic families in the community.

I also realized that I was the minority in the classroom and the broader community. I moved from a passive to an explicit awareness of my surroundings, through a willingness to learn about the value of and experience of being in a minority. Additionally, I began to question my previous response to Hispanic children's lives, which tended to ignore learning that did not mirror my own experience. I started to find satisfaction in responding with interest to students instead of minimizing their conversations about home life in the interests of preserving time for the day's lesson.

The exploration of students' home lives through conversations with them provided a space through which I began to learn the significance of these conversations. I began to develop a sense of commitment to the Hispanic population in my classroom and the broader community as a result of my relationship with the Rodriguez family. I began to grocery shop in the neighborhood, taking the time to talk to parents and families that I recognized from school. As part of my progression toward becoming a teacher who sincerely valued the Hispanic population, I recognized the value of engaging in conversations for learning all that I could about each student in my class. I further began to investigate how my focus on teacher-driven learning, in which I marginalized the interests and desires of students, primarily benefited me through provision of time for me to complete tasks that I deemed requisite. I began to focus on my students, revealing the organization of a value system in which I merged the value of meaningful conversations with existing value systems.

Cooperative Learning

In contrast to the highly individualized and competitive instruction systems often found in schools, I would now recommend cooperative learning systems for Hispanic students. Because Hispanic students often develop social interaction skills interacting with multiple individuals they trust, cooperation is a highly developed skill and expectation for this population. Cooperative learning may be an important learning tool because it may contribute to interethnic relations in the classroom, as children from all backgrounds work together and develop a sense of teamwork and inclusion.

FoK takes a socio-cultural approach to instruction (Moll and Greenberg, 1990), recognizing that intrinsic family ties function within thick social expectations. Juan and Gabby were consistently exposed to learning environments with a significant number of English and Spanish speaking adults. Juan's school environment, however, consisted primarily of interactions with one adult, an English-only speaking female. My own approach to early literacy had been based on expectations that prescribed curriculum would serve the needs of all students in the classroom. Juan's experience suggests that an education environment with access to multiple bilingual educators and the freedom to experiment with language in both English and Spanish is important in utilizing FoK in the classroom.

Tania as co-teacher. Juan was not the only student in my classroom who seemed to thrive when Tania and other Spanish-speaking mothers began to assist. Tania visited the classroom once a week, for six consecutive weeks, for approximately one hour. Tania lead one table during literacy rotations. At this table, she reread one book each week and then discussed the plot, characters, and setting with the students. Tania read the book each week in English and Spanish and often used both languages when talking to the students. She further spent time talking about how the students felt about the story before encouraging students to act out the story during each visit. Then, she enlisted the help of the students and other Spanish-speaking mothers and created masks for the characters in the story. She, along with the students, assigned students one character to portray in a re-enactment of the book for other classes. Finally, she led the students in acting-out the story for the other prekindergarten classes.

Throughout the duration of Tania participating in the classroom, I noticed many Spanish-speaking children grow in their confidence and skill level. Her ability to relate school learning to native culture, language, and family ties made home-school learning come alive for students. Further, because Tania and many other families in the classroom lived in the community, she was a trusted individual for students and their families. Many Spanish-speaking parents began to provide feedback through Tania, a trusted liaison. Tania would share parent concerns such as lack of inclusion of Spanish-speaking mothers as volunteers in the school. This communication was imperative in increasing my understanding of the way families were being marginalized by the school.

Cooperative learning began to seep into the way I worked with parents, the way parents engaged in the classroom, and the way curriculum was disseminated. Foremost, the interactions I had with parents evolved naturally into cooperative learning experiences about each other. My communication also evolved through my efforts to be accessible, active listening, and trust. Parents, in turn, emerged as facilitators in the classroom, implementing cooperative learning in student small groups. I invited more parents and community members into the classroom, and allowed more time for students to experiment and learn with peers as the year progressed. During this time, I let go of preset homework packets, teacher-driven lesson planning, and expectations that parents adhere to my preconceived, and often inaccurate, understanding of parental involvement, which had been limited to assistance in completing homework packets and signatures on a daily behavior chart.

