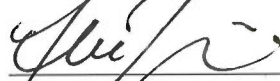


LITERACY PRACTICES OF LATINA IMMIGRANT MOTHERS AT HOME IN A
RURAL AREA WITH YOUNG CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 4

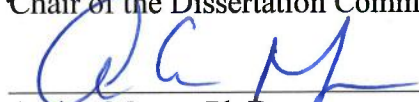
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RURAL AREA WITH YOUNG CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO AGE 4

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Seidel School of Education

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Abstract

The aim of this research study was to examine how Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area experience literacy at home with their young children from birth to age 4. In addition, the purpose of this study was to explore experiences, perceptions, values, and beliefs about early literacy through the Latina mothers' stories and *testimonios*. There were 16 participants, which included eight mothers and their eight children, who live in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. This single case study used qualitative research methods to capture the circumstances and interactions in which literacy practices occurred in the routines of the mothers and their children at home. These literacy experiences were explored from a sociocultural perspective. The findings from the study were: Latina immigrant mothers with young children engaged in reading practices with a variety of books at home; Latina immigrant mothers fostered oral emergent literacy through faith-based, religious storytelling; and Latina immigrant mothers' perceptions of education and values guided their beliefs about early literacy. The study, which was conducted during fall and winter 2021–2022, contributes to the knowledge about literacy practices that occur in Latina immigrant homes, and it was intended to generate information that will help educators value Latina immigrant mothers' literacy practices.

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Contexts for Exploring Language Development in Latinx Homes	2
Language and Literacy Practices at Home, and Parental Involvement	2
Sociocultural Perspectives on Exploring Literacies Involving Latina Mothers With Young Children	4
Problem of Practice.....	5
Insufficient Studies About Home-based Literacy Practices Involving Latina Mothers and Their Young Children (Birth to 4 Years Old)	7
Limitations of Existing Research That Focuses Primarily on a Single Immigration Experience From an Individual Country of Origin.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Organization of Dissertation	10
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review	11
Theoretical Framework.....	12
Emergent Literacy.....	13
Emergent Literacy Development as a Theoretical Approach	13
Environmental Print in the Home	14
Mothers' Involvement in Early Literacy Development.....	16
Oral Language at a Young Age	18

Play in Childhood: Emergent Literacy Context.....	20
Latina Mothers' Literacy Practices With Young Children	24
The Development of Oral Language and Bilingualism	25
Talk in the Home: Oral Interactions	26
Biliteracy Development	28
Challenges of Preserving the Primary Language at Home	29
Role of Reading and Literacy	31
Purposes for Reading	31
Access to Reading Materials.....	33
Reading Practices.....	34
Social and Cultural Aspects of Early Literacy Development	35
Social Aspects.....	35
Cultural Aspects.....	37
Latina Mothers With Young Children: Immigration Context.....	38
Cultural and Linguistic Values as Elements of Advocacy and Educational Support.....	39
Summary of the Chapter	42
Chapter 3: Methodology	43
Study Design.....	43
Researcher Positionality.....	45
Research Setting.....	50
Participants.....	51
Participant Inclusion Criteria	51
Participant Selection	53

Participants' Profiles	54
Renata	57
Ana	58
Andrea	58
Micaela	59
Olga	61
Flor	62
Martha	63
Rosa	64
Data Collection	65
Interviews	68
Initial Interview	68
Second Interview	70
Testimonios	71
Observations	72
Artifacts	75
Environmental Artifacts	75
Mother-focused Artifacts	76
Child-focused Artifacts	76
Mother and Child Daily Routine Schedule and Optional Explanatory Video	77
Data Analysis	78
Description of the Use of Spanish and English in the Analysis of the Data	78

Qualitative Coding Strategies	79
First Cycle Coding	80
Second Cycle Coding.....	81
Trustworthiness and Reliability	84
Chapter Summary	85
Chapter 4: Findings.....	86
Latina Immigrant Mothers With Young Children Engaged in Reading Practices With a Variety of Books at Home	87
English Reading Materials and Mothers' Reading Styles to Foster Early Literacy Development	89
Reading Experiences With Children From Birth to Age 2	89
Reading Experiences With Children From 2 to 4 Years Old.....	98
Spanish Reading Materials and Mothers' Reading Styles to Foster Early Literacy Development	102
Culturally Relevant Children's Books in Spanish	103
Children's Picture Books in Spanish	105
Bilingual Children's Books.....	107
Additional Print Materials to Foster Early Literacy Development	113
Latina Immigrant Mothers Foster Oral Early Literacy Development Through Faith-Based, Religious Storytelling	126
Latina Immigrant Mothers Used Oral Prayers as a Literacy Practice With Young Children.....	127
Latina Immigrant Mothers Incorporated Spiritual Music in Their Daily Routines to Promote Literacy	134
Exposure to Church Experiences and Religious Print Materials Influenced Literacy Practices at Home	138
Latina Immigrant Mothers Used Faith-based Storytelling as a	

Literacy Practice With Young Children	146
Latina Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions of Education and Values Guide Their Beliefs About Early Literacy.....	151
Explicit Knowledge of Early Literacy Continuum, Language, and Print Concepts.....	152
Early Literacy Associated With Speaking, Communicating, Studying, and Other Languages	155
Educación Connected With Early Literacy.....	157
Values Associated With Early Literacy	159
Mothers' Projected Goals for Children and Beliefs About Education	164
Chapter Summary	166
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications	168
Significance of the Study	169
Interpretation of the Findings.....	172
Latina Immigrant Mothers With Young Children Engaged in Reading Practices With a Variety of Books at Home	172
Latina Immigrant Mothers Foster Oral Early Literacy Development Through Faith-based, Religious Storytelling.....	175
Latina Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions of Education and Values Guide Their Beliefs About Early Literacy	176
Latina Mothers Perceived That Language Is Associated With Early Literacy and Perceived It as a Continuum	178
Latina Mothers Perceived That Early Education Involves Learning Other Languages.....	179
Latina Mothers Perceived the Importance of Teaching Alfabetismo and Educación as an Integral Part of Education.....	180
Latina Mothers' Values Are Associated With Early Literacy	181
Implications.....	182

Implications for Theory	182
Implications for Future Research.....	183
Implications for Practice	185
Limitations	186
Conclusion	187
References.....	188
References: Children’s Books.....	202
Appendix A: Spanish and English Version: Protocols	204
Appendix B: Protocol # 2	208
Appendix C: Protocol # 3: Testimonio	213
Appendix D: Adapted Observation Protocol (Jack, 2018)	214
Appendix E: Member Validation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), Participant Validation (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).....	218
Appendix F: Schedule of Daily Routine	220

List of Tables

	Page
1. Participant Demographics	56
2. Data Sources	67
3. Codes.....	83

List of Figures

	Page
1. Andrea Reading the Letters to Andy (1 year, 6 months) and Describing the Picture by Pointing and Transacting With the Text	95
2. Image of a Snowman and a Tree With a Sentence Saying, “God Made the Winter.”	97
3. Martha Reading a Bilingual Book and Martin (3 years, 7 months) Turning the Page	110
4. Caro (3 years, 6 months) Pointing to Poster With Numbers	119
5. Print Literacy Materials Obtained by Older Children at Andrea’s Home	121
6. Martin (3 years, 7 months) and Martha Playing and Learning Letters	125
7. Caro (3 years, 6 months) Praying in Front of the Altar	131
8. Ana’s Religious Written Message	142
9. Lord’s Prayer in English in Ana’s Home	145

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In my work in special education in a public school district, in addition to evaluating young children, I had several other roles that I did not anticipate when I began in the position; one of the most significant roles was as interpreter and document translator for the Latinx¹ children's families. Through my work in this area, I observed that when meeting with these families, educators often had limited awareness of Latinx immigrant children's families. Knowing their stories would have given myself and my colleagues more empathy, understanding, and consideration when asking mothers to collaborate in their children's education at home.

For example, some educators were unaware that there were no other family members who could speak English at home, as only the Spanish-speaking mother was present. In some cases, immigrants do not have many opportunities to learn English until they settle down and acculturate to the new area. As I discovered by talking with Latina² mothers, who had just immigrated to the United States, they were experiencing the acculturation process and facing challenges that included language demands. While Latina mothers were working hard to address these obstacles, I learned through conversations with them that they had some strengths that could help support their young children's language development. For instance, Latina mothers were speaking in Spanish

¹ *Latinx*, the term most frequently used in academia to refer to those with origins in Latin America, it is gender-inclusive and supports multiple gender identities (Scharrón-del Río & Aja, 2020). This term is used in this study when referring to people of Latin American origin who do not necessarily identify as *Latina*, and when referring to the work of other researchers who used the term *Latinx*.

² The term *Latina* is used throughout with respect to mothers, as the participants in this study identified themselves as "Latina": a woman who born in Latin America and living in United States.

daily at home as much as possible, using books in Spanish, and experiencing print literacy while interacting with their children.

Understanding their at-home literacy practices would help educators to adapt their suggestions to these Latina immigrant mothers' practices and work with the strengths they already have. Educators may benefit from knowing aspects of the Latinx family that are culturally contextual, such as the use of language, sets of rules, or ways of interacting with an emergent bilingual child. This knowledge may be incorporated in an educational setting where the young child can transition more smoothly and effectively from home to school.

Language is important, as it brings relevant information about young children; however, the family circumstances are necessary to consider as well. In some cases, Latinx immigrant families need to acculturate themselves to the language, area, and culture. At the same time, these families have many strengths: their status as Spanish speakers, their cultural diversity, their broad multicultural experiences, and their heritages give them grounding in their own funds of knowledge. It is the practices embedded in these funds of knowledge, as shown by the at-home literacy practices of Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area, that this dissertation sought to explore.

Contexts for Exploring Language Development in Latinx Homes

Language and Literacy Practices at Home, and Parental Involvement

Latinx parental involvement has a powerful effect on the education of children, and it has been significantly recognized over the past few years (Billings, 2009; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Reyes & Azuara, 2008); therefore, is important to explore Latinx

homes, as these parents serve as collaborators in their children's journey in educational settings.

Reyes and Azuara (2008) explored in their study the relationship between emergent biliteracy and growing up in a biliterate environment. The authors showed data from a multiple-method research project of an ecological model of emergent biliteracy. This model serves as an exploratory plan that allows educators to consider the impact at home of different linguistic and cultural spaces in the environments where children are growing up bilingual. Results in their research indicated that the children were developing knowledge, early biliteracy, and awareness of print in both languages at home during the interactions with parents; the families demonstrated a wide variety of communicative practices and literacies in their home environment. Reyes and Azuara (2008) explained how bilingual children participate in different literacy events at home—for example, living routines, entertainment, storybook reading, and interpersonal communication. The findings of literacy events may bring benefits to the field by challenging deficit perspectives that tend to devalue the Latinx languages, bilingualism, and biliteracy as barriers rather than potential advantages for academic growth. They also combat the idea that Latinx immigrant families do not have enriched home environments that encourage and motivate the child to participate in literacy experiences in future educational settings (Reyes & Azuara, 2008).

There is research that contributes in certain ways to the study of at-home literacy practices of Latinx families but describes children of older ages. For example, Farver et al. (2013), in a mixed methods study, investigated children's emergent literacy skills in both English and Spanish to find connections among literacy abilities. These emergent

skills were examined by the end of preschool. The intent of this study was to search for factors that potentially influence children's opportunities for learning. The elements they considered were abilities in both languages, aspects of the family and language patterns associated with the early literacy skills, children's age, nonverbal cognitive ability, parents' education level, and mother's acculturation into American society. However, the study may be limited in the sense that it focused on children that are older and already in school.

A few aspects of literacy experiences in Latinx families in the United States have been explored in previous research (Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003). Researchers have developed a strong understanding of biliteracy practices in which children engage at home, at-home literacy practices of older children school-aged, education practices for older children, and the importance of various elements of everyday experience influencing the development of literacy. However, what remains unexplored are the perspectives of these immigrant mothers related to literacy and education. With greater understanding of these mothers' stories and experiences in promoting literacy in their homes, it would be possible to replicate literacy experiences from their home country and apply them in the context of early literacy education in the United States.

Sociocultural Perspectives on Exploring Literacies Involving Latina Mothers With Young Children

This study endeavors to explore and discuss the multiple literacies of Latina immigrant mothers and young children and could potentially provide direction for future research for educators in educational settings. A sociocultural approach helps to elucidate

the interactions of the mothers and young children and their use of language in a home context (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). As Vygotsky (1978) also believed that adults and more advanced peers help children develop culturally meaningful activities, the communication between them becomes part of children's thinking (Vygotsky, 1978), and therefore these social interactions are valued. Vygotsky emphasized that many aspects of cognitive development are socially mediated. With this perspective, it will be possible to explore literacy experiences, as well as values and beliefs in the home context that Latina immigrant mothers impart to their young children.

Going along with Vygotsky, Moll used sociocultural views, particularly in the home context. Moll's funds of knowledge approach is about the idea of that people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005).

Funds of knowledge are the essential cultural practices as it is a way to represent the communities related to the resources they possessed that are embedded in the daily literacy practices and the routines of the family (Gonzalez et al., 2005). These home practices might include use of language and literacy, forms of reading, forms of interaction, and maintenance of their primary language. The sociocultural and funds of knowledge frameworks both influenced the analysis of this study on literacy practices and experiences of these Latina mothers at home and the stories of these immigrant mothers with their young children in rural areas.

Problem of Practice

In this study, my problem of practice mainly investigated (a) insufficient data about home-based literacy practices involving Latina mothers and their young children

(birth to 4 years old); (b) limitations of existing research that focuses primarily on a single immigration experience from an individual country of origin. Together, these problems contribute to the challenges that Latinx families experience when arriving in the United States and engaging in literacy practices in the home.

In the United States, several initiatives emphasize the importance of early literacy development and focus on diverse families. Public programs like Head Start are well-known and provide comprehensive early childhood education, along with parent involvement services to diverse families. Another initiative that focuses on home literacy practices and literacy intervention for young children is called Reach Out and Read (ROR). In the ROR program, pediatricians give advice and support to parents about the importance of literacy, for instance reading aloud along with a “prescription” to read with their child every day (Billings 2009). These initiatives illustrate a movement to explore literacy practices that involve mothers with young children with diverse backgrounds and that support literacy at home.

Additionally, many factors that influence literacy practices in the homes of Latinx immigrants, such as language, socioeconomic status, Latinx parents’ expectations about literacy and education, and cultural values and beliefs. Some scholars have emphasized how a child’s socioeconomic status influences academic outcomes. Research has shown that in the United States, diverse groups are more likely to live in poverty. For instance, 69% of African American children and 66% of Latinx children live in homes with lower incomes compared to 34% of White children who live in similar circumstances (Sawyer et al., 2018). Some studies have indicated that children from low socioeconomic status (SES) homes often have lower academic language and early literacy skills than their

peers from higher SES backgrounds (Sawyer et al., 2018). Some researchers approach the problem from a deficit perspective that views poverty as a negative influence on academic achievement; in contrast, the sociocultural perspective acknowledges and values home literacy practices as a foundation for later learning.

Insufficient Studies About Home-based Literacy Practices Involving Latina Mothers and Their Young Children (Birth to 4 Years Old)

Some researchers have suggested that Latina mothers experience multiple literacy activities at home; however, those literacy practices are invisible to people outside the home setting (Billings, 2009; Poza et al., 2014). Also, these practices may not be observed daily. Regarding these practices and potential information found in Latinx immigrant families, it is evident that there are important studies related to immigrant families; however, more empirical studies that explore the diverse, unique, and multiple home literacy practices of immigrant families are still needed (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Cycyk & Hammer, 2018; Galindo et al., 2019; Poza et al., 2014). Further exploration may contribute to properly valuing of Latinx immigrant families and their multiple and unique home literacy practices (Reyes & Azuara, 2008) as well as their funds of knowledge (Moll, 2019).

The study of literacy events with Latina mothers with young children may bring benefits to the field by challenging deficit perspectives that tend to devalue the Latinx languages, bilingualism, and biliteracy as barriers rather than potential advantages for academic growth. These findings may also combat the idea that Latinx families—for instance, Mexican immigrant families—do not have enriched home environments that

encourage and motivate the child to participate in literacy experiences in future educational settings (Reyes & Azuara, (2008).

Research has shown that the interactions between mothers and children and home context help to explain the forms, types, objectives, and frequencies of literacy experiences and practices of Latinx families, and clearly there are diverse forms of family literacies (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Saracho, 2002a). The inclination in the literature to make general statements about Latinx immigrant family literacies possibly comes from one area of research about children of certain ages (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020) that examines them only from a single standpoint without contemplating all the elements that influence their literacies at younger ages (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Saracho, 2002a). This highlights the significance of studying literacy practices in the home environment, which is preliminary to the formal educational setting.

Limitations of Existing Research That Focuses Primarily on a Single Immigration Experience From an Individual Country of Origin

Existing research that focuses primarily on a single immigration experience from individual country of origin limits our understanding, when approaching these families, of the multiple ways of promoting literacy that are occurring in Latinx families (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Cychk & Hammer, 2018; Durand, 2010; Sawyer et al., 2018). It is problematic to limit our information to an immigrant group that does not represent all Latinx families, when generalizations are then made to describe all Latinx groups in the research. In the context of research on at-home educational practices, it is not sufficient to focus on just one country of origin because people of each country of origin or culture engage in different educational practices that we may be missing by

generalizing. Also, when approaching these families with the framework of one country and culture of origin in mind, researchers and educators may be missing extended information that reflects and represents more about their literacy practices and expands on their specific funds of knowledge. For instance, we may have a concept about Mexican literacy practices, but we may be missing further exploration of daily literacy practices. Exploring the at-home literacy experience of multiple immigrants from multiple countries of origin may bring a richer variety and more detailed information that other members of these communities offer to the community related to literacy.

In addition to the problem of targeting only a specific group to represent literacy activities, several qualitative studies focus only on older, school-aged children, with very few studies focusing on children of younger ages with their mothers at home (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). To understand early literacy development, it is necessary to explore more about these children's experiences at home before the transition to educational settings. Also, it is important to explore mothers' voices and experiences, particularly their in-home emergent literacy practices in promoting children's literacy development (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020), and value their funds of knowledge, seeing them as collaborators in the education and development of young children.

Research Questions

How do Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area experience literacy at home with their young children from ages birth to 4?

Sub question: What are the Latina mothers' stories (*testimonios*) and perceptions, values, and beliefs about early literacy?

Organization of Dissertation

To answer the research questions, I utilized a qualitative research method: a single case study to obtain a better understanding of the Latina mothers' literacy practices with their young children in a rural area at home. Along with learning about their home literacy experiences, I learned more about Latina immigrant mothers, their *testimonios*, and their values and beliefs about early literacy. Chapter 2 discusses the framework, the literature review that supports my research questions. In Chapter 3, I provide in-depth information regarding research setting, research participants, researcher positionality, data sources, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the research findings. Chapter 5 discusses the implications, future recommendations, and limitations.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area experience literacy at home with their young children from birth to age 4. The theoretical framework and literature review are presented in three sections with subsections. The first section discusses emergent literacy as a theoretical approach used to “denote the idea that the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child” (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). The second section addresses how Latina immigrant mothers experience, practice, and foster oral literacy with their young children regularly at home (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Cycyk & Hammer, 2018; Durand, 2010; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). The third section explains challenges of immigration as they relate to the process of acculturation, which refers to the assimilation to a different culture. Latina mothers with young children face many challenges when arriving in the United States (Winsler et al., 2014), and the process of acculturation involves language spoken and social aspects of life at home (Potowski & Rothman, 2011). By considering these three subtopics and immigrant mothers’ stories, it becomes possible to explore how these Latina mothers experience literacy with their young children at home.

Research has indicated that the interactions between mothers and children and home context help to explain the forms, types, objectives, and frequencies of literacy experiences and practices of Latinx families, and clearly there are vast and diverse forms of family literacies (Ortiz, 2004; Saracho, 2002b). In this study, the literature that was reviewed and incorporated echoes the diverse experiences of Latina immigrant mothers

with young children. The focus of this literature emphasizes Latina immigrant mothers and their young children, considering the value, diversity, and complexity of their literacy experiences, and relies on the understanding that their literacy experiences are probably more diverse and distinct because of their experience as immigrants.

Theoretical Framework

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study takes a sociocultural approach to the study of early literacy practices at Latinx homes. This study is based on the framework provided by Vygotsky's sociocultural perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978) and Moll's funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Vygotsky (1978) is well-recognized theorist in the field, and Moll is a well-respected researcher whose most recognized work is about funds of knowledge. Vygotsky viewed cognitive development as a social process that depends on the support that adults give children when trying new tasks, as opposed to the children learning all by themselves (Gonzalez et al., 2005).

A sociocultural framework supports studying the social interactions that occur through play and authentic social interactions at home. Vygotsky's *zone of proximal or potential development* refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot handle alone but can do with the help of more skilled partners; with that in mind, this study focused on the interactions of children with their mothers. Similarly, Moll built on Vygotsky's ideas by using sociocultural views, particularly in the home context. Moll's funds of knowledge approach is a way to represent communities regarding the resources they have and how they use these resources at home and on a daily basis (Gonzalez et al., 2005). These frameworks influenced and guided the analysis of this study on literacy practices and experiences of these Latina mothers with their young children at home.

Emergent Literacy

This review begins by describing emergent literacy as a theoretical approach based on empirical research. Emergent literacy is a substantial theory that expands on literacy development (Morrow, 2018), with researchers viewing literacy development as a nonlinear process (Whitmore et al., 2004). The main theme explored in research indicates that literacy begins at birth, it continues when the child enters an educational setting, and that the child explores and learns in a natural environment. Additionally, the importance of adult interaction as related to emergent literacy was emphasized through the documented research. For, example, children benefit from transacting with adults in home environments rich in print resources (Rohde, 2015; Whitmore et al., 2004).

Oral language experiences are a major contributor to a child's development of language and eventually of print knowledge. According to research studies, the role of play is a fundamental component in children's emergent literacy (Saracho, 2002b). Over the last two decades, researchers have investigated the impact of play in early childhood and literacy development. Play enhances a child's social interactions, language development, and complex knowledge. Researchers are continuously studying play and facing the challenges of exploring its forms in a variety of patterns, symbols, languages, technologies, and cultures; for the purpose of this study, play was emphasized to meet the challenges in the circumstances of Latina mothers and their children.

Emergent Literacy Development as a Theoretical Approach

Emergent literacy is a theoretical approach used to "denote the idea that the acquisition of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, with its origins early in the life of a child" (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Emergent literacy is a

significant theory that explains and expands on literacy development (Morrow, 2018). Beginning in the 1980s, the introduction of emergent literacy developed as an approach to literacy development, along with Vygotsky's and Piaget's theories. Research regarding reading and writing incorporated other fields and expanded to include cognitive and linguistic, meaning-making, and social processes (Goodman & Altwerger, 1981). Teale and Sulzby (1986) suggested the term "emergent literacy" to refer to the concept that reading and writing are interrelated processes that develop concurrently from birth (Rand & Morrow, 2021).

A child develops literacy knowledge from birth as an active participant in literacy experiences through social interactions with relatives and in their environment (Shany et al., 2010; Whitmore et al., 2004). Moreover, Rand and Morrow (2021) claimed that emergent literacy develops naturally in real-life settings that are meaningful (Rand & Morrow, 2021). According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1989), emergent literacy focuses on the way children learn and discover literacy through their own attempts in literacy activities (e.g., reading and writing). Other researchers have viewed literacy as a nonlinear process (Whitmore et al., 2004). From the emergent literacy perspective, a young child develops literacy on a continuum from their own meaningful experiences (Rohde, 2015). The common themes found in research are that literacy begins before a child enters school and that the child learns in a natural environment and through social interactions.

Environmental Print in the Home

From the emergent literacy stance, literacy is experienced through print at a young age and at home. According to research, children gain knowledge of the written

environment through multiple experiences in their environment before they enter school (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1989; Goodman & Owocki, 2002; Kassow, 2006; Mielonen & Paterson, 2009; Reyes & Azuara, 2008), and most likely the child's first literacy experiences are in their communities and in the home (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). Young children are exposed to print experiences in their environment, resulting in a multifaceted "process that is different for every child" (Whitmore et al., 2004). For instance, when the child is exposed to print (e.g., flyer with words, maps, drawings, notes, posters, schedules, pictures with names, and calendars) in their home environment, the child learns to interact, organize, and analyze its meaning and associate it with their own personal experiences (Goodman & Owocki, 2002). This developmental process of understanding print varies, depending on the child's own process of being aware of print (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). Through these print experiences, young children are active participants in the process of learning (Goodman & Owocki, 2002) and experience emergent literacy.

Young children view and experience print in their environment (Goodman et al., 2005; Whitmore et al., 2004). Ferreiro and Teberosky (1989) investigated low socioeconomic Latinx parents (Argentinian) explored children's knowledge and thought processes through print. They found that young children who are exposed to environmental print are likely to develop literacy ideas prior to entry to educational settings. Consistent with previous studies, Kassow (2006) found that children begin taking notice of the print in their environment prior to entry to school. Purcell-Gates (1996) found that parents also used environmental print to develop literacy (Purcell-Gates, 1996). Also, children recognize environmental print and the cues that these

represent (Kassow, 2006). By recognizing the print in their surroundings, children take the first steps in understanding that print has a meaning (Kassow, 2006), and these emergent literacy experiences form the basis of growth toward literacy development. Similarly, Neumann et al. (2013) studied 35 mothers and their children ages 3 to 4 years old. Researchers investigated the frequency with which letters and words were referenced with respect to the environmental print. Neumann et al. noted that maternal referencing of environmental print during play interaction had a positive effect on young children's literacy development. In this observational study, the authors reported that the mothers used opportunities to help the children explore letters and words meaningfully. Parents utilized environmental print in daily activities and interactions with their children—for instance, grocery lists and labels (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005).

This research shows meaningful experiences and interactions with environmental print occur during routine daily activities with adults and most likely with the child's primary caregiver, who encourages playing that involves print, experiencing print, viewing print in their communities, noticing print in their home, and actively pointing out words and letters, all of which enrich and foster literacy development. Through consistent exposure to print and multiple interactions with caregivers, the young child begins to understand print and surrounding world. While print exposure and adult interactions help the young child to develop early literacy, other forms of print exposure, including books and adult reading, foster their literacy understanding.

Mothers' Involvement in Early Literacy Development

Some studies have indicated that mothers support and interact with their young children at home, particularly when the children are in the process of emergent literacy

(Caspe, 2009; Hammer et al., 2005). Caspe (2009) explored Latinx mothers' book sharing styles and how they related to their young children's subsequent emergent literacy. The study suggested that Latinx mothers engage when telling the story "in unique and cultural ways and prefer a book sharing style that creates distance between audience and narrator" (Caspe, 2009, p. 310), in which the mothers tend to be the sole narrators and encourage minimal child participation. Furthermore, Caspe described how Latinx mothers tend to focus more on the narrative scaffolding style of book sharing rather than asking children direct questions while telling stories. In some cases, Latinx mothers might shift away from a co-construction of stories with their children. Instead, the inclination might be for mothers to assign specific roles in the book reading process; one person tells the story and the other observes and listens intently.

Regarding emergent literacy practices, Hammer et al. (2005) found that Puerto Rican mothers in their interactions with their young children encouraged emergent literacy using a child-centered approach, in which the mothers allowed children to lead the storytelling. Hammer et al. (2005) revealed that mothers read from books, responded to their children, and asked questions regularly, and therefore produced more opportunities for verbal expression. In other interactions, the mothers provided most of the information during the storytelling. These Latinx mothers engaged in early literacy practices by operating as the main storytellers, reading directly from the text, and asking questions to encourage their children's understanding of the story (Hammer et al., 2005). Hammer et al. (2005) and Caspe (2009) discussed these common interactions in the Latinx parenting style during storytelling practices with young children. Both of these studies emphasize the interactions between mothers and children and their environment

(e.g., books, pictures, letters, graphics, or play materials) that support language, communication, and literacy development (Whitmore et al., 2004). From an emergent literacy approach, these studies denote the idea that the experience of literacy is best conceptualized as a developmental continuum, and the child is an active participant in literacy activities in constructing language and knowledge (Morrow, 2018) with the support and interaction of adults. Hammer et al. (2005) and Caspe (2009) presented studies that relate to how the mothers read books and are storytellers with their young children in the home. Notably, the young children experienced early literacy (e.g., observed print, listened to vocabulary, and saw symbols) through these experiences. While the mother is reading to the young child, it is noted the child plays the role of an active participant: the child is not passive in either style of reading, as the child listens attentively and takes the role of an active observer (Caspe, 2009). In all these literacy activities, the child constructs language while being exposed to the mother's variety of ways of reading. Therefore, these studies are significant, as they reflect how literacy is experienced from an emergent literacy approach.

Oral Language at a Young Age

While there is a tendency to associate literacy with just writing and reading, it also involves oral language experiences, which begin as early as birth (Rohde, 2015; Whitmore et al., 2004). Research has shown that early experiences with oral language help children to learn to communicate with others and express themselves (Neuman & Dickinson, 2002; Roskos et al., 2004; Shany et al., 2010; Song et al., 2012). Honig (2007) stated that even prior to birth, the unborn child experiences sounds and language while hearing the mother's voice as she reads a story aloud. Children learn oral language

at a young age, and oral language is an essential aspect of literacy learning and development (Roskos et al., 2004). For instance, in the oral development process when the children are about 2 years old and the mother is engaging in “rhyming, chanting, singing, sing-song voices, delight and expressive responsiveness to infant vocalizations—all these are caregiver characteristics that will promote the emergence of early language” (Honig, 1990, p. 13). In this oral language interaction, as in the storytelling experience, the child is an active participant when observing and listening attentively through the experience of oral literacy. The child emerges in literacy as the child listens to the language spoken while the mother expresses with sounds, songs, and body language. Children initiate, explore, and experience language in the years before they enter school (Goodman & Owocki, 2002; Saracho, 2019; Whitmore et al., 2004), and commonly their first interactions are with their primary caregivers. Engaging in meaningful oral language experiences serve as a major contributor to a child’s understanding of language and eventually of print knowledge. These studies served as a model for exploring ways to promote and foster literacy development in young children with the support of adults.

As part of literacy development, play is a topic to be considered and reviewed within the literature review. In fact, according to research, the role of play is a major component in children’s emergent literacy (Saracho, 2002b). Play, as a theme, expands upon how print, oral language, and literacy experiences are involved in the child’s literacy development. Play allows children to explore and interact, and it enables them to discover language. The following section will include a discussion of multiple forms of play and how it relates to emergent literacy.

Play in Childhood: Emergent Literacy Context

Over the last 20 years, researchers explored and documented how play impacts early childhood and literacy development (Kim & Kim, 2016; Saracho, 2002b; Spodek, 1998; Wolfgang, 2004). A strong relationship exists between play and literacy, with play enhancing social interactions and language development (Kim & Kim, 2016; Wolfgang, 2004). In other words, children learn more complex concepts through play. For example, through playing with toys, coloring, painting, and playing with books as an activity of free play, children become aware that images on paper are meaningful and say something. Through play children explore languages, experience creativity, show feelings, and develop relationships that eventually support their literacy development (Wolfgang, 2004). A combination of play, the play environment, and the influence of peers and adults supports children's social and cognitive growth and literacy development (Roskos & Christie, 2011; Spodek, 1998; Wolfgang, 2004; Zentella, 1997). Play provides an opportunity for interaction with other children and with adults and fosters language and literacy development.

Neaum (2020) found that the adult's role in supporting and enhancing children's play is significant. Neaum's study included 14 children selected based on nursery school observations. Neaum found that children's engagement with activities in child-initiated play is taken to be an important mediating factor in their learning. When adults were present, the play and interaction between children and adult was observed to be rich and engaging, less so in child-initiated play (Neaum, 2020).

In another study, Mielonen and Paterson (2009) examined how young children develop literacy through play. The study reported that literacy develops naturally through

play. When given opportunities to have a personal choice and to socialize with others, the children engaged in their own form of literacy learning that was meaningful to them. The case study took place in a home environment with two young participants in a rural neighborhood. Researchers observed the young children at play, as well as the children's drawings, to explore their language, writing, and reading skills. The children participated in non-guided play and experienced literacy learning activities through social interaction. Mielonen and Paterson reported that the environment plays a significant role in these interactions. When adults provide materials and a rich literacy environment, children are encouraged to find a way to play with the materials (e.g., colors, crayons, shapes, drawings, and paintings). The study showed that young children who are part of playful social interactions eventually develop early literacy. For example, when given the option to draw or communicate with adults and peers in natural ways, children use imagination, creativity, and verbal interactions while explaining the drawing. By implementing social interactions in the home environment and creating the opportunity to communicate with peers in natural way, adults provide materials and enrich the environment, with the children exploring freely and in meaningful ways. Through play, children practice communication and later more complex literacy skills such as learning to talk, write, and read. Mielonen and Paterson are among multiple scholars that found that literacy develops at home in the presence of adults, when children explore freely and spontaneously with a variety of materials.

In addition, the ethnographic research of Kim and Kim (2016) shows the connection that exists between play and early literacy development. The study focused on literacy events that involved a 4-year-old boy, his older brother, and his mother in a

bilingual household (English and Korean). The study explored the values of child-initiated play through recording family literacy events (e.g., drawing, pointing to letters, telling, acting, and talking). Kim and Kim studied identified phases by following the child's meaning-making processes as the child was playing. In the study, the child's mother's role in play activities included offering opportunities for the child and his older sibling to engage in unstructured child-initiated play. For instance, the boy in the study asked his mother to read a book (*Beautiful Oops!*), then his brother read aloud in English, and then his mother translated the book into Korean. Both brothers decided to draw a picture independently, both engaging in artistic experimentation. In that study, the mother and one child had conversations about the drawing that revealed how the child makes connections between the book and the drawing (Kim & Kim, 2016). Through these literacy events the child experienced spoken language, verbal descriptions, conversations, and reading routines, in a unique bilingual family literacy context in which the play-literacy event occurred. As a result, the early literacy experiences in the study show the meaning-making process as the child plays, also evidenced in linguistic experiences that foster literacy development.

In addition, the interaction from a transactional perspective of literacy development is a negotiation (transaction) in which the child's experience with his environment, play materials, and individuals (i.e., family members) leads to eventual literacy (Whitmore et al., 2004). In other words, literacy occurs as a meaning construction process, which is a process that allows a child to construct knowledge and language while experiencing their daily routines and situations. As researchers continue

to study how play impacts emergent literacy, it becomes clearer that the multiple types of play factor into how literacy occurs in the development of the young child.

Play provides children with a multimodal way (e.g., children utilize their bodies, objects, artifacts, toys, and props to create and imagine scenes, stories, and identities) to express communication and creativity (Kress, 2000; Wohlwend, 2019). For example, children may engage with print materials, talk, or perform art (music, dance, songs, sounds). Children can experience literacy through electronic devices such as tablets, phones, and iPads to experience music and lyrics. In this way, young children's multimodal experiences through technology are also experiences that lead to literacy development. In fact, a variety of types of play are associated with literacy.

Wolfgang (2004) indicated that "symbolic play is make-believe play in which young children express their ideas through gestures or the movement of toys and objects" (p. 21). The development of symbolic play begins around age 2, and usually occurs when children pretend to talk on the phone, care for a baby, cook a meal, use tools for construction, etc. (Wolfgang, 2004). Through symbolic make-believe play with toys and objects that are found in the home, children communicate, express feelings, show ideas, construct new knowledge, and eventually develop literacy (Mielonen & Paterson, 2009). Research has shown that by simply experiencing these forms of play, children develop language abilities through social interaction (Mielonen & Paterson, 2009).

Children who engage in sociodramatic play use language to develop dialogues and to practice skills that enable them to ultimately transfer this knowledge into a literacy activity, such as reading (Mielonen & Paterson, 2009). For instance, a child may assume a make-believe role and imitate a mother, father, doctor, or an animal, and use gestures to

show an object. This type of play involves movement and imagination as the child creates pre-literacy experiences, such as oral language (Soto-Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014), which influence language and literacy development (Saracho, 2019). Through this symbolic play the child uses his imagination and communicates the experiences, which enhances the child's language development.

Besides dramatic play and symbolic play, there are other forms of play that enrich fostering literacy. Some societies use music as part of these games: families use songs, hold hands, and play circle games (Spodek, 1998). These songs invite language and literacy experiences and are socially welcoming to all. For instance, Mexican families interactions with young children include singing, clapping, rocking, jumping, dancing, swinging, and tickling (Spodek, 1998). Researchers in various fields continue to explore play as it is a dynamic element of learning (Saracho, 2002b), and they face the challenging task of addressing its forms. Young children's multimodal practices, such as playing, singing, drawing, and making movement, all may serve to foster literacy development. Play in early childhood is important as it serves as an initiation to literacy.

Latina Mothers' Literacy Practices With Young Children

In a previous section of this review, the early literacy development experiences of young children were considered through their interactions with their caregivers; however, to fully understand these interactions, it is important to consider the mothers' experiences as well. Latinx mothers' experiences with bilingualism and language difference make up part of these practices with their young children. This section addresses Latinx mothers' reading, writing, oral language literacy practices, print materials, and social and cultural aspects of their experience. Latinx immigrant mothers experience, practice, and foster

oral literacy regularly at home (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Cycyk & Hammer, 2018; Durand, 2010; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). A variety of oral literacy events occur in Latinx mothers' homes. Some of these are related to religion and stories associated with their families (Billings, 2009). Spanish and English are commonly spoken in Latinx immigrants' homes, depending on the circumstances (Saracho, 2002a). For instance, bilingual literacy experiences occurred in a study of the daily routines of Latinx immigrant homes including reading time, caregiving, meals, errands, and routines (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). These literacy practices commonly involve bilingual older siblings, social and cultural interactions, and books at home (Bridges et al., 2015; Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Saracho, 2019).

Previous studies have indicated that Latinx family members rarely practice literacy (Boyce et al., 2004; Hale et al., 2009); however, Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett (2020) found that mothers practice literacy with a variety of routines and with print material. For instance, Ortiz and Ordoñez-Jasis (2005) suggested that parents were able to actively participate in their children's schooling. Cultural influences on Latinx mothers' literacy experiences and their practices with their young children will also be explored in this section of the literature review (Galindo et al., 2019). In the following subsections, oral language, the role of reading, bilingualism, and social and cultural aspects of literacy development will be presented, as they are part of literacy practices in Latinx families.

The Development of Oral Language and Bilingualism

Research has suggested that Latinx immigrant mothers promote oral literacy daily at home (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Cycyk & Hammer, 2018; Durand, 2010; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005), and these mothers describe ways of fostering oral language

development with their children (Casper, 2009; Cycyk & Hammer, 2018; Durand, 2010; Galindo et al., 2019; Hammer et al., 2007; Ordoñez-Jasis et al., 2006; Poza et al., 2014; Reese & Balzano, 1995; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003; Sawyer et al., 2018). Daily practices of oral literacy occurring in these Latinx mothers' homes vary and include topics stemming from culture, such as values, religion, and stories related to their family (Billings, 2009); certainly, these interactions involve other members of the family, including older siblings (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). Older siblings are commonly bilingual, and they have a key role in the family oral interactions where they share, teach, and engage in both languages—Spanish and English—with their younger siblings.

Talk in the Home: Oral Interactions

Oral literacy practices at home are essential to Latinx mothers. Previous studies found that families practice oral literacies through the telling of folk tales and recounting family stories (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992, 2004). Furthermore, studies have revealed that Latinx families' oral literacies encompass discussions about values and beliefs, religious discussions, and telling stories about Latinx culture (Billings, 2009; Casper, 2009; Soto-Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014). These unique literacy activities reflect how these families experience oral literacy through discussion and stories about culture, beliefs, and values that might not be contemplated as academic or educational but reflect ways of fostering language development.

In addition, Sawyer et al. (2018) found that Latinx mothers explained daily activities with their children in a way that encompasses positive language opportunities, for example as “adult–child conversations, playing with others, doing chores, learning Spanish and English and watching television.” Latinx mothers described these practices,

but some mothers showed little explicit understanding of why these practices were important (Sawyer et al., 2018). Latinx mothers did not define those activities as fostering early literacy development or developing language. In contrast, mothers described activities such as talking during meals, media use, and play as daily experiences, and they defined these activities as teaching basic vocabulary, generally in Spanish, to meet toddlers' needs during the activity (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018).

Latinx mothers value the use language at home as a tool for discipline (Sawyer et al., 2018). Oral language serves as an organizational tool through which mothers can provide guidance and direction to their children at home (Sawyer et al., 2018). When Latinx mothers verbally interact with their children, they focus on behavioral objectives (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). For instance, it is common to promote politeness. Mothers encourage their children to be polite by using their words, expressing their needs, asking for help from adults, and communicating to build relationships (Sawyer, 2018). Latinx mothers value communication experiences for their young children because communication helps them to develop words, addresses their basic needs, opens up a space to understand directions, and ultimately supports them in regulating their conduct (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018).

Families foster oral literacy in a variety of ways, with some being to facilitate speech by providing labels and inviting toddlers to construct words (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). Latina mothers experience oral language practices with their young children at home, involving a variety of types of interactions and conversations considered to facilitate language learning, such as recurrently giving labels and asking their children to say and repeat these words. The involvement of educators and practitioners in early

childhood supporting the use of language within Latinx families with young children is important, as it reflects their shared responsibility and manifests their practices to acknowledge their funds of knowledge (e.g., practices and knowledge that families have produced experiencing at home (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll, 2019) and to support and build on literacy practices they already fostered when exploring these families' experiences. These language and literacy experiences serve to develop language, to encourage the children to preserve the Latina mother's language to communicate with other family members, to foster literacy development, and to eventually foster bilingualism.

Biliteracy Development

Latinx mothers with their young children experience a variety of literacy activities and events contributing to their children's bilingual oral language and literacy development (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). In order to understand bilingual literacy development in young children it is important to understand bilingualism, which is fluency in or use of two languages (Reyes & Azuara, 2008). Reyes and Azuara (2008) found that preschool immigrant children in the U.S. Southwest developed knowledge and awareness of print in both Spanish and English. Likewise, researchers have revealed that young children cultivate language and literacy development through authentic and meaningful exposure to two languages (e.g., Justice & Ezell, 2000; Payne et al., 1994). These and other studies have explored biliteracy as part of the natural development of young Spanish-English emergent bilingual children (Reyes & Azuara, 2008).