Implementation of cooperative learning in my classroom among students and between students and adults has transformed learning from an ineffective checklist to a student-driven dialogue between peers. My experience suggests that other educators have the power to change their teaching practice through cooperative learning, driven by a deep understanding of and support from parents and the broader community. Students engaged in meaningful learning with their peers, with scaffolding from trusted adults who mirrored the child's community values, which empowered students and teachers to use cooperative learning on a larger scale. Although this research was conducted with an early literacy focus, cooperative learning has improved student skill level as well as the interaction between all stakeholders in the classroom.

Conclusions

Over a century ago, Dewey (1902) suggested the potential relationship between schools and the community. He called on educators, "to be responsive to the strengths, struggles, and desires that bloom in the neighborhoods surrounding their school, (Dewey, 1902)." This suggests that educators are responsible for contributing to the growth and collaboration of the community. For educators who do not speak the language of their students or who are unfamiliar with the culture of the students, this type of responsibility may seem daunting. However, through FoK, teachers have the potential to view the community as a storehouse of knowledge and then to transform schooling to reflect the needs of the community, providing a space for growth and restoration of a respectful school-community relationship.

If possible, teachers should conduct action research in their classrooms, with the assistance of parents from the community. Action research was valuable to this study, leading to continuous change in the way I practice. And when multiple teachers in a setting engage in action research in the classroom, there is potential to improve the relationship not only between the teacher and the family but also between the school and the community.

I recognize the issue of time to conduct FoK research while a classroom teacher. It is essential to provide time for educators to engage in the local school community, but such time is rare. While conducting my dissertation research, I found it difficult to maintain my full-time job. This research transformed my teaching practice, my teaching philosophy, and my perceptions of parents and families. However, teachers are engaged in demanding work that already usurps family and personal time, with no additional pay. Doing FoK research requires added time and responsibility from educators. While educational funding remains a topic of much debate, providing teachers the time and resources to conduct FoK in the local school is beneficial to student learning and student growth. Perhaps teacher education programs can initiate teacher candidates in FoK as part of their program, to improve the prospect that new teachers will have the skillset to connect with diverse students and families.

Autoethnography

When I began this study, I had a conceptual awareness that all families have developed FoK on which they rely to grow and thrive. However, the experience of spending time with the family developed that understanding into a multi-dimensional view of how FoK was developed and enacted in a home. I found that the Rodriguez family had a system of values, goals, and networks based on knowledge acquired through historical, cultural, and social experiences. Through experimentation and error, provided within a zone of comfort, they supported Juan's early literacy development, particularly through oral language skills. With the assistance of Tania, we brought this FoK way of learning into the classroom. Through the action research project, I learned that Tania positively affected not only the students' early literacy skills, particularly their rhyming ability, but that she further enhanced overall student participation, engagement, and investment in learning. Through interviews with the family and action research, I also learned that I had perpetuated a cultural divide between myself and the Hispanic families I served. By examining my own cultural tenets, I began to fracture the cultural divide, making space for Hispanic mothers to enter the classroom as teachers, while developing an appreciation for the Hispanic population and the way they support their children's learning.

Implications for Research

FoK research, done in conjunction with action research and autoethnography is not extensively addressed in the literature. I relied heavily on all three components and each component was important in addressing the research questions. Autoethnography, however, proved to be especially important in my personal transformation. It allowed me to reflect on my behaviors, actions, and perceptions and how those changed through participating in FoK and action research. As I viewed myself in a different context, I began to view my students, their families, and myself differently. This revisioning was especially crucial since I did not share the students' cultural or linguistic backgrounds. It was only through the autoethnographic portion of this study that I recognized my role in operationalizing social and economic divisions throughout the school. More research on studies that implement autoethnography with FoK research and action research may provide insight into how teachers can accurately view their role in perpetuating cultural divides in education.