Spanish and English are used in Latinx immigrants' homes depending on the events (Saracho, 2002a). For instance, bilingual literacy experiences occurred in the daily

routine of Latinx immigrant homes during caregiving, meals, errands, and routines (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). Reyes and Azuara's (2008) study described the bilingual literacy events at home, for example, in daily routines, entertainment choices, storybook awareness, and interpersonal communication. Some Latinx immigrant families speak primarily in Spanish at home (Song et al., 2012); however, we cannot generalize that all Latinx families speak only Spanish at home, as it depends on the family or the circumstance. Researchers have suggested that parents communicate in the primary language of their home country with their children, as Latinx mothers indicated that the usage and maintenance of Spanish supports development of fluency in both languages (Cummins, 2017). In the Cycyk and Hammer (2018) study, some Latinx mothers (29%) considered that using two languages was important but felt that English was not practiced enough in the home. The role of bilingualism in Latinx mothers' concept of literacy is that it is a conduit for their children to learn both languages.

Challenges of Preserving the Primary Language at Home

Studies have suggested that having the primary language as the language of the parents' home country gives a strong foundation to learn English; however, some Latinx immigrant families try to include English in communication (Martínez & Mesinas, 2019; Potowski & Rothman, 2011; Winsler et al., 2014). Additionally, Winsler et al. (2014) found "more positive early cognitive outcomes for children in immigrant families appeared when some amount of the heritage language was occurring in the home compared to only English" (p. 761). Experiencing the primary language (i.e., the mother's language) helps children to eventually develop the second language; also, for these mothers, the perception of supporting their children in the language in which they

will be immersed is important. For instance, the dichotomy of two cultures demands that the primary caregivers must make a conscious decision about speaking in English or their home language to their young children. Balancing the two languages in a bilingual family context can be a point of conflict. Immigrant parents themselves feel uncertain about communicating with children in both languages (Potowski & Rothman, 2011). At the same time, Latinx mothers speaking only the language of origin and not being unable to support older children with homework in English language is part of the stress of their experience as Latinx immigrant mothers (Cibils, 2017), as they encounter the challenge to preserve their language.

Besides these challenges, like the mothers in this study, Latinx immigrant parents consider it important to maintain their primary language in order for children to connect with their extended family (Martínez & Mesinas, 2019; Potowski & Rothman, 2011). By communicating in Spanish or other indigenous languages, like Zapoteco, the mothers in the study by Martínez and Mesinas (2019) honored their familial and cultural heritage by encouraging their young children to communicate with their relatives (e.g., grandparents) and help new members in the community. By doing so they maintained their language and also expanded their children's literacy experiences. Ek et al. (2013) defined *linguistic motherwork* as "the practices that [Latinx] mothers engage in to maintain and develop their children's heritage language and literacy" (as cited in Martínez & Mesinas, 2019, p. 202). Immigrant mothers make a vast effort to preserve their primary language with their young children. By interviewing mothers, Martínez and Mesinas (2019) explored multilingualism and Indigenous language maintenance in their children's lives. The mothers reported the importance of keeping the language, for instance in the Zapoteco

language, to communicate with speakers who reside in both the United States and Mexico. By maintaining the Zapoteco language in their new community in California, they respected their linguistic roots in effort to serve the community and to support new members of the Latinx community (Valdés, 2011). [Latinx mothers] tend to be “the primary caregivers for their children” (Valencia-Garcia et al., 2008 as cited in Ayón et al., 2018); hence, the impact of their role with their young children. Their young children absorb and learn parent attitudes about the value of each language spoken (Potowski & Rothman, 2011).

Role of Reading and Literacy

Latina mothers support their children's reading through social interactions, sometimes centered on books, and other times with help from older siblings and other adults (Saracho, 2019). Latina mothers in research studies discussed the provision of materials at home for learning (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Luo et al., 2019; Sawyer et al., 2018). In their interactions with their children, mothers typically favor unstructured, spontaneous learning opportunities, to demonstrate reading (Ortiz & Ordoñez- Jasis, 2005), suggesting that parents are able to actively participate in their children's schooling in regard to reading in spite of the time constraints and the presence of other children in the home.

Purposes for Reading

There is a shift from previous studies compared to more current research that shows the progression from reading as a rote practice (Reese & Gallimore, 2000) to reading using more complex literacy strategies such as elaborating on their children's ideas (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020) and social interaction when sharing books

(Boyce et al., 2004). Reese and Gallimore's (2000) study of Mexican and Central American immigrant families living in the Los Angeles area described the Latinx immigrant cultural model of early literacy related to immigration and experiences in U.S. schools. The Latina immigrant mothers in this study had in common a view of literacy development that influences their daily activities. In the study, Latinx parents revealed that they conceived reading as "something that is learned through repeated practice" (Reese & Gallimore, 2000, p.112) and as something that children begin learning after entering school. They believed that the key to learning is repeated practice, and a parent may say "hasta que se lo grabe" which means "until it is engraved or memorized" (p. 112). Consequently, reading demands usually are characterized by rote practice. Additionally, the concept of literacy for some of these Latinx parents is that reading-is mostly taught in school (Reese & Gallimore, 2000).

Boyce et al.'s (2004) study described a group of low-income Latina immigrant mothers, without intervention, sharing books with their children, and how those interactions are related to the children's total concept of vocabulary. Furthermore, the Latinx mothers enhanced their children's attention to the printed text, promoted conversation and interaction with their children about what was in the books, and slightly less often the mothers used more complex literacy strategies such as elaborating on their children's ideas as they shared the books. Also, Boyce's study evidenced that mothers who interacted with multiple ways of reading books had the children with the largest vocabularies. In addition, it was found that some Latina mothers engaged in dialogic reading strategies that support their children to become active learners during the activity of book-reading (Boyce et al., 2004). Similar to other researchers, Coba-Rodriguez and

Jarrett (2020) focused on dialogic reading in these Latinx families. Ultimately, in these studies, mothers' purposes of reading have been shown as to improve their children's attention to the printed text and to promote interaction and conversation with their children about the content in the books.

Access to Reading Materials

Several researchers have found that Latinx children do have access to and are exposed to books at home (Bridges et al., 2015; Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020), similar to the families in this study. In Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett's (2020) study, Latinx mothers provided supportive home learning and reading materials to their children (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). While mothers did expose children to books, several mothers reported having difficulty accessing books in Spanish (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). Even though the parents reported valuing reading, sometimes they had limited access to other reading materials, such as those available through technology, as well as limited access to libraries (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett hypothesized that mothers may not go to the library only because of language barriers (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). Latinx mothers reported using available resources such as a Spanish Bible to read, using their mobile phone to support translations into their primary language, or interacting with their children using alphabet and print texts (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). My study builds on this research, illustrating a wider range of print materials beyond Spanish language Bibles.

In Sawyer et al.'s (2018) study, mothers described the various styles they used when book-reading: they focused on the print in the book, such as spelling out words or cueing children to look at print when they read, and they used book-reading as an

opportunity to practice letter sounds and decoding via physically referencing the printed text to their child. In the books with only pictures, the mothers reported asking questions about the story or elements of the illustrations. Latinx mothers reported that other family members read and purchased books for the children, and children also had access to their siblings' school-related materials (Sawyer et al., 2018). Also, Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett (2020) indicated that the mothers displayed creativity and resourcefulness when selecting books, as well as by using strategies for reading even in English, such as using translators, reading from the Spanish Bible, and seeking help from family members who collaborate in fostering children's reading development.

Reading Practices

Boyce et al.'s (2004) study indicated that Latinx family members read to their children only once or twice a month, rarely went to the library, and had few books available. Similar to these studies, Hale et al. (2009) found that Latinx mothers did not typically read before bedtime; however, Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett (2020) found that several mothers reported reading to their children before bedtime. Reese and Gallimore (2000) focused on frequency and consistency in reading, and that frequent and consistent reading is not a common practice in low-income families (Reese & Gallimore, 2000); in contrast, Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett showed that all Latinx mothers in their study read to their children, and several mothers even reported reading before bed. For instance, the mothers read out loud, and encouraged their children to become active learners (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). I considered these claims during the research for this study, with the purpose of exploring and countering the deficit perspective and practices that

result from it. In the findings, I reveal more creative reading practices these mothers initiated with their young children.

Studies found that besides adults (e.g., mothers) engaging with literacy with young children at home, older siblings are part of the literacy experience for young children, as well. Older siblings share books with toddlers and show them “letters, numbers, and colors,” (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018, p. 10). Furthermore, Latina mothers reported that siblings were routinely involved in several toddler literacy activities such as pretend play; regularly sharing books with their younger siblings; and engaging in pre-academic activities, such as counting and practicing the alphabet (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). Older siblings who experience academic life in the United States bring reading materials home (Kibler et al., 2020) and more advanced textbooks, which enrich the literacy experiences at home.

Cycyk and Hammer (2018) and Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett (2020) have in common the claim that these families’ purpose of reading is to foster language and literacy development. Some Latina mothers also use Spanish books to support literacy. Even though there is research that claims that Latina mothers read to their children infrequently, rarely go to the library, and have few books (Boyce et al., 2004), alternatively other research indicates that Latina mothers read more frequently with the help of other family members (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020).

Social and Cultural Aspects of Early Literacy Development

Social Aspects

Literacy development occurs through socialization. Durand (2010) defined *social practices* as “[social relationships], children’s behavior, and attitudes, [feelings]

regarding [home] and school routines” (p. 217). *Educación* and *familismo* (Caldera & Lindsey, 2015; Cych & Hammer, 2018) are key concepts in exploring socialization in Latinx mothers’ homes. Studies have claimed that in Latinx immigrant homes might define education more broadly than educators do (Durand, 2010; Poza et al., 2014). For instance, *Educación* for Mexican families includes not only academic literacy (e.g., knowing the alphabet, shapes, and colors) experiences but also morality, proper behavior, good manners, and interpersonal aspects which are closely connected (Reese & Balzano, 1995). *Educación* is a concept that serves as a reference to understand how Latinx mothers educate their young children; the mothers incorporate values of respect for adults and personal development by giving advice regarding good behavior during the process of socialization. These forms of socializing are oral language literacy practices manifested in these forms of interactions (Reese & Balzano, 1995). Caldera and Lindsey (2015) and Cych and Hammer (2018) considered the concept of education that some Latinx families preserve, particularly when exploring literacy practices in these homes.

In Latinx homes, literacy experiences occurred through socialization, and primarily through interaction with mothers (Mace, 1998; Ortiz, 2004) who spend time at home with their children. Ortiz and Ordoñez-Jasis (2005) suggested that mothers were able to actively participate with their children despite the time constraints, the presence of other children in the home, and employment. Researchers have found that Latinx mothers put emphasis on social development, as they considered it beneficial for their children's learning and personal development (Cych & Hammer, 2018; Durand, 2010). These social interactions amongst family members contribute to developing language acquisition and life skills. Overall, Latinx family members play an important role in

educating toddlers, for instance, teaching them manners, social skills, proper behavior, and respect for authority (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018), which ultimately is intended to support their education and literacy development.

Cultural Aspects

Culture influences mothers' literacy experiences and therefore their practices with their young children. Consistent with previous studies, Galindo et al. (2019) found that Latinx mothers' literacy is influenced by cultural practices learned in their countries of origin. Delgado-Gaitan (1992) found that Latinx families promote oral literacies through telling folk tales and recounting family stories. Studies have revealed that Latinx mothers' cultural literacy activities encompass discussions about values and beliefs, religious discussions, and telling stories about Latinx culture (Billings, 2009; Caspe, 2009; Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003). Similar to this study, in more current studies, Galindo et al. (2019) and Miller (2020) found that Latinx mothers are culturally influenced by their religious routine in their literacy practices. For example, the mother and the child count from 1 to 10 when praying *Ave María* (Hail Mary) while reciting the Rosary, which later gives the opportunity for the child to repeat the numbers—not necessarily with a specific method or with the use of books, but through the use of a religious daily routine that enhances literacy. Culture can be an invisible factor that contributes to literacy development, especially in Latinx communities.

Latinx mothers value the prevalence of their traditions in their daily literacy activities. For instance, in Cycyk and Hammer's (2018) study, the majority of mothers stated that their young children go to Mexican cultural activities (e.g., celebrations of holidays such as *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe)

and for others, attending church in Spanish “was closely connected to their culture” (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). By going to church, Latinx families with their young children socialize with their community and practice their religion by verbalizing the prayers, experiencing the language spoken in the Mass, and reading the *versículos* (verses) during the *liturgia* (liturgy). In other social activities, Latinx mothers indicated that their toddlers cook Mexican foods with them, watch Latinx media, travel with them, participate in cultural activities, and help with chores (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018); those activities involve oral language. These are some of the daily activities of Latinx families that involve social and cultural practices and rely on and promote literacy.

Although there is still limited research on the influence of cultural and socialization aspects on practices of Latinx mothers as they promote early literacy in their young children (Galindo et al., 2019), it is clear that Latinx mothers support literacy at home with cultural influences and regardless of their education levels. They have been shown to demonstrate the use of multiple socialization approaches (Galindo et al., 2019) and cultural practices to foster literacy development.

Latina Mothers With Young Children: Immigration Context

Immigrant families, particularly Latinx families, encounter challenges every day arriving and living in the United States. These challenges, which include learning the English language, becoming acculturated, and experiencing isolation and fears that impact their daily functioning, are particularly prevalent among children and mothers (Chavez et al., 2012; Whitehead et al., 2020). Proficiency in English, some unauthorized documentation, and family separation are a few of the circumstances that some Latinx immigrant families experience upon arrival (Ayón et al., 2018; Campano et al., 2016;

Cervantes et al., 2013; Chavez et al., 2012; Compton-Lilly et al., 2019; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Martínez & Mesinas, 2019; Miano, 2011; Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Potowski & Rothman, 2011; Vieira, 2016; Whitehead et al., 2020; Winsler et al., 2014; Zarate et al., 2016).

A major element of stress for immigrant families is the use of the English language, which can impact parenting and literacy practices with their young children (Cervantes et al., 2013; Whitehead et al., 2020). Limited proficiency in English in immigrant families is a challenge and makes them vulnerable to oppression (Ayón et al., 2018; Cervantes et al., 2013; Chavez et al., 2012). Despite the circumstances of these immigrant families, research has indicated that Latina immigrant mothers value education, they are involved in literacy practices with their young children, and they preserve their Spanish language at home.

Cultural and Linguistic Values as Elements of Advocacy and Educational Support

Despite the challenges immigrants face in developing social networks, immigrant mothers and families advocate for their young children in their own ways (Winsler, 2014). For instance, Campano's (2016) study described how immigrant communities use literacy to advocate for their educational rights. Latinx mothers use their cultural values, including prayer, to support their family and advocate through *familismo*, *cariño*, *respeto*, and *consejos*. Consistent with previous research as it relates to Latinx community values, parents transmit their culture to young children.

Parents impart their cultural values to their young children, as they pertain to Latinx culture, and provide education through socialization, interaction, and advice (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). An important element that supports Latinx immigrant families in

copied with their new culture is the core value of *familismo* that enhances the importance of family unity, cohesion, and support (e.g., putting the family above oneself vs. individualism and independence) within the members of the family (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020; Whitehead et al., 2020). Another way that Latina mothers advocate for, support, and nurture their children, community, and other women is by communicating through giving *consejos* in circumstances of vulnerability because of the immigration context. Latina mothers use these core values as resources they embrace that support not only the literacy experiences of their young children but also their well-being in challenging circumstances due to immigration.

In many cases, immigrant women are put in vulnerable positions because of their immigration status. For instance, Cibils (2017a) found that some immigrant mothers engage, experience, and interact with their young children in different events that are “instances of educational motherwork” (Cibils, 2017a). Cibils’s (2017a) studies revealed the experiences and narratives of seven Mexican immigrant women with their young children in the Southwest of the United States, guided by a critical feminist theory: “The ideology of motherhood, characterized by the women’s agency within a context of vulnerability, manifests itself in various ways in the narratives, for instance: in *consejos* (words of wisdom) shared with their children” (Cibils, 2017a, p. 80), when they support other newly-arrived mothers, or when they advocate for their children in situations of injustice (Cibils, 2017a). Latina mothers tend to use *consejos* as a way of passing and conveying their “wisdom” to their children (Cibils, 2017a). Cibils mentioned *consejos*, which are not just regular advice but serves as moral lessons or guidance that parents use as an advocacy tool. These *consejos* are a fundamental part of parental involvement

(Cibils, 2017a). These core values and experiences of socialization reflect the advocacy processes used by families in times of adversity.

Another way that Latinx immigrant mothers impart support in challenging times is by emphasizing the concept of education. Education is related to *respect*. For instance, in “[Latinx] cultures, the concept of education itself is associated with *cariño* (care affection), and *respeto* (respect)” (Valdes, 1996), and therefore, “these cultural values are reflected in, and inform, [adults and family] language and literacy practices” (Campano et al., 2016). Educating with *cariño* and *respeto* seems like a basic principle, but in Latinx immigrant families these are fundamental concepts to integrate when fostering literacy—not just because these values are common practices in Latinx families when educating but also because they enhance the process of experiencing literacy.

It is important to understand the mothers’ lived experiences with consideration of many mothers’ challenges. Cultural values are important to be aware of when discussing the experiences of these Latina immigrant mothers with their young children, in order to understand ways of perceiving and experiencing literacy and language. Campano et al.’s (2016) and Cibils’s (2017a) studies serve to present the Latina immigrant mothers’ narratives about their challenges; moreover, they show the potential tools and powerful values they possess to enhance their literacy experiences with their young children. At the same time, these studies manifested the immigrant mothers’ adversities in a foreign country and reported about their creativity, resourcefulness, perseverance, cooperation, and cohesion as a community. Additionally, some of the immigrant mothers embraced and imparted to their children their values, language, and education, all of which impact in some degree their children’s literacy experiences in a new culture.

Summary of the Chapter

In sum, despite the circumstances of these immigrant families, research has indicated that they have cultural literacy practices that support the challenges that mothers and children face, and that these support language and literacy development. My study focused on the literacy practices of Latina immigrant mothers in rural areas. In addition, many of the studies have explored experiences occurring in educational settings, while few have given attention to home environments that involve researchers interacting with Latina immigrant mothers at their homes. To fill this gap in the research, my study focused on the in-home literacy experiences that precede those in formal educational environments. This study is intended to contribute to the knowledge of educators, social agencies, and non-profits who work with Latina mothers and their young children about the literacy practices that occur in these Latinx homes. If those who support their efforts have a better understanding of the literacy practices of these Latina mothers, they will more fully value their practices and build on the strengths of these practices. My hope is that this study's contribution to practitioners' appreciation of the value of at-home literacy practices will enhance practitioners' literacy practices in educational settings when working with young children. Additionally, acknowledging the Latina immigrant mothers' stories may lead to insights about their circumstances to help practitioners to be more empathetic toward and supportive of these families when needed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This qualitative, exploratory, single case study (Hesse-Biber, 2017) focused on understanding the literacy practices of Latina immigrant mothers with their young children in their homes in a rural area. In addition, I explored the Latina mothers' stories (*testimonios*), perceptions, values, beliefs, and experiences about early literacy. I selected a qualitative design because a qualitative approach offers a variety of perspectives to gain an understanding of social circumstance (Hesse-Biber, 2017). One type of a qualitative design, a case study, is described as an "empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon ('the case')" (Yin, 2018, p. 15). I intended to explore a phenomenon that can be comprehended by framing the questions in a certain way; according to Yin (2018), case studies are appropriate when asking "how," "why," "what," and "who" questions. Also, a case study involves a specific context; for this study, the context was the home setting (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). A case study was suitable for this study, as it enabled me to explore and answer questions about how Latina immigrant mothers define and enact understandings of literacy with their young children in their setting at home. The rationale for a single case study is that it goes along with the *common case* (Yin, 2018), in which the objective was to capture the circumstances and conditions in which literacy practices occur in Latina immigrant mothers' daily routine with their young children at home. These literacy experiences were examined from a sociocultural perspective. To make sense of the case, I drew on qualitative research methods (Check & Schutt, 2012) by conducting, online/Internet-

based interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Due to COVID-19, I went to their homes in person only one time to conduct an interview and observation. Remotely, the mothers shared artifacts (e.g., notes in writing, pictures, and/or photos) and used a webcam to show their real-life literacy experiences with their young children at home.

The single case that I explored is all the participants' experiences regarding literacy practices, the interactions of these mothers with their young children, and the shared time at home of these eight Latina women with their eight young children as part of this study. The system was the set of experiences that this diverse group of Latina women and their children shared, with the dimensions of being a mother of young children, speaking Spanish, being an immigrant, and living in an area of the Mid-Atlantic. The mothers, who were the central participants, met the inclusion criteria of Latina immigrant mothers with at least one young child from birth to age 4, Spanish speakers, and living in the mentioned rural area in the United States. This study's participants included children of these Latina mothers; the children's ages ranged from birth to 4 years old. There were two groups of participants: the mothers and the children, who were observed interacting together during the literacy experiences throughout the study. It was expected that for the purposes of this study that the Latina mothers' actions would be the main representation of literacy practices; however, these young children may have had their own ways of showing interactions during the observations, such as making sounds, talking, or singing. I reported each child's interactions, actions, language, and any activity relevant to early literacy, and this information was included in the data collection. The role of the child in this space served to reflect interactions with the mother and early literacy experiences occurring at home; it was part of the observations and

included in the data analysis.

This qualitative single case study was bounded temporally and spatially. Time relates to the duration of this study, which was conducted during fall and winter 2021–2022, which the young child was between the ages of birth and 4 years. The case study was bounded with eight mothers and their children in a rural area of the Mid-Atlantic in the United States.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, in my research study, I have a central research question and a supplementary question. The central research question is: How do Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area experience literacy at home with their young children from birth to age 4? My supplementary question is: What are the Latina mothers' stories (*testimonios*), perceptions, values, and beliefs about early literacy?

In the following sections, I will describe and explain in detail my data collection process for this study and positionality. In the final sections of this chapter, I describe the plan for data analysis and design.

Researcher Positionality

It is essential to be aware of one's positionality, particularly in relation to aspects of the study that may adversely influence the research—in the case of this study, factors such as immigration and biases about cultures. I have personal and professional reasons for approaching this study in the manner described. Personally, I have a particular interest in and identify with the literacy practices of Latina mothers and their young children because (a) I am a mother of two young children, and so I can empathize with the impactful role that mothers play in the developing literate lives of young children; (b) I have been living abroad for many years now and recognize that my primary/native

language, or my identity as a non-native English speaker/bilingual speaker, greatly impacts my daily life; and (c) in my professional positions in the United States, I have always been called upon to work with bilingual students and Spanish-speakers and their families, and therefore I have become aware of the challenges and strengths that these children and families bring into the educational setting. These experiences have led me to value—both personally and professionally—the perspectives of these Latina mothers, so I avoided discussing their experiences from a deficit perspective. Using a sociocultural approach, I explored and interpreted all actions related to early literacy practices from a social perspective, valuing the daily activities in the mothers’ homes with their young children; in other words, I value their funds of knowledge.

Within a broader sociocultural context, I am aware that the label of “immigrant,” can have several connotations that are similar in the sense of traveling to a foreign country. However, it is important to consider that not everyone has the fortune to emigrate under comfortable circumstances. While the study’s mothers and I share many common characteristics and experiences, our perspectives differ in significant ways. While I have been fortunate to have my family’s support as I have pursued my own education and career, I have always been interested in other women’s social stories, in their background history, and in their experiences about how they acquire education and how they share their knowledge to their children. I have always admired single or married mothers that live with challenging financial circumstances and still find a way to educate themselves and their children—I realized that this was the case for most of my participants. One of my challenges in understanding first-hand the mothers’ struggles is my lack of experience in knowing how it is to travel under challenging circumstances. I

have never experienced being forced to leave my hometown with no other option than to leave, to live in freedom, to practice my religion freely, to escape poverty or oppression, or to make a better life for myself and my children. In contrast, many of the mothers have had these experiences. I came to the United States to enhance my education and career, with my own desire to travel abroad, which is part of my passion to live among people of other cultures, and I made this transition with the support of my family. These Latina mothers, however, left their homes without any assurance that they would be able to see their families again.

With my vast experience in talking with women during my several years in United States, I have had the opportunity to listen to the challenging stories of how and why Latina mothers travel to the United States. These mothers have faced difficulties that have led them to emigrate from their home countries because of the need to find a safe place, and education for their child. These experiences shaped them through their memories, their identities, and their ways of educating their children. In some cases These Latina mothers are escaping from poverty, lack of education, lack of work, and lack of mobility (Ayón et al., 2018; Cornejo-Villavicencio, 2021; Vieira, 2016). For instance, Winsler et al., (2014) discussed about immigrant families especially those who are similar to disadvantaged U.S. minority groups, acculturation, adapting to a new culture may not always be a positive experience, it depends on the time of the arrival and of all the mother's previous experiences. Then, when they are in the United States, some Latinx immigrants live in enclosed ethnic communities in their "barrios" towns, which may lead to social isolation and exclusion and prevent them from upward social mobility (Ayón et al., 2018). Some Latinx immigrant mothers in different circumstances face the

experiences of leaving the home country under duress (Torres, 2021; Wolf, 2020), which for some can involve crossing borders, walking long distances with a child in their arms, traveling in the back of a truck for several hours, paying extra money to acquire other transportation for the next part of the journey to the United States, sleeping in the same room with strangers, saving money for the trip, having to borrow diapers from other mothers along the way, and most of the time not being able to talk with anybody due to safety issues. I have not only read about these experiences in the news; rather, these are real details of the story of one of the participants, which for me is unforgettable.

It is not possible for me to distance myself from the human vulnerability of these mothers with young children in a foreign country. In conducting this research, I worked with a population that faced and was continuing to face challenging life circumstances, and I confronted ethical questions about assisting them in multiple ways such as bringing materials and providing information about the community, English classes, literacy resources, and community services (e.g., library services and agency that offers free books). I cared about these participants because it is my nature, and furthermore, we share similar cultures. I considered that as a researcher I was the primary instrument during all the data analysis. I experienced emotions about the mothers' stories, beliefs, and values, and I felt connections to the participants as I was conducting the study. I acknowledge that this sensitive research encompassed an emotional dimension of care and vulnerability; therefore, I assisted these participants, if necessary, in answering questions when they had them.

Notably, I approached this study as a researcher who is seriously devoted to working with a bilingual, immigrant population to explore, and later evidence, all the

strengths they have and how they impart their knowledge to their young children. This desire to explore the experiences of immigrant families is motivated by my innumerable experiences with Spanish-speaking members of the Latina community—with bilingual students and their families, Spanish speakers. As a researcher, I was aware that I would navigate through circumstances in which I might not agree with the participants regarding language. However, I respect their bilingual practices, as I am a Spanish speaker with a great deal of experience with bilingual students and Spanish speakers. I have had the opportunity to see the value in maintaining their primary language at home with their young children. At the same time, I committed to respecting if the mothers were to consider it not important to maintain the language, and if they wanted their children to learn English. I was aware that I would potentially need to navigate through that conflict of differing with the mother on her values and beliefs. I understand that my beliefs about biliteracy and bilingualism are important, as they influenced my study. As Latina mother, I consider that education is a priority for me and my young children; my experiences have informed my desire to acknowledge and respect these participants and their literacy practices because they are vital in the process of experiencing literacy.

With that said, I came to this research with experiences with and beliefs about bilingual and immigrant populations not only in my empirical and methodological approach to experiences of immigration, but also in how I interpret the data. I was aware of these biases and committed to trying to mitigate them and maintain an open mind during data collection and analysis so that I could be as objective as possible and contribute to the field of education and diversity, building upon the scholarship of others.

Research Setting

This research took place in a rural area in the Mid-Atlantic region during fall and winter 2021–2022. The term *rural* was used in terms of the population and economy. In the last 20 years, the focal community of this study has undergone significant changes in population. Many Latinx immigrants who speak Spanish first arrived in the early 1990s, staying year-round while performing jobs in the poultry-processing industry (State history archive, 2019). The area has between 3.5% and 4.4% Hispanic population (State history archive, 2019). The economy is predominantly guided by three sectors: farming, fishing, and tourism. Some of the economic activities relate to vegetable and grain farming, chicken farms, and coastal tourism in the area (State history archive, 2019). As these Latina mothers have experienced living in a rural area with their young children, I sought to explore their perspectives about literacy considering the area in which they live.

All the participants in this study lived in a rural location, and this influenced their ability to access places of literacy and materials. With that said, some participants lived closer to places of literacy such as libraries, and some had more access to transportation. Some participants were better positioned to access to these places of literacy because of their location, meaning that they could more easily acquired more literacy resources to bring literacy home. These rural areas had small towns and small cities—many with disconnected migrant work camps—and my participants lived in those places.

The Latina mothers and their young children were at their home when I conducted the process of data collection virtually (James & Busher, 2016). Each mother with her young child had access to a digital device (e.g., computer or cellphone) with a webcam, and we used the platform Zoom that allowed video and audio recording, with the

WhatsApp encrypted platform as a backup, as needed. We also used an audio digital recorder and cellphone (iPhone) that are managed with encryption. The Zoom platform protected the data, as its communications were established using encryption.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the study was facilitated virtually, and it was my intent to create a scene that emulated a face-to-face conversation using this online platform. Some mothers were still following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines to maintain social distance for family members who were not yet vaccinated, and these mothers had young children who, because of their age, were not eligible for a vaccine as of fall and winter 2021-2022. Therefore, the best option to conduct this research study was using technology that helped me to enter their homes virtually and live their literacy experiences virtually by talking and observing, with the collaboration of the Latina mothers and their young children. Additionally, the use of technology for virtual data collection allowed flexibility in the scheduling of data collection.

Participants

This qualitative research study was conducted with the collaboration of Latina immigrant mothers with their young children, and these mothers self-identified as Latina immigrants living in a rural area. In addition to the Latina mothers, the children of ages birth to 4 years old were participants in this study. What follows is a description of the participants and participant selection methods.

Participant Inclusion Criteria

As mentioned, the inclusion criterion for this study were that the immigrant mothers who have a young child of ages birth to 4 years old, self-identify as Latina,

immigrants, Spanish speakers as their L1 (Language mainly used, Spanish), and living in a rural area; the families were represented by the mothers with their young children. The inclusion criterion for the child was that they be from a specific age range of birth to 4 years old; this is important because I explored the literacy experiences when the young children were still immersed in their home environment, which I was able to observe, and not yet in an educational setting where the children may be exposed to several educational inputs, such as formal exposure to English.

Regarding the mothers, these Latina women had in common that all of them spoke Spanish; in addition, four mothers spoke indigenous languages (i.e., Micaela, Mam; Renata, Aguacateco and Quiché; Olga, Mam; and Andrea, Quiché). These Latina mothers had similar experiences as immigrants (e.g., managing the transition to a new language), they were from different countries in Latin America (i.e., Guatemala, Perú, or México), and their ages range from 25 to 45 years old. For the purposes of this study, I am defining *immigrants* as those having arrived in the United States in the last 20 years. I was interested in these Latina immigrant mothers because they speak Spanish, and I was able to learn more about their literacy activities with their young child that happen in Spanish that may be different from those conducted in other languages. The participants may trust Spanish speakers more readily than others that can be considered outsiders who may require translators because they do not speak Spanish, so my status as an L1 Spanish speaker facilitated my data collection.

The group size of eight Latina mothers with their young children was necessary to facilitate conducting a thorough case study that allowed me to gather thick, rich, specific data that can be obtained with the participation of this small number of participants

(Hesse-Biber, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was able to get to know them better compared to having a larger group with less opportunities to talk with them.

Regarding the children, it is important to acknowledge that the age of the child was one of the main focuses of my attention because at these specific ages the children are not immersed in an education setting in which they can have multiple inputs and exposure regarding language, reading, writing, and literacy activities. The role of the children was important because the children were not involved in formal academic instruction, and I observed their interactions with their mothers. The mother was the first input and the primary figure that created literacy experiences at home, which was the child's main environment for literacy experiences. The data were collected over a period of 5 months, and the ages indicated in the document were the ages of the children at the conclusion of data collection.

Participant Selection

Participant selection is a central aspect of this study. Regarding the children, the young children were selected only based on their age and not other characteristics. The child was the biological child living in the house with the mother, or the mother had to be the legal guardian of the child. The mother chose the schedule to manage the time of observations and only when the young child was present.

The option selected for recruitment was snowball sampling, and it was successful. Snowball sampling is usually used when potential participants are challenging to find (Check & Schutt, 2012), and it helps the researcher to identify cases of interest from people who know other people (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Two Latina immigrant mothers from the pilot project in 2019 collaborated in the process of snowballing. The two pilot

study mothers contacted Latina immigrant mothers of young children that they considered to be potential participants. They shared with me the potential participants' phone numbers (with their permission), and I called them. During the process of recruitment, I considered that the mothers may be hesitant to participate because of their description of *immigrant*, or because they do not speak English, or because they doubted that their participation would benefit them or their child. Therefore, I explained in detail to the mothers about this research project and conveyed that it was for academic purposes.

Regarding establishing a relationship with each participant, I emphasized that participation was voluntary. To build trust, when I met the potential participants, I provided an informational letter in Spanish and in English to explain the study. The mothers were informed that their identities and their children's identities would be protected by use of pseudonyms, and that their names and specific locations would not be made public. It was important to build mutual trust with the participants by being honest and clear (Miles et al., 2014). I built trust with my participants by explaining explicitly my role as a researcher, the project, member validation, and confidentiality. I received all signed consent forms, and verbal assent for young children. The participants were assured that their willingness to participate would be respected and the information they provided would be used carefully and confidentially.

Participants' Profiles

I present the profiles of Latina immigrant mothers in this chapter to provide information that the participants shared during the initial conversation when I gathered their background information and during their *testimonios*. The *testimonio* approach

involves the participant sharing personal stories; this research tool has been used by previous researchers (Beverley, 2004; Perez, 2009), in whose studies “participants were prompted to share their experiences of struggle, survival, and resistance” (Perez, 2009, p. 379). In this way, the Latina mothers’ profiles can be visualized and kept in mind when reading this study. Table 1 includes participant demographic information.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Mother's name, age, and country of origin	Child's name, gender, age range (5 months of data collection)	Time in United States	Mother's last grade in school in country of origin
Renata 36 years Guatemala	Reni Female 8 months to 1 year, 1 month	5 years	Grade 9
Ana 38 years México	Juanito Male 11 months to 1 year, 4 months	20 years	Grade 10
Andrea 36 years Guatemala	Andy Male 1 year, 1 month to 1 year, 6 months	13 years	Grade 9
Micaela 38 years Guatemala	Mica Female 1 year, 2 months to 1 year, 7 months	16 years	Grade 6
Olga 25 years Guatemala	Oliver Male 2 years, 1 month to 2 years, 5 months	3 years	Grade 9
Flor 37 years Perú	Caro Female 3 years 1 month 3 years, 6 months	20 years	Grade 12
Martha 38 years Guatemala	Martin Male 3 years, 2 months to 3 years, 7 months	17 years	No school Self-educated to read and write
Rosa 44 years México	Rober Male 3 years, 8 months to 4 years, 1 month	18 years	Grade 6

Renata

Renata, a 36-year-old woman, is from Guatemala. Renata lived with her husband and their two children. Her younger child, a female, was Reni (1 year, 1 month).³ She completed formal education until ninth grade in high school. Renata came to the United States with her husband around 5 years ago for safety and economic reasons. Renata felt that the transition to United States was challenging. However, it was more challenging to live in Guatemala. She received several threats from gangs saying that they were going to take away her older daughter. To be safe, the family decided to travel to the United States. She used to work in a plant nursery. Spanish was spoken commonly at home, and sometimes they used some words in English because of the schooling of the older child. Renata used oral language and interacted with Reni in Spanish, and sometimes in the Aguacateco/Quiche language by reading and telling stories about family, respect, and religion. Renata emphasized that learning Aguacateco helped them understand their heritage and remember where they come from. Renata enjoyed taking care of Reni during the day. She played with Reni using her materials such as books, musical videos, and toys. She went to the library with her daughters to look for books in Spanish. Renata expected that when Reni grows up, she will not have difficulty finding a good job compared to Renata; to support her children's future success, she always talked to both children about the importance of studying hard and getting good grades in the future. During the journey to the United States, she promised herself that she would do everything for her children to study, to be someone with value (an expression of being considered important in life), and her goal was to learn English. One of her common

³ The data were collected over a period of 5 months, and the ages indicated in the text are the ages of the children at the conclusion of data collection.

activities was to read about health and about Jesus' life, and then comparing what she read to her family's daily lives.

Ana

Ana, a 38-year-old woman, is from México. Her family encompassed her partner and four children. Her youngest child, a male, was Juanito (1 year, 1 month). She came to the United States following her husband, who came for economic reasons 18 years ago. Ana felt that the transition to the United States was challenging. Ana spent time at home taking care of Juanito and the household. Spanish was spoken commonly at home, but the family often included vocabulary in English because the older children speak English in school. Ana loved cooking a variety of food, and her favorite dish was *Mole Mexicano*. She considered herself a good cook, dedicated mother, and disciplined in her religious practices. Also, Ana enjoyed preparing her devotional messages for her religious community. She interacted with Juanito by talking about bible passages, devotionals, and family stories. Ana described Juanito as a curious child who uses his hands to explore everything around the home—from textures and food to books and toys. She considered education and literacy important. Ana encouraged her family's literacy in every stage of their lives by her involvement in literacy-based activities at home.

Andrea

Andrea, a 36-year-old woman, is from Guatemala. Her family encompassed her husband, Andrea, and three children. Her youngest child was Andy, a male (1 year, 6 months). Spanish was spoken commonly at home, sometimes mixed with English. Andrea only attended school until ninth grade due to lack of resources. Andrea came to the United States 13 years ago for education for her children, work, economic reasons,

and for a better life. She felt that the transition to United States was difficult. During the journey to the United States, she encountered several challenges, such as traveling long distances for hours without food. In the United States Andrea has worked in restaurants, such as in a bakery and a Mexican restaurant. Andrea spoke at home in Quiché language/dialect, and she believed that Andy understood some Quiché. Andrea enjoyed telling stories about the family and school when she was young. One of the stories that she narrated to Andy was about how she had to walk to school every day without public transportation, and that is why Andrea emphasized education. She encouraged Andy to speak with their relatives virtually, to maintain Spanish communication with their relatives and appreciate their roots. She was proud that if she learned English, she would be trilingual. Andrea described herself as a dedicated mother who loves to cook—that is one of her most valued skills. She did not write much, but she expected her children learn to write their names. Even though she was cautious with them while cooking since they were little, she always explained aloud the ingredients that she used to prepare traditional Guatemalan food. Andrea encouraged her children to value and respect all that they had in the United States related to education.

Micaela

Micaela, a 38-year-old woman, is from Guatemala. Her youngest child is a female, Mica (one year). Micaela attended school until sixth grade, and she was not able to continue to high school due to financial problems and the long distance between her home and school. She loved going to school, and her dream was to be a doctor, but unfortunately her parents got divorced and her formal education was discontinued. She used to love to read books when she was young. She began to work at the age of 10

years. Micaela explained that in her country of origin she was not able to have savings even working several hours each day, and she described living day to day financially. Micaela described the situation by explaining that if she earned enough money to buy bread today, she would not have enough money to buy tortilla tomorrow, and it was never possible to have both. She came to the United States by herself around 20 years ago for economic and educational reasons. Micaela desired that her children continue their education, which she could not afford for herself, and she was determined to support them in any way possible to accomplish this. Micaela and her partner worked in an Italian restaurant. Micaela described herself as a cook, and the main dish that she prepared was fried steak, which is traditional in Guatemala. Micaela's wish was to open a small supermarket with Latin products. Spanish is spoken commonly at home, but she sometimes said some English words that she learned at work. Micaela also spoke a dialect called Maya. She considered it important to know more English because of the schooling of the older children and so the children will not face difficulties interacting in the main language spoken in the United States. Micaela used to attend programs at the library; however, at the time of the data collection for this study, she was not attending due to the pandemic. Also, she wanted to go to the library more often, but she thought there were no books in Spanish, and she was hesitant to ask in English for information. Spanish was important for Micaela, as she would like for Mica to be able to communicate with others in the community. Micaela also connected education with behavior (gentleness) and values (respect). She expected Mica's teachers in the future to be patient and respectful with the students from other countries and speak another language.

Olga

Olga, a 25-year-old woman, is from Guatemala. Olga's family encompassed her husband, Olga, and two children. Her younger child, a male, is Oliver (2 years, 5 months). At the time of the data collection, Olga was also pregnant with a baby girl, due March 2022. Olga completed school until eighth grade. The reasons that she came to the United States were to obtain an education for her children, to have better economic opportunities, and to have a better future compared to that in her home country. In her country, she experienced a lot of risk, and she always lived in fear of being robbed or threatened. Olga lived in the United States for around 3 years. She felt that the transition to United States was difficult. She missed her family whom she left without the option to see them again. Olga encouraged Oliver to maintain the connection with his family members who lived in their country of origin. One of the hardest parts about leaving her home country for Olga was losing her grandfather, with whom she spent her childhood, without being able to say goodbye. Olga talked about her grandfather with Oliver, and she explained that grandparents bring wisdom and advice (*consejos*). Olga emphasized that is different to talk over long distances and not having relatives closer to support Oliver, but she believed that it was her responsibility to maintain those relationships so Oliver will know that he has a family that cares about him. Olga said that she tells the stories of her immigration to her children to provide a lesson and make them appreciate and value the effort it took to attain their education. Spanish was spoken commonly at home, but the family sometimes used vocabulary in English because of the schooling of the older child. Olga also used the Maya language/dialect with family members. Olga considered it important to learn English, even though she said that English was not easy

to learn. Olga worked part time in an Italian restaurant, and her specialty was making pizzas. Olga's wish was to be a midwife; however, she could not accomplish that due to other responsibilities. Olga liked to read, and she read on her cellphone to learn about recipes, health, and entertainment. Her main wish for her son was that he will complete his studies and graduate. Olga believed that mothers from Guatemala educate their children to go to school and be responsible and obedient to their teachers.