Research from teachers who have conducted FoK longitudinally is not common in the literature. My personal evolution during this relatively brief study indicated that the process of such a study, with all three components, has the power to transform teachers' understanding of teaching students who are different from them. Conducting similar research over an extended period of time may provide additional information regarding the effect of including parents in the classroom on teachers, students, parents, and the community. At the conclusion of this research, Tania and two other Hispanic mothers still periodically assisted in the classroom. Their desire to sustain the project beyond the initial time period indicated that such a project does not have to end.

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Appendix

Parent Interview

General Background

1. Please tell me about your family background. How did you and your family come to live in Texas? How did you and your family come to live in Fort Worth? How long have you lived here?
2. Before coming to Fort Worth, did you have family or friends that lived here? Please tell me about that.
3. Where did you live before moving to Fort Worth? Please tell me about that.
4. How is life different in Fort Worth when compared to where you moved from? Please tell me about that.
5. How is life similar to Fort Worth when compared to where you moved from? Please tell me about that.
6. Please tell me about your home language. Do you primarily speak Spanish? Does your extended family primarily speak Spanish or English? Please tell me about that.
7. Please tell me about your immediate family. How many members? What roles or responsibilities does each member have?
8. Please tell me about your extended family. Do you have a large or small family? Do you have family members that live nearby or that you visit often?
9. How often do you and your children interact with your extended family?
10. If extended family lives in another country or state, do you visit them? How often?
11. Do you have friends that live nearby that you see or interact with daily? What role do these people play in your family's daily lives?
12. Please tell me about your community. How do you interact with others in your community?
13. Do you have any shared responsibilities with others in your community? Please tell me about that.

Labor History

1. Please tell me about your family's work history. What work does your family currently do?
2. Please tell me about your family's work opportunities. What types of work are the members of your family involved in?
3. If family came from a country different than U.S., inquire about differences and similarities between work opportunities.
4. If family has extended family or friends, ask about their work.
5. Do your children have any work-related responsibilities? Please tell me about that.
6. How do you feel about your work? Please tell me about that.
7. How do your children feel about your work? Please tell me about that.

Child-rearing Experience and the Experience of Being a Parent

1. What does a typical day look like in your home? Please tell me about that.
2. What does a typical evening look like in your home? Please tell me about that.
3. What do your children do when they leave school?
4. What are the daily responsibilities of your child? Do these responsibilities ever change?
5. What are your daily responsibilities? Do these responsibilities ever change?
6. How do you communicate responsibilities to your child?
7. How do you view the relationship between the parent and child? Is this similar to the relationship you had with your parents?

8. What is your experience with disciplining your child? Please tell me about that.
9. What is most important when raising your child? Please tell me about that.
10. What are some things that your family enjoys doing together? When do you do these things?
11. Tell me about household roles. What are the primary responsibilities of each family member? How are these communicated to each member?
12. How do you feel your educational background influences the ways in which you interact with your children?
13. What is parent involvement? Please tell me about that.
14. How are you involved in your child's education? Please tell me about that.

Funds of Knowledge and Early Literacy

1. What is early literacy? Please tell me about that.
2. How is early literacy shared through interactions in daily household routines and roles?
3. What materials in your home potentially improve the literacy of your child? How?
4. Does your work history relate to the ways you share literacy with your child? How?
5. Do the social relationships with extended family or friends influence how you communicate school expectations with your child? How?
6. How do your views on raising children affect how you communicate with your child about literacy learning?
7. What cultural practices are important for you to communicate to your children? Please tell me about that.
8. Do any of the cultural practices discussed influence how and/or what you communicate regarding early literacy concepts?
9. How do you incorporate your child's interests into home activities?

Home Literacy Instruction

1. How do you communicate ideas about learning with your child?
2. How do you help your child when they are struggling with reading?
3. Tell me about some of your home practices that help your child with early literacy skills? What does your child enjoy doing at home that helps them learn literacy concepts? Please tell me about this.
4. Tell me how your child learns best. How did you find this out?
5. How do you encourage your child?
6. What is most important when helping your child learn reading skills? How did you come to find this out?
7. What types of literacy related material do you have in your home? Where did you get these items from?
8. What guides your decision to have these materials in your home? Please tell me about this.
9. How does your child use literacy related material in your home?
10. How do you and your child (or any other family members) interact with those materials in your home together?