Flor

Flor, a 37-year-old woman, is from Perú. Her family encompassed her husband, Flor, and their three children. Her youngest child was Caro (female, 3 years, 6 months). Flor assisted her husband in his job repairing cars. Spanish was spoken commonly at home, but the family often mixed in English because of the schooling of the older children. Flor finished high school. She used to work in Perú as a secretary, and then she came to the United States with her husband 20 years ago for economic reasons. In the United States, she worked in a cleaning company that specializes in disasters like fires and floods. Also, she worked in hotels, babysitting, and restaurants. Since she was in school, Flor loved art, and she considered herself creative, especially with her hands, as she sews and paints. Also, Flor enjoyed decorating with balloons and crepe paper for all types of events. She played constantly with Caro; the materials she used at home were books, toys, paper, pencil, and colors. Her priorities were educating Caro to respect others, to believe in God, and to have strong values. Flor often shared about her traditions in Perú with her daughter, such as traditional food, ways of dressing, and sharing in the community. Flor enjoyed reading story books about princesses, looking at family photo albums, and telling stories about the holidays with the family. Flor was excited that Caro

was learning to write her name. Flor encouraged Caro to speak with her grandmother virtually as a routine to maintain the connection with her relatives and to use Spanish fluently. Flor and Caro talked about what Caro would like to be when she grows up, and Caro wanted to be a doctor. Flor encouraged her in all that she did to help her to believe that everything is possible, and to remind her that she has to study. Flor expected her daughter to pursue higher education than she herself has pursued.

Martha

Martha, a 38-year-old woman, is from Guatemala. Her family encompassed her husband, Martha, and four children. Her youngest child, a male, was Martin (3 years, 7 months). Martha's parents did not attend school, and they passed away when she was young. Martha did not attend school, but she learned to read and write. She was responsible for her younger siblings, especially for one that has special needs. Martha came to the United States with her brother (with special needs) and daughter (then 3 years old) 17 years ago for economic reasons and for education. Her journey to the United States took 1 month, and it included several challenges. Martha felt that the transition to the United States was difficult because she had to learn the basics in English and adapt to a new culture. However, she considered that the education in United States is good and attainable, and she has received significant support for her brother and children in school. Spanish was spoken commonly at home, but the family often mixed in English because of the schooling of the older children. Martha enjoyed cooking and learning English. She dedicated most of her time to Martin. She was responsible for taking Martin to the doctor, buying all his clothes, and cooking for him. She dedicated most of the time to playing with, teaching, and reading to Martin at home. One of her

favorite activities was talking and teaching her child about the values associated with God, being obedient as God would like us to behave on Earth. Martha interacted with Martin about food and traditional dishes in Guatemala such as *pollo al pipián*; she talked to him in Spanish, explained that the *pipián* is a sauce that included ground pumpkin seeds. Martha described Martin as alert and curious, asking a lot of questions all day. She considered learning Spanish important; however, she wanted Martin to learn English, too, to adapt to his environment in school. Martha tried to self-educate in English because of her previous jobs. Martha believed that coming to United States, even with all the challenges during the journey, has been worth it so her children will have a better education than she did.

Rosa

Rosa, a 44-year-old woman, is from México. Her family encompassed Rosa, her partner, and her two children. Her younger child, a male, is Rober (3 years old). While in México, Rosa worked in agriculture, taking care of animals (e.g., cows, sheep, and goats). She attended school to sixth grade in México. She did not consider going back to school to finish high school; however, she believed that education was important for her children and expected them to complete high school. She arrived alone in the United States 20 years ago. She came to the United States for economic reasons. She felt that the transition to United States was difficult, and she missed her family. Rosa considered it was important to learn English, at least the basics. Rosa worked part time in a nursery, working with plants. Rosa described herself as an expert in a nursery planting and harvesting. Rosa loved nature and taking care of plants; she knew how to sow and harvest and how to conserve the plants and manage chemicals in the nursery planting and

harvesting business. All of these topics are knowledge that Rosa shared with Rober. She relied on her 12-year-old daughter for English language purposes and playing with Rober. Rosa spent time at home taking care of Rober and the household. Spanish was spoken commonly at home, but the family often included some vocabulary in English. Rosa's daily routine involved playing with Rober with toys or any materials at home. She considered it pivotal to educate Rober to respect elders and other members of the community by having manners and speaking Spanish correctly. Rober communicated in Spanish with his uncle virtually. Rosa described Rober as an active boy who loved dinosaurs, superheroes, movies, and cars. She described them as inseparable: they did everything together. Rosa educated Rober to study hard in the future. She considered that the work in the agriculture field is harder than her children think. Therefore, she believed that they must study hard, go to school, and maintain a career when they grow up.

Data Collection

With the purpose of exploring the literacy experiences in this group of Latina immigrant mothers with their young children in their homes living in a rural area using the best practices for this qualitative single case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I sought to include multiple data sources to create a truthful representation of the case to be studied and to represent the complexity and uniqueness of the whole context. The instruments for data collection included two semi-structured interviews, one *testimonio*, four observations, one log of a daily schedule (24 hours), and multiple artifacts (e.g., notes, drawings, photos, and pictures). Virtual data collection allowed the mothers to have time flexibility to share with me the home literacy practices on multiple occasions, to select them at any time of preference, and to feel comfortable using technology,

particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews and observations using multiple forms of technology, such as the telephone or the computer and the Internet, are increasingly applied (James & Busher, 2012) and convenient in qualitative case studies, providing more opportunities to talk with participants who are geographically distant from the researcher, or who are in unsafe places or circumstances (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Having briefly explained the process of data collection and the conveniences of using technology, I will present the data collection instruments: (a) interviews, (b) *testimonios*, (c) observations, and (d) artifacts. Table 2 shows the data sources.

Table 2*Data Sources*

Data source	Description and rationale
Initial interview	1 virtual semi-structured interview, approximately 60 minutes
	Audio recorded using a digital recording device
	Background information, age, racial and ethnic identity, country of origin, marital status, and preferred language spoken at home with her children
	Literacy activities and materials at home; definition of literacy, purposes of reading, types of reading, types of books, printed material
Second interview	1 virtual semi-structured interview, approximately 60 minutes
	Audio recorded using a digital recording device
	Topics covered: interactions and bilingual practices, literacy practices in Latinx immigrant homes, oral language and reading, play, print materials, beliefs and values about early literacy
<i>Testimonio</i>	1 conversation with the mother, using a <i>testimonio</i> approach (Beverley, 2004), approximately 60 minutes
	Audio recorded
	Main question “What brought you here to the United States?”
	Participant shared personal stories
	Uninterrupted narrative of participant’s immigration experiences, and literacy experiences, education, values, and beliefs
Observations	3 virtual, 1 in-person, approximately 60 minutes
	Virtual observations conducted using webcam, notes, audio, and video clips recordings
	Mothers’ and children’s literacy activities in daily activities in their home interacting in a free activity
	Observations supplemented the data collected, and corroborated the interviews
Artifacts	Environmental artifacts: photos, artwork, posters, books, religious notes
	Mother artifacts: biblical annotations, handwritten notes, letters, and arts and crafts
	Child-focused artifacts: photos of various types of books, song lyrics, nursery rhymes, photo albums, posters, laminated shapes, alphabet magnets, play toys, cooking materials, art, and crafts
	Mother and child schedule log/routine and optional explanatory video clip: One chart in which the mother described her daily activities that evidenced the routine of a day

Note. All data were collected in Spanish. Virtual data collection was conducted using the Zoom or

WhatsApp platforms. Data were collected during fall and winter 2021–2022.

Interviews

I conducted two virtual semi-structured interviews during the fall and winter 2021–2022. These semi-structured interviews were virtual via web-based technology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were based on an adapted interview protocol from Goodman and Owocki (2002) and Purcell-Gates (2007; Appendix A). The adapted semi-structured interview protocols were designed to address questions that were suitable for the Latina immigrant mothers, participants in this study. According to Sawyer et al. (2018), semi-structured interviews are appropriate for identifying literacy practices such as provision of educational materials, engagement with books, focus on print, and implicit language opportunities. The questions in these interviews were appropriate because they address questions related to literacy experiences occurring at home and targeting the Latina mothers with their young child at home.

In these protocols were included questions related to demographic information of the mothers with their young child, including age, racial and ethnic identity, country of origin, and languages spoken at home. All the questions in the protocol were translated into Spanish. In this this protocol, how the Latina mother defined the household and literacy practices was addressed. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using audio recording using a digital recording device (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Initial Interview

The initial interview focused on background information; literacy activities and materials at home; and topics related to definition of literacy, purposes of reading, types of reading, types of books, printed material, use of technology, and types of writing. We

started with a conversation about the mother's background information, including demographic information such as age, racial and ethnic identity, country of origin, marital status, and preferred language spoken at home with her children (Spanish or English). (See Appendix A.) We discussed how she defines the household: who lives at home with her, including young children, as well as her current living circumstances. Then, we continued talking about literacy experiences occurring in the mother's home with her young child in a rural area; use of language, reading, and writing practices; use of technology related to literacy; and finally the types of print materials at home to foster early literacy (Kassow, 2006). This information helped me to address the research question of how Latina mothers with young children at home define their households and experience literacy in a rural area.

This initial conversation with the Latina mother established certain ways of communication between the participant and the researcher—for instance, the use of the word *usted* or *tú*, which both mean “you,” to convey the formality of a relationship. The word *tú* is less formal than *usted*. It is common knowledge that a speaker uses *tú* when talking to someone of the same age, the same rank, or the same educational level. *Usted* signifies a more respectful way of talking to someone, such as a new acquaintance. I modified for each participant certain verbal expressions or vocabulary at certain moments, in case I used terms in Spanish that are used differently in the participant's country. After establishing our way of communicating, we continued with the conversation.

In qualitative research, it is important to consider the quality of relationship between the participants and the researcher (Miles et al., 2014). It was expected that this

initial conversation would allow me to build rapport that would lead to getting to know the participant (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview allowed me to sympathetically comprehend the significance of things as the participant viewed them (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), while establishing a positive relationship. It was important that in this relationship, the mother would feel comfortable sharing her personal information that involved her young child, and that required trust. This initial conversation provided me with an opportunity to learn how the mothers describe their literacy experiences at home; in the next interview, the participants had the opportunity to articulate their reasons for their beliefs and values related to literacy (Hammer et al., 2007).

Second Interview

The second interview focused on the language, experiences, and play interactions including use of Spanish or English at home, language development, use of materials, child's favorite activities, and types of books according to the child's age. (See Appendix A.) In this interview the mother had the opportunity to articulate her literacy experiences, values, and beliefs related to literacy.

Overall, these interviews were intended to enable me to (a) examine the interactions and bilingual practices at home; (b) understand the literacy practices in these Latinx immigrant homes; (c) describe types of literacy experiences regarding oral language and reading; (d) explore emergent literacy activities that may foster literacy development, such as play; (d) examine the literacy print materials and the use of multimodal factors to promote literacy; and (e) understand their beliefs and values about literacy at an early age. (See Appendix A.) At the end of this interview, I asked the mothers any follow-up questions from this or the previous interview. I attended to any

patterns I saw developing in the participants' responses. To prepare for the following steps of data collection, I mentioned to the mothers the *testimonio* (sharing a personal story) and virtual observation that would be conducted in the next virtual meetings.

Testimonios

After two semi-structured interviews, I used *testimonio* as a research tool. I had a conversation with the mother, using a *testimonio* approach (Beverley, 2004), which involves the participant sharing personal stories. The approach of the *testimonio* process (Beverley, 2004) stems from the question "What brought you here to the United States?" (Appendix C) and continues as an uninterrupted narrative of the participant's immigration experiences. Through the process of *testimonio*, the participant was not interrupted with pre-planned questions during their narration of events regarding immigration. All the participants were invited to give their *testimonios*. *Testimonios* were audio recorded and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The *testimonio* was in Spanish. The Latina immigrant mothers did not need to prepare in any way in advance.

The purpose of using *testimonios* in this study was to collect background information regarding the mothers' education, immigration, literacy experiences, values, beliefs, and stories. Perez (2009) described *testimonio* as a methodological approach in which the "participants were prompted to share their experiences of struggle, survival, and resistance within the context of oppressive institutional structures, events, and experiences" (p. 379). Throughout the *testimonios*, the mothers narrated their stories regarding their sociocultural experiences with literacy. This act of narrating creates an opportunity for deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and allowed me to reflect on and obtain insights on those experiences. This process generated rich data

about the sociocultural conditions, context, environment, circumstances, and vulnerability of their lives in their home country as well in the United States. These data served to give me insight into the participants' values and beliefs regarding literacy in general.

Also, I took certain precautions that the child would not be present (or, if present, distracted by other activity during the *testimonio*). It was preferable that the child not be present, so the mothers would have privacy if the stories were to become emotional and challenging. As the researcher, it was not my intent to cause any stress to the mother. However, I understand the act of *testimonio* can bring about an emotional and tense situation. When a participant displays these emotions through their narration, it is important to demonstrate deep listening (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) by not interrupting and by giving them the opportunity to develop their story.

Observations

The three virtual observations and one-in person observation allowed me to see how the mothers and children enacted literacy activities in their home. In qualitative research, researchers often collect data in the field. In this case, I was not bringing the participants to a lab (a contrived situation), nor was I sending out instruments for individuals to complete, such as survey research. Instead, I observed the mothers' and children's literacy activities in situations as close as possible to their daily activities in their home setting (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020), interacting in a free activity that may illustrate their regular routine, and I observed through the webcam.

The reason for conducting these four observations was that they supplemented the data collected, and sometimes corroborated the interviews (Check & Schutt, 2012). The use of the observation data supported the examination of these experiences at home,

strengthened the research process considerably, and increased the validity of the study (Check & Schutt, 2012). I recorded data using notes, audio, and video recordings. I scheduled a convenient time with the mothers to conduct these observations. The observations were planned to last approximately 60 minutes. The virtual observations were via web-based technology (Check & Schutt, 2012), using the Zoom platform or WhatsApp platforms.

The observation protocol was based on an adapted observation protocol (Jack, 2018; Appendix D). Jack's (2018) protocol addresses what types of literacy interactions and activities are occurring in the day-to-day lives of the participants. I modified the protocol by adding more possible scenarios of what the researcher may observe. Also, I expanded the information in this protocol to focus on the mother and child literacy interactions, considering that the child is from birth to 4 years old. In my protocol I included the purposes that these observations aim for, such as (a) to observe and understand the Latina mother and her young child's interaction; (b) to describe the setting: home; (c) to describe the literacy experiences occurring in the participant's home with her young child; (d) to observe the type of language, bilingual practices, writing, and reading practices; (e) to explore ways of social interactions and play activities at home that foster early literacy; and (f) to describe the types of resources and capture the types of print materials and multimodal factors (e.g., e-books, textbooks, print, materials for coloring, writing, painting, and technology used at home to promote emergent literacy; Sawyer et al., 2018). The adapted observation protocol (Appendix D) was designed to be conducted in Spanish with Latina immigrant mothers—the participants in this study. In the first two observations were conducted using the same approach and the same

protocol. Once I got to know my participants, it was not as necessary to use a script but to focus on previous information from the interviews. I was interested in comparing and contrasting the information that they reported from one interview to the next, such as when the mothers read in Spanish with text in English or the activity of storytelling.

I adopted a role that involved some active, overt participation (Check & Schutt, 2012). I asked some questions at the beginning of the observation. The webcam was expected to be placed strategically so I could visualize the complete setting in the mother's home; I asked the mother to place the webcam in a specific position to make this possible. If the mother and child were engaged in a specific literacy activity, I did not distract the participants; however, the mother could interact with me at any time.

I conducted these observations strategically at different times of the day, which enabled me to capture alternative literacy activities during the day and find additional patterns in literacy experiences. Also, varying the time gave the mother the opportunity to select an appropriate and convenient time during which the child would cooperate more (e.g., good mood, after lunch, or after nap) with the mother. At different times of the day, the mother and the child had different activities that reflected diverse literacy experiences—for instance, reading, talking, cooking, gardening, dancing, playing, doing chores, or praying—that foster literacy development. The observations were adapted depending upon the mother and her child, in case the mother needed to postpone the scheduled observation until another time. If an observation was interrupted or information from an observation was unclear, I scheduled additional observations at a convenient time for the participants. The observations were discontinued as the participants and researcher completed the plan due February 2022 and reached saturation

on specific activities. The artifacts are described in the following section.

Artifacts

Artifacts were collected to corroborate the interviews and to provide additional opportunities to produce abundant thick, rich data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2017; Miles et al., 2014). Literacy materials allowed me the opportunity to understand and learn more about the literacy elements to which the mother and child were exposed in their home environment. The Latina mothers submitted pictures of their writings; notes; calendars; grocery lists; correspondence with family members; and photos of the environment and the resources they use when experiencing reading, writing, talking, playing, and other literacy activities. These cultural artifacts included religious writing notes, drawings from church, story books, recipes, art, crafts, and other elements relevant to this study that the mothers shared and reproduced through a virtual mode. These artifacts helped me to have an idea of how literacy at home is conceptualized as a social practice mediated by cultural artifacts, and parents' beliefs situated in everyday activities at home (Galindo et al., 2019). The mothers sent these to me electronically (e.g., email or WhatsApp). I envisioned these literacy materials influencing in some ways and fostering the child's literacy development; this information provided the context to analyze the environment and the literacy experiences that occur in the home. The following sections describe artifacts in the form of (a) environmental artifacts, (b) mother artifacts, (c) child-focused artifacts, and (d) mother and child schedule and optional explanatory video.

Environmental Artifacts

In the one-time observation in their home, when obtaining artifacts such as photos or video clips helped me to see the environmental context and examine the ways in which

the child was exposed to photos, artwork, posters, books, religious notes, and religious decorations, among other items of interest. In daily living activities, mothers use artifacts commonly found at home to engage their children in meaningful learning experiences (Galindo et al., 2019). In addition, some mothers (i.e., Ana, Martha, Flor, and Renata) submitted a video clip with an additional home environment to help me better understand a context that I did not have the opportunity to observe at the visit. The field notes, photos, and video artifacts served to help me understand the environmental context in which a variety of literacy experiences occurred in their home.

Mother-focused Artifacts

Each mother sent digital images of print texts from her daily life. The information that each mothers provided included photos of a biblical annotations, text that she read aloud, magazines, letters, and arts and crafts. Because artifacts are daily items that represent genuine expressions of individuals' literacy experiences (Galindo et al., 2019), the artifacts collected were digital images that illustrate the mother's items that related to literacy at home. Artifacts illustrated how the mother exposed the child to talking, reading, writing, and using art. These digital images helped me to visualize each mother's items at home. Without receiving them from the participants, I would not have had access to them through the webcam, and when I received images of these artifacts, I was able to examine them in detail.

Child-focused Artifacts

I collected several digital photos and videos as artifacts with the collaboration of each mother. These artifacts illustrate the child's items that relate to literacy at home (Galindo et al., 2019). Artifacts corroborated how the young child was presented to a

variety of literacy development experiences such as talking, reading, writing, playing, and creating art and crafts. The mothers provided photos of the following items: various types of books, song lyrics, nursery rhymes, photo albums, posters, laminated shapes, alphabet magnets, play toys, cooking materials, art and crafts, YouTube videos, and other relevant elements. All these items were presented in the photos that evidenced the literacy tools, objects, and texts present in the home setting. This information helped me as a researcher to have a broad idea of the materials the mothers used when they interacted with their young children.

Mother and Child Daily Routine Schedule and Optional Explanatory Video

The artifact was a schedule to be written by the mother, using a protocol in which there is a chart (Appendix F) in which she described her daily activities that evidenced the routine of a day. With some mothers (i.e., Olga, Renata, Rosa, and Andrea) I had to co-construct their daily routines logs (due to difficulties with writing and the fact that the process was time consuming for them). They told me verbally the information, I wrote for them, then I read aloud to make sure we did not miss any relevant information of their routine. With other mothers (i.e., Flor, Martha, Micaela, Ana) who created their own daily schedule, we still reviewed it together (virtually) to expand or clarify details of their written log (provided digitally via WhatsApp).

With these artifacts, I was able to explore and understand literacy activities that I was not be able to see during our virtual meetings. These schedules provided the time in which literacy activities occur, and sometimes the frequency with which those activities happened at home. This schedule illustrated the literacy practices that occur with the child at home through different opportunities during the day. Also, these written logs

indicated the moments that independent play occurred, or Spanish interactions were involved in their activities at home. In addition, some participants included a video clip that explained and showed how they interacted, used language with the child, and fostered experiences with print literacy, and how this occurred in their daily interaction at home.

Data Analysis

Description of the Use of Spanish and English in the Analysis of the Data

This analysis was based on qualitative methods, as well as the work of other researchers who used similar strategies—in particular, a study that involved two languages (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). This study was conducted in Spanish, the primary language of the participants, and the data were translated into English. I have professional experience as an interpreter in both English and Spanish. My certification in Spanish is by the Catholic University in Ecuador, so I was able to translate the documents, and my co-principal investigator/faculty mentor, who is also bilingual in Spanish and English, provided additional input and supported in the process of data analysis. Collecting data in the participants' home language of Spanish was important for several reasons; conversation was fluent as there was no need for a translator, there was an authentic exchange of cultural expressions, and it enabled feelings of mutual respect and trust between myself and the participants.

Regarding matters of integrity and quality, the data were treated with sensible care. According to van Nes et al. (2010), inaccurate perceptions may occur as the researchers attempt to interpret meaning from the main source or home language into English. I made every effort to obtain the information clearly during translation and

transcription. I completed the transcripts (in Spanish), which are considered more reliable than interview notes, as they have more details and are not mediated by memory (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). After completing the transcripts, I coded all in Spanish, and then translated those codes to English. Once I had the pattern and categories, I translated those to English. Emerging themes occurred using English. I translated the information that needed to be presented for all non-bilingual readers, such as specific quotes, phrases, participants' profiles, and artifacts. In the last stage of the project, I conducted translation of all the relevant data sources as I prepared the final report. I revised the word choices, as they must reflect the participants' perceptions, perspectives, and beliefs. I constantly reflected on the decisions I made regarding language while I completed the data analysis. Analyzing the data in both Spanish and English built credibility for the study, contributed to the trustworthiness of findings, and reflected an understanding of the social reality of the participants in this study (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

Qualitative Coding Strategies

In this case study, the data were analyzed based on how the literacy practices and experiences occurred between these eight Latina mothers and their respective eight young children at home. The data were analyzed through qualitative coding strategies, including the development of categories, themes, and patterns (Saldaña, 2016). The process of data analysis involved distinct types of data, interviews, observations, *testimonios*, videos, digital photos of data, and member validation. The different types of data allowed me to triangulate and support the themes and findings. In this study, I used NVivo, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) program (QSR International, 2012), to collect, store, organize, categorize, color code, and analyze the data. The data were

uploaded into the NVivo program, including transcriptions, memos, videos, digital photographs, audio recordings, and artifacts.

Once I had all the types of data, I coded the transcriptions (of interviews and *testimonios*), memos, videos, digital photographs, and artifacts, as mentioned in Spanish. Coding is a well-known data analysis procedure in qualitative research. Saldaña (2016) defined a code as a “word or short phrase that symbolically assigns summative, salient, and essence-capturing . . . for a portion of the language base or visual data” (2016). Similar to my study, Cycyk and Hammer (2018) used two sequences of coding. This study used similar data collection and analysis strategies. Through coding, I identified the patterns which emerged.

I used two sequences of coding, specifically first and second cycle coding. After the first and second cycle coding, I found patterns in participants’ literacy experiences with their young children at home, such as types of books, ways of reading, ways they used oral language to foster early literacy, beliefs about early literacy, and multimodal resources (e.g., computer programs for children, cellphone, and digital information).

First Cycle Coding

In the first cycle coding, I analyzed the data using descriptive coding, which uses words or short phrases to describe the main idea. Also, I also used In vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016), which aligns closely to the participant’s words and assisted me in finding patterns, and assigning categories that provided evidence about these Latina mothers’ and their young children’s literacy experiences. I looked for print text-communication, and from these codes I was able to contextualize from these experiences. When the transcripts were in Spanish, I left the original phrases or words that convey and

may reflect or enlighten the salient traditions, philosophies, perceptions, identity, literacy, religion, dialect, and experiences. These themes in the datasets created a strong vision and understanding of these families' early literacy experiences, such as the use of oral language in their daily activities and literacy experiences at home. In preparation for second cycle coding, I wrote eight participant profiles and ten memos, conducted coding in the NVivo platform, created charts with codes, revised the data (e.g., interview transcripts, observations transcripts, translation notes, *testimonio* transcripts, video clips, photos, logs, and member checking transcripts), and discussed the codes with experts in the fields of research and literacy, as well as with Spanish speakers (advisor, colleagues, participants, and Spanish speakers in the education field). I completed the analysis and presented the more relevant findings.

Second Cycle Coding

After the first cycle coding was complete, I conducted the second cycle coding. I practiced the second cycle of coding for the entire data set using pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016). Using pattern coding, which highlights similarities and repetitions, revealed predominant themes in the data to identify patterns, processes, and interpretations. Also, I used focus coding to organize by conceptual similarities. The identification of patterns also disclosed the mothers' beliefs (e.g., education concepts, early literacy definitions, interpretations of education in a rural area, cultural perceptions, beliefs, and educational values) about early literacy development materials and activities in their context. The process of identifying the findings went from the broad themes by looking into the more relevant patterns until collapsing the codes and finding specific categories which helped

to generate the themes that became findings. I followed these steps to ensure trustworthiness and reliability as a researcher. Table 3 includes a description of the codes.

Table 3*Codes*

In vivo coding	Descriptive coding	Pattern coding	Focus coding	Emerging themes
I read to my child in Spanish	Reading materials in Spanish	Reading shared practices in Spanish	To develop language To maintain Spanish language Spanish to communicate with family members	Mothers use a variety of reading materials, print materials, and reading styles to foster early literacy.
I read books in English and bilingual books from my older children	Reading materials in English, bilingual	Reading in Spanish text in English	To develop and practice language To interact with the child	Mothers interact with their children to preserve Spanish language.
I pray, read the Bible, and go to church	Religious activities, including church	Praying and showing faith-based practices	To impart faith and religious activities To practice religious tradition To practice Spanish To foster early literacy	Mothers engage in religious and faith-based literacy to educate their children.
I play with my child using toys, books, and games	Playing, learning, and experiencing literacy	Playing with print literacy	To interact with the child in Spanish To play and learn	Mothers use print literacy, children's free play and learning.
I tell stories about family, religion, immigration, and Latina traditions	Perceptions of literacy Literacy associated with alphabet (<i>alfabetización</i> & <i>educación</i>)	Mother believes education is a priority	To share storytelling To impart cultural values To be obedient with future teachers To respect adult family members by learning Spanish	Mother's perception and belief of early literacy is connected to language and education/ <i>educación</i> . Mothers use storytelling to impart their values: <i>respeto</i> , <i>obediencia</i> , <i>comportamiento</i> [respect, obedience, behavior].

Trustworthiness and Reliability

With the purpose of demonstrating efforts to increase the trustworthiness of this single exploratory case study conducted using qualitative research methods (Check & Schutt, 2012), a data quality check was included (Hesse-Biber, 2017). This qualitative study involved the collection of several forms of data, including interviews, *testimonios*, observations, digital artifacts, and member checking. These various types of data relied on oral information I collected through observations, as well as concrete artifacts.

Triangulating the multiple data sources of interviews, observations, artifacts, and member validation allowed me to achieve valid results. Triangulation is recognized as a means of securing and preserving validity; “validity is a process whereby the researcher earns the confidence of the reader that he or she has gotten it right” (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 59). Triangulation involves the careful reviewing of multiple data sources through different qualitative methods to attain a valid approximation of qualitative results.

For the member validation process, I communicated with the participants to clarify with them and confirm and refine statements, content, assertions, perspectives, and concepts during the member checking process. I prepared materials to present to the mothers my perceptions, ideas, and thoughts about their individual literacy experiences with their children at home, as well as information about their personal information related to education, immigration, and activities. I carefully revised the information in the *testimonios*, interviews, background information, and field notes, and with that I constructed my participants’ profiles in both languages (English and Spanish). I read in Spanish (virtually) this profile to each Latina mother. Each mother had the opportunity to validate the information that I collected, and each agreed with how I represented her

testimonio, literacy perceptions, and immigration story. I built relationships with the mothers to ensure they would have the opportunity to revise and approve their statements for member validation purposes (Appendix E), since “The basic trustworthiness takes the place of truth” (Hesse-Biber, 2017, p. 59).

As a researcher, I treated these Latina mothers with honesty and respect. Also, I tried to ensure justice in presenting all the information provided by these Latina immigrant mothers. All participants collaborated voluntarily through the last stage of the research project.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented an in-depth description of the methodology that was utilized for the study. Within the chapter, I discussed the researcher positionality, along with the research setting. I provided information regarding the participants and the way I recruited and selected the participants. I explained the rationale for each of the data sources. Additionally, I discussed the validity and trustworthiness of the research. In Chapter 4, I will present and discuss the data collected.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings for this research study. The findings rely on analysis of the interactions between the Latina immigrant mothers and their young children at home, offering a context for understanding their literacy practices in their home. I was able to empathize; hear the participants' voices; and gain a better understanding of their literacy practices, perceptions, beliefs, values, stories, and views regarding early literacy development, as well as how the Latina mothers supported and fostered emergent literacy in a home context.

I describe in this chapter how these Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area practiced literacy at home with their young children from birth to age 4. First, I explain how Latina mothers were active participants in their young children's early literacy development experiences, where they particularly supported their young children's reading through interactions in Spanish, centered on books and other reading material, and through embedded cultural practices. Then, I explain how the Latina mothers involved their young children in literacy experiences which included their faith-based and religious activities, storytelling, and rituals. Next, I describe their beliefs about early literacy in the home and discuss the Latina mothers' perceptions of early literacy as a combination of knowing the language (formal schooling) and teaching values to their young children. Lastly, I present a summary of the chapter.

**Latina Immigrant Mothers With Young Children Engaged in Reading Practices
With a Variety of Books at Home**

In this study, all eight Latina immigrant mothers routinely used books with their young children to foster early literacy at home. These Latina immigrant mothers, with limited English proficiency, used English, Spanish, and bilingual books, as well as other reading literacy materials. The books in English included cloth books, picture books, and one-word books for the younger (1 year, one month old to 1 year, 7 months old) children, as well as more elaborate texts for the older children (2 years, 5 months old to 4 years, 1 month old). They had books in Spanish, as well as bilingual books, and they included other print materials (e.g., posters with shapes, letters, and numbers). Although they had limited resources, the mothers' book choices depended on the interests of the children.

Across all these Latina mothers in their reading with their young children, they demonstrated the reading style of reading aloud, showing encouraging and positive interactions (e.g., constant praise), and physically placing the children next to them to be close. The mothers were not in front of the children (as in the school read-aloud or daycare setting), but rather next to the young children so they could guide the young child's hand to the book. As the children progressed in age, the mothers responded with developmentally appropriate reading styles.

The Latina mothers' reading styles evidenced modifications when reading to children from birth to 2 years old, compared to when reading to children from 2 to 4 years old. When reading to the younger children, the mothers modulated their voices, repeated to keep the children's attention, used emphasized and pointed to all the pictures, explained with simple words, asked short questions (e.g., yes, no, or what is this?), asked

them to point to the pictures and immediately helped them, and prompted them to repeat sounds or words; they constantly verified whether the children were listening. Again, the mothers' strategies of reading were adjusted according to the age of the child. The approach of reading with children over 2 years old involved the mothers elaborating more on the stories, explaining the images in combination with prompting the children to point to the assigned pictures. When reading to children 2 years of age and older, they formulated longer, more complex questions, expecting the correct responses. They paused to let the children say the answer, they engaged with less repetition and more descriptions. They constantly verified if the children were engaged. The children responded mostly in Spanish, with English responses occurring more frequently among the older children. While reading in Spanish, these Latina mothers used minimal explanations and stayed close to the Spanish text.

During the observations the younger children under the age of 2 focused on the mother when reading, were alert, listened, made sounds, gestured, pointed to pictures with their mothers' assistance, or said a few words; the older children from 2 to 4 years old were more verbally interactive, expressed more words in Spanish and a few in English, and asked more questions than the younger children.

The Latina immigrant mothers during the interviews and observations indicated that the English and bilingual books they used were obtained through social agencies, pediatricians' offices, and schools of their older children. While most books were in English, the Latina mothers had access to a few bilingual and Spanish books attained through family or community members. In all observations, these Latina mothers found intentional learning opportunities and fostered early literacy when interacting with text.

In the following sections, I describe examples which include the mothers' voices and the reading practices that they used to foster early literacy development.

English Reading Materials and Mothers' Reading Styles to Foster Early Literacy Development

In this study, all eight mothers used books in English with their young children. Four of the eight mothers read bilingual (Spanish and English) books, usually books with a large picture on each page including a descriptive label beneath the picture. It is important to also note the interactions between mother and child while reading, particularly when the mothers used materials in English, with respect to their emphasis on using Spanish to foster early literacy. The mothers' strategies of reading were adjusted according to the age of the child.

Reading Experiences With Children from Birth to Age 2

Two of the eight children turned 1 year old during the data collection. Reni (female, 1 year, 1 month old) and Juanito (male, 1 year, 4 months) were the youngest participants. Their mothers, Renata and Ana, respectively, used English books appropriate for those ages such as cloth books, card picture books, alphabet books, and one-word books. For instance, Renata showed a picture card book titled *Hugs and kisses* (Intrater, 2002). This book with text in English was full of babies' photographs in their multiple moods and actions such as crying, laughing, and smiling. In the images, babies appeared with the mothers performing different actions, such as kissing on the belly, kissing on the feet, kissing on the cheek, and hugging the babies. Renata interacted with Reni by interpreting the images, pointing to the images, and expressing in Spanish the words that connected with the facial expressions of the babies and the mothers in the

photos. For example, Renata embraced Reni on her lap and opened the book, and Reni turned the pages fast. The mother opened to the pages for her and started reading. The *Hugs and kisses* book stated the following text in English: “A kiss on the belly,” “A kiss on the feet,” a “kiss on the cheek,” and “oh, how sweet.” Renata interpreted the book in English by looking at the images and explaining them in this way:

mira Reni, ves aqui hay muchos bebes en este libro, y mira sus mamas juegan porque son muy bebes, asi como tú chiquitos, y ve Reni mira que estan haciendo aqui, mira la mami está jugando con el bebé, mira cómo sonrie el bebé, la mami le toca las manitos, si ves? Mira pasa la página, mira otra bebé, ves como la mami le toca y besa los pies, el bebe parece que le gusta nocierto? Mira el bebé le está viendo a su mami, y le toca las manos, si parece que le gusta eso, ahora pasa la página Reni, veamos otro bebé como tú, mira como le da besos la mama a su hijo, a ti te gustan los besos mija? A este bebé parece que no le gusta @@⁴ oh mira a este otro bebé la mama le dejó un beso con marca de pintalabios en su mejillo, ves que está rojo, esa es una marquita, eso se ve chistoso, [look Reni, you see here there are many babies in this book, and look at their mothers playing because they are very little babies, just like you, very little, and look Reni look what they are doing here, look the mommy is playing with the baby, look how the baby smiles, the mommy touches his hands, do you see? Look, turn the page, look at another baby, you see how the mommy touches and kisses his feet, the baby seems like he enjoys it, right? Look, the baby is looking at his mommy, and he touches her hands, it seems that he likes it . . . turn the page, Reni, let's see another baby like

⁴ In transcripts, each “@” marks one pulse of laughter.

you, look how the mommy kisses her son, do you like kisses, sweetie? This baby doesn't seem to like it @@ oh look at this other baby, the mother left him a kiss with a lipstick mark on his cheek, you see he got a red mark . . . that looks funny.]

While the mother was describing all the pictures in the book, Reni turned the pages, touched her mouth, looked, made sounds like “ah,” and repeated the word “bebe.” With this children’s book in English, Renata was encouraging Reni to listen, gaze, touch, play, turn the pages, and hold the book in her hands, allowing Reni to explore with English books, but also to listen to her mother speaking in Spanish at all times. This is an example of the mother’s reading approach, which includes reading aloud expressively and using senses of touch, sight, and sound.

Similar to Renata, Ana had children’s books in English that depicted just a single word on each page, along with a big picture—for example, the book *Shapes* (2008), as well as picture books made of soft material—for instance, *Touch and feel kitten* (DK Publishing, Inc, 1999) and *My puppy playtime* (2005). When reading aloud these books in English, Ana described the context in Spanish, the characters, and the details of the pictures for Juanito. Ana pointed to each image and repeated the words aloud. For example, in the image of the soft book (*My puppy playtime*) it said, “I love to play with my little pup.” The image on the page was a child playing with a dog outdoors, and around them were objects like a house, bone, and ball. Ana showed the book to Juanito, who was sitting next to her on a couch. Ana slowly showed each page to Juanito. Ana said:

. . . el perrito café, está contento, se acuesta, es bonito, y juega con su dueño, él come el huesito de carne, juega con sus juguetes, con la pelota, y la casita es

pequeña para que pueda entrar a dormir . . . ahí el perrito, el dueño le da de comer en este plato rojo ves Juanito, plato rojo, di “ro-jo,” puedes decir “ro-jo,” ese es el plato rojo del perrito. [. . . the brown dog is happy, he lies down, he’s cute, and he plays with his owner, he eats the meat bone, plays with his toys, with the ball, and the house is small so he can go in to sleep . . . there is the puppy, the owner feeds him on this red plate you see Juanito, red plate, say “ro-jo,” you can say “ro-jo,” that’s the puppy’s red plate.]

Even though there was just a single line of text in this English book, Ana added all these details.

Juanito stared at her, then made eye contact, moved his head toward her, and moved his hands toward the book. He did not repeat words, but he took the book and looked at the page. Ana said, “él siempre señala, golpea el libro, lo muerde, escucha, hace sonidos, y sonríe” [“he always points, pats the book, mouthing, listens, makes sounds, and smiles”]. Both Latina mothers, Ana and Renata used these children’s books with text in English; the mothers interpreted the images and described them in Spanish, and the children experienced early literacy development. When using English books, these Latina mothers had to creatively interpret, according to their best ability, relying mostly on the images and general context. Rather than reading the specific text of an English book, both mothers elaborated on the story and the context of those pages in the book in Spanish without reference to the English text.

As the children grew to 1 year old and older, the books varied, but the mothers’ approaches remained the same. The Latina mothers, Andrea, Micaela, and Olga, whose

children were 1 year old or older, developed a reading approach that was more interactive, using simple vocabulary, and the children responded with few words.

Andrea, Micaela, and Olga used English story books with their children, and they all described the context in Spanish. For instance, Andrea read to Andy a Walt Disney book (*Alphabet A-Z: How many F words can you say*, 1983), while Micaela read *Disney's Frozen: Do you want to build a snowman* (Glass & Mosqueda, 2015). Andrea, Micaela, and Olga described in Spanish from the pictures of the books in English to each of their children. The mothers creatively invented the story lines of the stories in English that were unfamiliar. For instance, Andrea, Micaela, and Olga explained in their own words the materials, or images to the children, by constructing the story based on pictures. The children (Andy [male, 1 year, 6 months], Mica [female, 1 year, 7 months], and Oliver [male, 2 years, 5 months]) listened, looked, turned the pages, pointed, and said a few words. What follows are more detailed examples of Andrea's, Micaela's, and Olga's English books and their reading approaches.

Andrea, for example, read the Walt Disney book *Alphabet A-Z* (1983) for Andy (see Figure 1) about each letter of the alphabet with images that matched with the initial letter. Also, the text said, "How Many F Words Can You Say?" accompanied by images of a fox, frog, flower, and fish. She ignored the text in English and continued describing the characters. Andy pointed to and looked at the pictures, and Andrea said in Spanish the animals' names; then, she said the sound of the letters. Andrea knew the sound of the letters of the alphabet, but she had limited proficiency in English to read the questions and sentences. However, she resourcefully described all the images and the scenes in Spanish. For example, while she looked at the pictures, she said to Andy

mira la “D,” la “E,” la “F” . . . oh. Mira, aquí hay un lobo . . . busca la “Quiou,” la “ES” . . . , aquí si ves este lobito él vive en el bosque, el pez que vive en el agua, y el sapito verde que hace croc croc. [look the “D,” the “E,” the “F”. . . oh, look, there is a fox here . . . find the “Quiu,” the “ES” . . . do you see the little wolf that lives in the forest, and the fish that lives in the water, look and the little green frog that makes croc croc.]

From these observations and artifacts, it appears that these Latina mothers were using English books differently than how they were intended to be used. For instance, the text of that book referred to letter sounds associated with the character but did not describe the characters of the pictures. However, Andrea emphasized the letter sounds in Spanish and then she proceeded to describe the characters and scenarios of the pictures. One could interpret this as missing the point of the English text, but Andrea recognized the letter sound in Spanish, and she was making sense of the images and using her previous knowledge about animals in Spanish as she was describing each of them to Andy.

Figure 1

Andrea Reading the Letters to Andy (1 year, 6 months) and Describing the Picture by Pointing and Transacting With the Text



In other words, the mothers relied on the images to describe what they thought was happening in the book. Often, these mothers used their literacy strategies to understand the reading and to explain the books to their children. These strategies included making sense of the pictures, making connections with their own lived experiences with the content, transacting with the text while sharing reading, and using their Spanish as a tool to communicate their understanding of the text.

Similarly, Micaela, when reading books in English, such as *Disney's Frozen: Do you want to build a snowman* (Glass & Mosqueda, 2015), interpreted the words based on the images while Mica listened, turned the pages, and looked at the pictures. Micaela said: “mira las dos princesas jugando con toda esa nieve, con sus bellos vestidos, y toda la nieve a su alrededor, y qué se ve allá lejos . . . un castillo, verdad?” [look the two princesses playing with all that snow, with all those beautiful dresses, and look all the snow around them, and what do you see far away . . . a castle, correct?] The text of the book was: “Ok I think is enough snow, take a deep breath, and blow on the page to make

it stop snowing.” Although Micaela’s elaborations were close to the narrative of the English story, her interpretations in Spanish were still not aligned with the text. The interpretations in Spanish accompanied the illustrations. This approach might be considered as an omission of the textual meaning; however, the mother was applying literacy strategies available to her.

Similarly, Olga used books that are in English such as *Little Red Riding Hood* (Ransom, 2005), *PJ Masks* (Testa et al., 2018), *Disney: Pooh’s Christmas sled ride* (Gaines & Milne, 2003), *Penguins* (Gibbons & Mazzoli, 1998), *Amazing eggs* (Hodgkins & Smith, 2011), and *God made the winter* (Shearer, 2014). Olga read sentence by sentence with some pauses; she did not expect repetition, but she was making sure that Oliver listened. Since she has limited English proficiency, Olga used the best of her knowledge to give her interpretation of the text, pictures, and scenes while speaking in Spanish to Oliver. For instance, when she used the book *Penguins*, Olga guided Oliver by pointing, speaking aloud, and turning the pages to explain about penguins. Oliver listened while turning the pages. Then, Olga described how the penguins looked and what they were doing, while Oliver repeated some words in Spanish, made some animal sounds, and pointed with Olga’s help.

While reading to Oliver, Olga took a break and said to me:

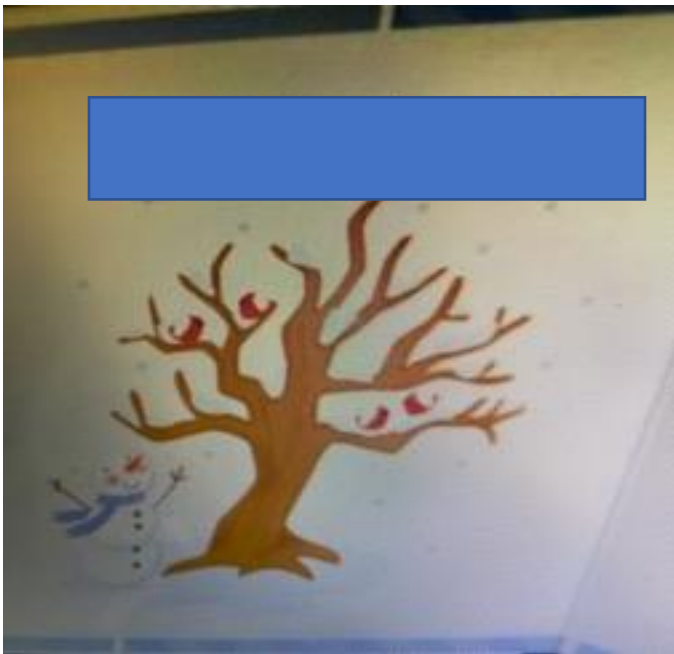
Este es un libro que nos lo regalaron de un programa [agencia social] y a mi bebé [Oliver] pues le gusta observar lo que es la imagen, él no ha podido leer ni yo [tampoco], pues porque el libro está en inglés, pero nos gusta mucho ver las imágenes. [This is a book that was given to us by a program (social agency) and

my baby (Oliver) likes to see what the image is, he has not been able to read it (nor have I), because the book is in English, but we really like to see the images.]

In another virtual observation, Olga told the story differently; she talked about the creativity of making a snowman, as the image showed the snowman with a tree covered by snow. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2

Image of a Snowman and a Tree With a Sentence Saying, "God Made the Winter."



In her reading of a page in a book (*God made seasons* [Shearer, 2014]) with an image of snow, she ignored the text in English about the season. Olga used her background knowledge to share meaning with Oliver. Olga showed him a page in the book about the snow. She did not paraphrase the story; instead, she talked about making a snowman, and then continued:

. . . y yo le cuento [a Oliver] que cuando nieva mucho pues las personas levantan lo que es la nieve y le transforman de lo que es una figurita de una persona para

que este más detallado le ponen más cosas . . . le adornan con mucho detalle. [. . . and I tell (Oliver) that when it snows a lot, well, people pick up (all the) snow and transform it (into a) shape of a person, (so they put more) details (nose, eyes, mouth, and a scarf) and they put more things on it . . . they decorate it with a lot of detail.]

Olga tried to interpret these books in English for her son, using her prior knowledge and experiences. For instance, Olga was using her limited experiences with winter conditions in the United States and describing them to her son. Having immigrated from Guatemala, Olga had no prior experience with snow before coming to the United States. Olga, Andrea, and Micaela conveyed meaning by reading aloud, explaining, pointing, and showing meaning making by pointing to the images and describing. More importantly, they displayed creativity and imagination by using these strategies for reading even when the books were in English.

Also, as discussed in the literature review, from a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky's zone of proximal or potential development refers to a range of tasks that the child cannot handle alone but can do with the help of more skilled partners. In this case, the mother was the more skilled partner; with that in mind, the child as an active participant experiencing and playing with books, this observation focused on the interaction of the young child with the mother, fostering emergent literacy by experiencing the act of introducing reading in Spanish.

Reading Experiences With Children From 2 to 4 Years Old

For this age group, it was observed that the Latina mothers Flor, Martha, and Rosa relied on verbal interactions and more elaborate responses, using more Spanish

vocabulary while reading English books. These literacy practices were more co-directed than those with the children from birth to 2 years old, engaging with play and learning. These three Latina mothers, compared to the mothers with younger children, read English books with more content, longer sentences, and elaborated pictures. The children chose the books from the options offered by the mothers. For instance, Flor read picture and story books, as well as alphabet books such as the *Rainbow fish and the big blue whale* (Pfister & James, 1998). Martha used picture books, such as *My first words* (Metsola, 2016); books in English about transportation (e.g., trains, cars, and planes), animals (e.g., dinosaurs), seasons (e.g., winter and summer), schedule of the day (e.g., breakfast, lunch, dinner); and story books (e.g., *Lion King: I am Simba* [Sazaklis & Batson, 2019]). For example, Martha read to Martin the book *My first words*; a short transcript follows:

Martha: Esto qué es?

Martin: Cavera, caveeeraa (Martin approximates the word excavator)

Martha: Si son camiones para llevar cosas, y ese otro que es. . .

Martin: Esto es un bike, y ese qué es ese.

Martha: Si una bike, una bicicleta para ir a lugares, y esta qué es?

Martin: Toys.

Martha: Toys? Son los juguetes con los que jugamos.

Martin: Oh mira muuuuchoos.

Martha: Mira dime como es?

Martin: Oh mira este es chiquito.

Martha: Oh si ves estos juguetes aqui esos camiones, aviones, esos con para llevar y transportar, un dia te vas a subir a esos.

Martin: A esos yo me subo?

[Martha: What is this

Martin: Cavera, caveeeraa (Martin approximates the word excavator)

Martha: Yes, they are trucks to carry things, and that other one that is. . .

Martín: This is a bike, and what is that

Martha: Yes, a bike, a bicycle to go places, and what is this?

Martin: Toys.

Martha: Toys? Are the toys we play with.

Martín: Oh look soooooooooo (many).

Martha: Look tell me what is this?

Martin: Oh look this is small.

Martha: Oh, do you see these toys here, those trucks, planes, those are to carry things and transport, one day you're going to get on those.

Martin: I will get on those?

Another mother, Rosa used books featuring animals and alphabet letters, as well as story books. Rosa's story books were *Little Red Riding Hood* (Ransom, 2005) and *Paw Patrol* (Petrossi, 2015). She read these books aloud by interpreting; for instance, she recognized the names of the characters from *Paw Patrol*, but did not know the story, so she interpreted based on what she saw in the scene. For instance, the picture showed many items, such boats, whales, individual watercraft, and animals in the water, and the mother asked the child to find each of the items. This activity had little connection to the text on the page. Rosa looked at the pictures and informally asked Rober (male, 4 years, 1 month) to find the items: "Rober, mira todos estos dibujos, encuentra cada uno de estos,

dime cual te gusta mas y empezamos por eso” [“Rober, look at these pictures, find each of them on the page, tell me which one you like more and you can find that one first”]. This was similar to the Latina mothers previously described, in that their reading style consisted of interpreting in Spanish the English text; however, the difference is that these types of books were more complex. These types of books have long sentences and multisyllabic words. The meaning of the text was completely ignored.

The children Caro (female, 3 years, 6 months), Martin (male, 3 years, 7 months), and Rober (male, 4 years, 1 month) engaged with their mothers by asking more elaborate questions, pointing to images, and answering questions with short phrases. For example, when Rosa read to Rober the book *Paw Patrol* (Petrossi, 2015), Rober pointed to the dogs and asked, “Where are the other dogs?” Rober added short phrases like: “aquí esta la tortuga, aquí está la ballena” [“here is the turtle, here is the whale”]. Also, the three children replied not only in Spanish but also with a few words in English, which was different from the younger children in this study. For instance, Flor interpreted story books in English, such as *Rainbow fish and the big blue whale* (Pfister & James, 1998) or *Can a princess be a firefighter?* (Roman, 2015), and she explained the general idea of the story on each page and explained in Spanish. Caro said: “qué es lo que tiene ella en la cabeza?” [“what is it on her head?”]. She followed up with “Por qué está usando ese vestido?” [“Why is she wearing that dress?”] and “Por qué ella tiene esas alas?” [“Why does she have wings?”]. Caro responded most of the time in Spanish and sometimes in English. The mother and child were interacting while interpreting the book, but interestingly the child said some words in English even though the mother was speaking in Spanish. For instance, Caro said “esa girl” [“that girl”], “vestido pink” [“pink dress”],

and “esas niñas usan muchos costumes” [“those girls use a lot of costumes”]. This interaction is an example of biliteracy development, where the child is processing information in both languages. The child is using Spanish and English in the same phrase, mixing the two languages fluently in a way similar to a bilingual interaction.

Similarly, Coba-Rodriguez and Jarrett (2020) indicated that the Latina mothers they researched displayed creativity by using strategies for reading, even with limited English, such as using translators to read from English texts and seeking help from family members who helped in fostering children’s reading development. Olga and the seven other mothers in my study used their creativity by using strategies for reading in Spanish with the material in English, and they managed to do it by themselves without the support of other adults. Some examples of these strategies include reading aloud, pointing to the pictures, using the fingers to track pictures, looking at the book from back to front, playing by touching, and emphasizing letter sounds. These strategies were applied while the mothers were speaking in Spanish.

Spanish Reading Materials and Mothers’ Reading Styles to Foster Early Literacy Development

Due to the scarcity of books in Spanish, there were fewer Spanish children’s books available regardless of children’s ages. For this reason, some of the same texts were used for children aged birth to 2 and for those aged 2 to 4. With respect to the types of Spanish books used, the Spanish Bible, culturally relevant books in Spanish, picture books in Spanish, bilingual books, and Spanish print materials were prevalent.

The observations, interviews, and artifacts indicated that even though the eight mothers mostly used books in English with their young children, they had a couple of

books in Spanish, and children's books, as well as some bilingual books, including print literacy material. When only reading Spanish or bilingual books (focusing on the text in Spanish), across all mothers the style was to read sentence by sentence, without improvising or interpreting, with few pauses; the mothers did not expect repetition, but they did verify if the children were listening. When reading books in Spanish, the responses from younger children under the age of 2 included alertness, making sounds, gesturing, and saying a few words; while focused on the mother when reading, they listened or pointed to pictures with their mothers' assistance. The older children, from 2 to 4 years old, were more verbally interactive, more participative, expressed more words in Spanish and a few in English, and asked more questions than the younger children. In the following sections, I discuss examples of Latina mothers' experiences reading with various types of texts in Spanish and bilingual literacy materials.

Culturally Relevant Children's Books in Spanish

Three Latina mothers (Renata, Andrea, and Micaela) out of the eight used children's books in Spanish that were relevant to their culture of origin. Andrea and Micaela read for their young children the classic Guatemalan literature for children. One example is *Barbuchin* (Armas & de Armas, 1991), which has 49 short stories in Spanish about good behavior with others. Another is *Nacho* (Osorio Quijano, 1996) a book Renata read that is commonly used in Latin American countries, such as Guatemala, to teach reading. Renata's shared reading activity focused only on reading aloud the words, emphasizing full sentences, practicing the sounds of the letters in Spanish, and looking at images as illustrated in *Nacho* as she considered the book to be for older children. Similar to this book Andrea (Andy, male, 1 year, 6 months) and Micaela (Mica, female, 1 year, 7

months), also used books that were culturally relevant to them such as the book *Victoria* (2003). For example, Andrea sat on the floor with Andy next to her. Andrea read the following text in Spanish of the book *Victoria*:

La señora vende leña, mira esa leña. . . . La araña sube a su telaraña, mira por donde sube la araña. El ruiseñor canta de mañana, hace así fíu fíu fíu así canta el ruiseñor, has coma el pajarito ruiseñor bebita. Toñito compró una piñata, ves las piñata aqui en el dibujo. La niña tiene una muñeca Mira, Andy, ésta es la piñata que te compro en tu cumpleaños, esta letra la eñe (Ñ) no hay en Inglés dice tu hermano, pero nosotros si usamos la Ñ, mira la piñata que bonita tiene tantos colores, en tu cumpleaños te vamos a preparar la piñata . . . a ver repite conmigo di “pi-ña-ta,” ahora veamos otras palabras con Ñ: muñeca, sueño, pestaña, ruiseñor, montaña, pañuelo. [The lady sells firewood, look at that firewood. . . . The spider climbs into its web, look where the spider climbs. The bird sings in the morning, it does like this chirp chirp . . . the birds do like this, do like the baby bird . . . Toñito bought a piñata, you see the piñata here in the drawing. The girl has a doll. . . . Look, Andy, this is the piñata that I bought you on your birthday, this letter is the eñe (Ñ) there is not such a letter in English says your brother, but we do use the Ñ, look at the piñata, how colorful it has so many colors, on your birthday we are going to prepare the piñata . . . repeat with me say “pi-ña-ta,” now let’s see other words with Ñ: doll, dream, eyelash, bird, mountain, tissue.]

While Andrea read, Andy played around, sometimes took the book, pointed to some pictures, and pointed with Andrea’s help. Also interacting with her mother, Andy said “Mama” and got distracted and wanted to take the book away, but Andrea insisted and

continued reading. She said, “mi Tia me trajo estos libros de Guatemala son fáciles de leer para mi y los dibujitos tienen mucho color, siempre le leo estos libros a que oiga como le leo” [“my auntie brought these books from Guatemala. They are easy to read for me and the drawings have a lot of color, I always read to them these books so that they hear how I read them”].

Regarding to these specific culturally relevant books in Spanish, noticeably these three Latina mothers read some books commonly used in their country of origin (Guatemala), which allowed them to share not only early reading but also embedded cultural content. When reading these books in Spanish to their children, they focused on the text and on the pictures, and they read sentence by sentence with a few pauses to emphasize specific words or letters. Additionally, by reading in Spanish a book that also pertains to their culture, as in Andrea’s example, they enhanced the reading experience with their young children, creating a foundation for the basis of cultural early literacy.

Children’s Picture Books in Spanish

In addition to culturally relevant books in Spanish, the mothers incorporated other books in their household reading. Again, these types of books were read line by line in Spanish text. Andrea used a story book in Spanish, *Eres mi Mamá?* (Eastman, 2001), a workbook for reading and writing; and Renata and Rosa had contemporary books in Spanish. For example, Renata had a children’s book, *Sol, nieve y arcoiris* (Monks et al., 2002a) that she read to Reni (female, 1 year, 1 month). Rosa used *Bizcocho* (Capucilli, 1996) and *Elige tu color!* (Monks et al., 2002a); Rober attentively listened and later responded to questions about the book. Rosa read the sentences in detail and later explained the images. But the responses of the children varied depending on their children’s ages. For

instance, Rober asked questions about the image of the dog in the book *Bizcocho*, for example:

Rosa: . . . Bizcocho es pequeño, es de color de canela.

Rober: Bizcocho es como el cake que comemos?

Rosa: No, se llama así por el color del perro, ves que es canelita amarillito, su pelo es amarillo, así como tú te llamas Rober el se llama Bizcocho.

Rober: Y con quien juega?

Rosa: Vamos a ver con quien juega el Bizcocho.

Rober: Oooh.

Rosa: Bizcocho es hora de dormir, guau guau, bizcocho es hora de dormir, guau guau.

Rober: Porque va a dormir, quiere jugar? quiere comer?

Rosa: No, es hora dormir del perrito bizcocho, y la mamá le prepara para que duerma . . .

Rober: Para que duerma? . . .

[Rosa: . . . Biscuit (Bizcocho) is small, it is cinnamon color.

Rober: Biscuit is like the cake we eat?

Rosa: No, it is called that because of the color of the dog, you see that it is yellow cinnamon, its hair is yellow, just like your name is Rober, his name is Bizcocho.

Robert: And with whom does he play?

Rosa: Let's see who the Biscuit (Bizcocho) plays with.

Robert: Oooh.

Rosa: Bizcocho it's time to sleep, woof woof, Bizcocho it's time to sleep, woof woof.

Rober: Why is he going to sleep, does he want to play? He wants to eat?

Rosa: No, it's time for the biscuit (Bizcocho) puppy to sleep, and the mother prepares him to sleep . . .

Rober: for him to sleep? . . .]

Rosa answered each question. Rober inquired about names of characters. Rosa read in detail the words and explained the images in her book. All mothers in this study demonstrated having very limited materials in Spanish. Regarding the access to books in Spanish, several mothers reported having difficulty accessing books in Spanish. As mentioned, Latina mothers in this study experienced early literacy by introducing and reading these culturally relevant books, and Spanish children's books to promote Spanish language and foster early literacy.

Bilingual Children's Books

Four of the Latina mothers, Andrea, Micaela, Martha, and Rosa used bilingual books. All four mothers focused on reading the text in Spanish and ignoring the words in English. They read carefully and slowly line by line, paying attention to the words' pronunciation, slowly when trying to make sense of the text, focusing on the Spanish text and ignoring the text in English, which, in a bilingual book is the same content. For instance, Andrea, Micaela, and Rosa read in Spanish *Curious George* (Sacks et al., 2009)—a bilingual version with large illustrations, and Martha read a board book *First bilingual A-B-C* (Davis et al., 2019). (See Figure 3.) When Micaela (Mica, female, 1 year, 7 months) and Andrea (Andy, male, 1 year, 6 months) read the bilingual story book

to their children (who were younger children), their children saw the images, pointed, repeated some sounds and words, and turned the pages.

For example, Micaela read *Curious George* (Sacks et al., 2009) to Mica. While the mother kept reading Mica was playing next to her. Micaela repeated some sentences when she noticed that she read an incorrect word or if she understood the line and read again. While reading this book, the following exchange occurred between Micaela and Mica:

Micaela: Ahora vamos a leer el libro de Jorge el curioso, no mija ten cuidado no cojas duro el libro, dejame yo lo leo, hoy Jorge fue a su primer Partido de baseball, su amigo Marco jugaba el partido, no me quites el libro espera voy a leer para ti despacito, dice el equipo de Marco jugaba con los tigres, Marco deseaba hacer un jon ron (home run) practicaba con el. . . .

Mica: Mama gacias (gracias) . . . no ball . . . tú.

Micaela: Oh gracias! De nada le pasa esa bola, esa es la ball, mira aqui la bola, si es una pelota, sigamos leyendo . . . di otra vez esa palabra gra-ci-as di gracias.

Ohhh el entrenador estaba enfermo, George no podia ayudar le preguntó el entrenador. . . Jorge nos podría ayudar le preguntó al entrenador, por supuesto. . . .

Te estas gustando el libro Mica, si di graaaaciaaaaas.

Mica: Gacias (gracias).

Micaela: De nada. Cada vez que un equipo anote un punto ponemos un nuevo número de comarco . . . nuevo número de marcación parecía fácil pero había un montón de números yo esperaba y esperaba ya era la tercera entrada. . . Mica ya no más? OK adios, bye bye.

[Micaela: now we are going to read the book about Curious George, don't mija be careful don't take the book hard, let me read it, today George went to his first baseball game, his friend Marco was playing the game, don't take me away the book wait I'm going to read for you slowly, says Marco's team played with the tigers, Marco wanted to do a jon ron (home run) he practiced with him. . . .

Mica: Mama thank you. . . no ball . . . you.

Micaela: Oh, thank you! There's nothing wrong with that ball, that's the ball, look at the ball here, if it's a ball, let's keep reading . . . say that word thank you again say thank you. Ohhh the coach was sick, George couldn't help the coach asked George could help us, he asked the coach, of course. . . . You are liking the book Mica, yes say thank you.

Mica: Gacias (gracias) (thank you).

Micaela: You're welcome. Every time a team scores a point we put a new region number . . . new dialing number seemed easy but there were a lot of numbers I waited and waited and it was the third entry. . . . Mica no more? OK bye bye bye.]

While the mother kept reading, Mica was playing next to her. Micaela repeated some sentences when she noticed that she read an incorrect word or if she made sense of the content of a specific line and read again. For instance, Micaela repeated slowly and carefully the following line in Spanish: "George couldn't help the coach asked. . . . George could help us, he [friend] asked the coach." Although the mother had limited English proficiency, she understood the importance of providing a positive example for her child.

Figure 3

Martha Reading a Bilingual Book and Martin (3 years, 7 months) Turning the Page



Martha (Rober 3 years old, 7 months) and Rosa (Rober 4 years old, 1 month) read to their children (who were older), and they responded with more verbal participation. These Latina mothers initiated and facilitated the early literacy activities with their children by reading short stories in Spanish. For example, Martha read to Martin the book *Curious George piñata party* (Sacks et al., 2009). The following is a short transcript of the reading session:

Martha: Jorge se puso una venda y no podía ver.

Martin: No podía?

Martha: No no podía, trataba de golpear la piñata pero no alcanzaba.

Martin: No alcanzaba, como no alcanza?

Martha: Si mira no alcanzaba la piñata.

Martin: Ohhh.

Martha: Ya vistes? Si te gusta la piñata? También quieres hacer como George?

Martin: Si si quiero . . . , mami que hay aquí?

Martha: Mira lo que dice aquí . . . se le ocurrió una idea, practicar otros sentidos, trata de seguir con la, con la, con las manos, ellos también quieren romper esa piñata porque es la fiesta de cumpleaños.

Martin: Ooooh si yo también quiero.

[Martha: George wore a blindfold, and he could not see. He swung, but he kept missing the piñata.

Martin: He missed it??

Martha: If you look again, he kept missing the piñata.

Martin: Ohhh.

Martha: Do you see? Do you like the piñata? . . . Do you want to do like George?

Martin: Yes . . . yes . . . I want . . . mommy what's here?

Martha: Look what it says here . . . an idea occurred to her, practice other senses, try to continue with the, with the, with the hands, they also want to break that piñata because it's the birthday party.

Martin: Ooooh, yes, I want too.]

This example shows how Martin asked some questions, Martha responded, and she continued reading slowly and carefully each line in Spanish.

Another example is in Rosa's reading of the book *Little Red Riding Hood*

(Ransom, 2005) to Rober:

Rosa: Un dia la abuelita le hizo una capa . . . caperuza de terciopelo, rojo, a la niña le quedaba tan bien que nunca se la quitaba, huy le gusto, por eso todos le llamaban caperucita roja.

Rober: Da la vuelta para ver al lobo.

Rosa: Ok veamos la foto del lobo . . .

Rober: Oh shiii, oh @@ es el lobo.

Rosa: @@ Si viste ahí está el lobo? . . . mi amor, a ver, sigamos. Un día su madre . . . así como yo contigo soy tu mamá . . . un día la mamá le dijo caperucita quiero que vayas a ver a la abuela . . . para llevarle, esta . . . esta . . . canasta y adentro hay una jarrita de miel . . .

Rober: Ya quiero ver al lobo.

Rosa: Rober quiero que escuches porque ahorita me vas a contar lo que tú entendiste . . . para llevarle, esta . . . esta . . . canasta y adentro hay una jarrita de miel, y pones un pastel . . . pero . . . pero ten mucho cuidado cuando entres en el bosque, ven derecho a la casa a la abuelita . . . y no te y no te entre . . . y no te entretengas en el camino a donde la abuelita.

Rober: Cuándo sale el lobo.

[Rosa: One day the grandmother made her a cape . . . red velvet cape, the girl looked so good that she never took it off . . . ohh she liked it . . . that's why everyone called her Little Red Hood.

Rober: Turn around the page to see the wolf.

Rosa: Ok let's see the photo of the wolf.

Rober: Oh shiii, oh @@, it's the wolf (scary tone).

Rosa: @@ . . . Did you see wolf there? My love let's see . . . let's continue. One day her mother . . . just as I am your mother with you . . . one day her mother told

her, Little Red Riding Hood, I want you to go see your grandmother . . . take her, take her . . . this . . . basket and inside there is a jar of honey.

Rober: I want to see the wolf now.

Rosa: Rober, I want you to listen to me because right now you are going to tell me what you understood.

Rosa: Take her, take her . . . this . . . basket and inside there is a jar of honey, and you put a cake on it . . . but . . . but be very careful when you enter the woods, come straight to the house to granny . . . do not get . . . do not get distra. . . do not get distracted on the way to your granny's house.

Rober: When the wolf comes out.]

Rosa read slowly with several pauses making sense of the text, trying to pronounce correctly, allowing moments for dialogue, and sometimes repeating some words or lines.

Both Martha and Rosa promoted language development, encouraged social interaction, and enhanced the reading experiences with their young children using bilingual books.

Additional Print Materials to Foster Early Literacy Development

In addition to reading books, Latina mothers and their children also interacted and played with other print literacy materials at home. Some previous studies indicated that Latinx family members rarely practice literacy (Boyce et al., 2004; Hale et al., 2009). Others (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020) found that mothers practice literacy with print material. For instance, Flor experienced reading with Caro using print literacy materials, such as posters with numbers, letters, and shapes, and coloring books with images of princesses. Flor read the posters, introducing and emphasizing the numbers, colors, and

shapes with her daughter (Caro, 3 years, 6 months). (See Figure 4.) Caro repeated letters, numbers, and shapes mostly in Spanish, and in English repeated to her mother. For example:

Flor: Qué número es este?

Caro: Uno, dos... three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine

Flor: Si sabes contar en Español?

Caro: Uno, dos, tres, c. . . .

Flor: Cuatro

Caro: Cuatro, cinco . . . siete

Flor: Seis

Caro: Seis

Flor: Siete

Caro: Siete, ocho, nueve, y diez

Flor: Y diez muy bien! Ahora los colores, tú tienes que decirme los colores OK?

Caro: Pink

Flor: No eso no es

Caro: Black

Flor: No eso no es black es brown

Caro: OK, OK, I can do it, I can do it. Brown.

Flor: Brown

Caro: Purple, green, orange, yellow, black, and what is this?

Flor: Gray

Caro: Gray, blue, pink, red, white

Flor: OK ahora vamos a hacerlo en Español, lo que hay aqui?

Flor: Marrón

Caro: Marron

Flor: Rojo

Caro: Rojo

Flor: Esto es morado

Caro: Morado

Flor: Azul

Caro: Azul

Flor: Anarajado

Caro: Anaranjado

Flor: Grei

Caro: Esto es gray?

Flor: Si esto es greeei⁵

Caro: Greeei

Flor: Y qué color te gusta?

Caro: Pink

Flor: Y cómo se dice en Español, Ro. . . .

Caro: Rooo

Flor: ro-sa-do rosado

Caro: ro-sa-do

Flor: OK, Rosado, ahora me tienes que decir las letras.

⁵ This transcription represents IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcription or phonetic spelling.

Flor: Cuál es esta?

Caro: A

Flor: Ahora vamos a decirle pero en Español

Flor: A, B, C, D. . . .

Caro: A, B, C, D. . . .

Flor: V, W, X, Y (ella explica que Y se la llama i griega)

Caro: V, W, X, Y

Flor: Cuál te gusta más de las letras y dibujos?

Caro: Rabbit

Flor: Con qué letra empieza Rabbit

Caro: Con R (ere)

Flor: Como se pronuncia la R? asi E-RR-E

Caro: a1

Flor: a1? OK veamos otro.

[Flor: What number is this?

Caro: One, two . . . three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine

Flor: Do you know how to count in Spanish?

Caro: one, two, three, c. . .

Flor: Four

Caro: Four, five . . . seven

Flor: Six

Caro: Six

Flor: Seven

Caro: Seven, eight, nine, and ten

Flor: And ten very good!

Flor: Now the colors, you have to tell me the colors, OK?

Caro: Pink

Flor: No that's not pink.

Caro: Black

Flor: No that's not black it's brown

Caro: OK, OK, I can do it, I can do it. Brown.

Flor: Brown

Caro: Purple, green, orange, yellow, black, and what is this?

Flor: Gray

Caro: Gray, blue, pink, red, white

Flor: Ok now we are going to do it in Spanish, what is here?

Flor: Brown

Caro: Brown

Flor: Red

Caro: Red

Flor: This is purple

Caro: Purple

Flor: Blue

Caro: Blue

Flor: Orange

Caro: Orange

Flor: Gray

Caro: Is this gray?

Flor: Yes, this is gray (grei)⁶

Caro: Greeey

Flor: And what color do you like?

Caro: Pink

Flor: And how do you say in Spanish, Ro. . . .

Caro: Piii

Flor: Pink (RO-SA-DO, mother pronounces three syllables of the word)

Caro: Pink (child pronounces three syllables of the word RO-SA-DO)

Flor: OK, Rosado, now you have to tell me the letters.

Flor: Which one is this?

Caro: A (English) . . .

Flor: Now we are going to say now but in Spanish

Flor: A, B, C, D. . . .

Caro: A, B, C, D. . . .

Flor: V, W, X, Y, i Greek (In Spanish the mother said “I griega”)

Caro: V, W, X, Y, I Greek

Flor: Which one do you like more of the letters and drawings?

Caro: Rabbit

Flor: What letter does Rabbit start with

Caro: With R (ere)

⁶ This transcription represents IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcription or phonetic spelling.

Flor: How do you pronounce the R? so ERE

Caro: aɪ

Flor: aɪ? OK let's see another.

Flor emphasized the importance of knowing the colors, numbers, and letters in Spanish by pointing the items, repeating, correcting, and asking a few questions. While playing, pointing, and talking with Flor, Caro pointed to each color and letter with her finger and named letters in both languages. This interaction demonstrated that the process of learning, interacting, and playing occurred simultaneously. Since Caro was exposed in the home environment to print literacy, and guided by Flor, she was learning to interact, to make sense of both languages, to organize, and create the meaning of print and associate it with her own personal experiences in English and in Spanish.

Figure 4

Caro (3 years, 6 months) Pointing to Poster With Numbers



Another Latina mother, Andrea, used with her young child print literacy in the form of laminated papers with letters and alphabet (materials from her older children). She relied on the images and focused on teaching only the letters of the alphabet so that Andrea and Andy (male, 1 year, 6 months) child could play, learn, and experience reading together. (See Figure 5.) The child was learning without noticing while playing. The mother was scaffolding the activity by showing blocks, and the figures on the materials, pointing, and asking questions in Spanish. Then Andy (1 year, 6 months) responded by holding the laminated paper, placing it on the floor, and turning the pages.

For example, Andrea said: “qué quieres hacer papi” [what do you want to do papi (daddy, darling)]? “Quieres jugar?” [Do you want to play?] Both Andy and Andrea were sitting on the floor. Andrea gave him some blocks to play with while she was forming letters with blocks, then Andrea was comparing the blocks with the letters on the laminated pages. Andrea, while holding the paper, said: “uno, dos, tres, cuatro” [one, two three, four] and then she took the block and kept counting, “uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete” [one, two, three, four, five, six, seven.] Andy kept playing with the laminated paper, touched a book, turned the pages, and then continued playing with his toys, such as cars and blocks.

Andrea said that when he plays on the floor “I still read for him so he can see me with the book, once he sees me reading, he will come on to my lap even for a little time.” Andrea read a small book *¿Eres mi mamá?* (Eastman, 2001), and Andy joined her to sit on her lap. Andrea read:

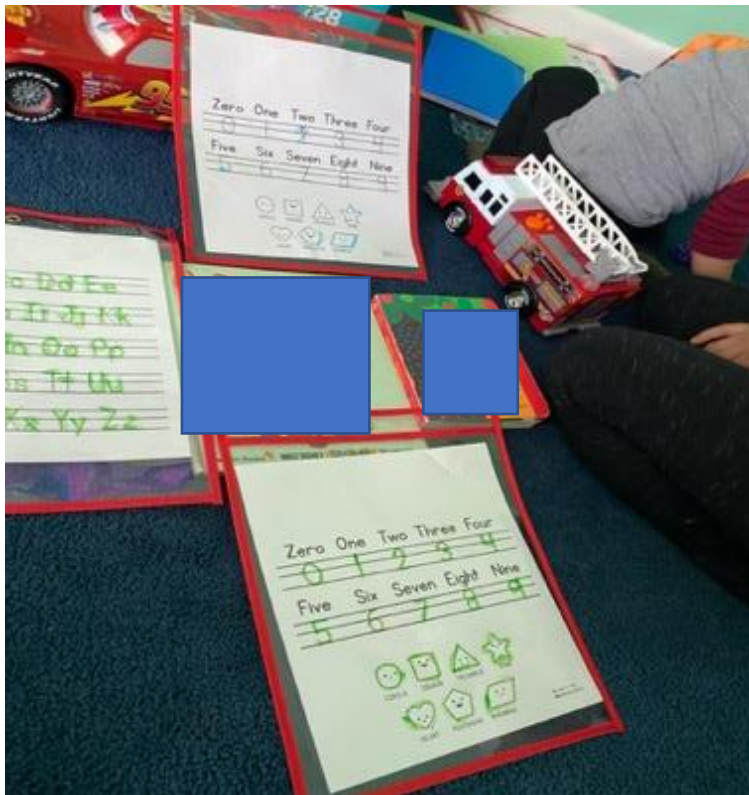
la mamá pajarito empolla un huevito, mira el huevito Andy . . . debo buscar comida para mi bebé Pajarito dijo el mama pajarito y voló muy alto, dentro del

nido, saltó, saltó y saltó . . . hasta que un bebé Pajarito, no la veía...espera papito, ven sigamos leyendo esto, no te vayas. [the mama bird hatches an egg, look at the egg Andy . . . nest, jumped, jumped and jumped . . . until a baby bird, I didn't see it . . . wait daddy, come let's keep reading this, don't go.]

Andy left Andrea to keep playing with his toys around them. Andrea continued her reading aloud until she finished the book. During these experiences with print, Andy was learning through playing and interacting with his mother; both play and learning were occurring at the same time. From a multimodal and play perspective, the role of play was important when Andy was interacting with Andrea while exploring print literacy.

Figure 5

Print Literacy Materials Obtained by Older Children at Andrea's Home



Other mothers, Rosa and Martha included in their literacy activities additional print literacy and numeracy materials at home, including magnets of letters and numbers that were located on the refrigerator. Their young children said the names of the letters aloud and played with the magnets independently. For instance, Martha had seen Martin (3 years, 7 months) using the magnets to play and learn the alphabet on the refrigerator while she cooked in the kitchen. Martha said that he played after she interacted with him showing the letters, she read the letters aloud, then he repeated after her. Also, she asked him the colors of the letters, and both moved the letters around, and then he tried to put in order the magnets on the refrigerator (see Figure 6). For example:

Martha: Mira, así pongo las letras ə bi: si:⁷ (ella pronuncia ABC en Inglés)

Martin: ə? bi?

Martha: Espera que estoy buscando el otro, la otra letra, buscala Martin.

Martin: Ah?

Martha: ə bi si di a ver como se dice esto . . . que sigue que sigue?

Martha: Donde está el otro? Buscame la C.

Martin: Aqui ta! (aquí está)

Martha: No aquí no está nada, esa no es la C, busca la C . . . mmm ya se nos perdió.

Martin: Mmm.

Martha: Ya estas son las fichas que tenemos, ahora veamos el color de estas letras, dime de que color es esta letra?

Martin: Mmm purple.

⁷ This transcription represents IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcription or phonetic spelling.

Martha: Si perple (purple).

Martha: Y este

Martin: Green

Martha: Y este otro

Martin: Yellow

Martha: Y este

Martin: Orange

Martha: Wow si sabes! Y este

Martin: Mmm yellow ese también.

Martha: Si es yellow otra vez.

[Martha: Look, that's how I put the letters ə bi: si: (pronounces ABC in English)

Martin: ə? Bi?

Martha: Wait I'm looking for the other, the other letter, find it Martin.

Martin: Huh?

Martha: ə bi si di let's see how to say this . . . what's next . . . what's next?

Martha: Where is the other one? Look for the C for me, find it.

Martin: Here it is!

Martha: No, there's nothing here, that's not the C, look for the C . . . mmm we already lost it.

Martin: Hmm.

Martha: These are the letters we have, now let's see the color of these letters, tell me what color is this letter?

Martin: Mmm purple

Martha: Yes purple

Martha: And this

Martin: Green

Martha: And this other one

Martin: Yellow

Martha: And this

Martin: Orange

Martha: Wow! You do know!

Martha: And this

Martin: Mmm yellow that one too.

Martha: Yes it's yellow again.]

While interacting with his mother, Martin was learning by exploring, experiencing literacy by playing with the magnetic alphabet letters and naming the letters in both languages.

Figure 6

Martin (3 years, 7 months) and Martha Playing and Learning Letters



Through these experiences of exploring, talking, and playing with the letters and identifying them, Martin was experiencing biliteracy. This is an important example of biliteracy, in which the simultaneous knowledge of print in two language systems at once occurred. Also, when exploring these literacy practices, it becomes evident that a strong relationship exists between play and literacy, with play enhancing social interactions and language development, as well as supporting literacy development. These experiences come together to underpin the lived experiences of Latina mothers in the active engagements they used at home to support their young children's early literacy and biliteracy development.

All the instances of the use of reading materials were meant to foster early literacy development. As previously cited in the literature review, similarly, Neumann et al.

(2013), in their study of mothers and their children ages 3 to 4 years old, discovered that maternal referencing of environmental print during play interaction had a positive effect on young children's literacy development. In these scenarios, the mothers used opportunities to learn, and to help their young children to explore letters and words meaningfully. From the emergent literacy perspective, literacy is experienced through print, even among children of these young ages.

Meaningful experiences and interactions with environmental print occurred during routine daily activities with the child's primary caregiver, in this case the Latina mothers; as observed in this study, the Latina mothers encouraged activities that included interacting with and experiencing print, noticing print literacy with their books in their home, and actively pointing out words and letters, all of which enrich and foster emergent literacy development. According to research, through consistent exposure to print and multiple interactions with the primary caregiver (Valencia-Garcia et al., 2008 as cited in Ayón et al., 2018), and experiencing play and learning simultaneously (Saracho, 2002b), the young child begins to understand print and the surrounding world.

Latina Immigrant Mothers Foster Oral Early Literacy Development Through Faith-Based, Religious Storytelling

In this study, I found that the eight Latina immigrant mothers fostered literacy in their children through faith-based practices and storytelling (Miller, 2020). They displayed literacies through faith-based language practices such as oral prayer (e.g., *Padre Nuestro* [*Our Father*], singing religious songs, attending church, sharing religious materials with their young children, and religious storytelling. This theme of faith-based

literacy practices was prevalent throughout this study, and I describe each of these practices in the forthcoming subsections.

Culture, including religion, can be an invisible but important factor that contributes to literacy development. In this study, the Latina mothers, who are the primary caregivers at home, involved their young children of all ages in literacy experiences, which included their oral religious beliefs and rituals. They identified themselves as *Católica*, *Evangelista*, or *Cristiana* [Catholic or Evangelical Christian]. Further, these Latina mothers used religious storytelling, such as when they recounted Bible stories in Spanish and applied them to events in the current moment (*in situ*) to encourage literacy development. In the following subsections, I will discuss specific faith-based practices and the use of storytelling that were observed to support emergent literacy.

Latina Immigrant Mothers Used Oral Prayers as a Literacy Practice With Young Children

As research has shown, Latina mothers value sharing their traditions, such as praying, in their daily literacy activities (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018; Miller, 2020). In this study, seven out of eight mothers who participated prayed with their children daily, at least twice each day. One of the mothers, Renata, shared a prayer in her daily routine with her young daughter (Reni, 1 year, 1 month). Renata said: “A las 9:00 am nosotras comemos juntas y empiezo el día rezando a Dios para agradecer” [“At 9:00 am we eat together. We start the day praying to God to thank God”]. Renata added,

Rezamos, yo le digo en voz alta la oración del día, aplaudimos, Reni aplaude un poquito y yo le enseño a aplaudir varias veces. Yo rezo a Dios, en voz alta,

agradecemos a Dios por estar reunidos. Lo mismo en la mañana por lo que Dios nos ha dado. [We pray, I say the prayer of the day out loud, we clap, Reni claps a little and I teach her to clap several times. I pray to God, out loud, we thank God for being together. The same thing in the morning for what God has given us.]

This was one example of how Renata used faith-based literacy practices in her daily routine. Other participants followed similar practices. For example, Ana, who goes to an Evangelical church, and she indicates that Juanito (male, 1 year, 4 months) is too young to interact through a specific prayer; however, she said aloud the prayer for Juanito. Based on what she memorized when reading her Bible, she included daily devotional messages (guided individual religious content for readers, usually Christians, who wanted to meditate on their faith and relation with God) and said them aloud when praying at night. Similarly, Micaela practiced the Catholic religion with her child Mica (female, 1 year, 7 months) by praying in Spanish. Olga (Catholic) explained that she regularly prayed a short prayer with Oliver (male, 2 years, 5 months) at night, and that she encouraged him to repeat the prayer after she says the prayer aloud. Another participant, Flor (Catholic), usually interacted by praying at night as well, with Caro (female, 3 years, 6 months), and they said aloud together the prayer “*el Padre Nuestro*” (*Our Father*) at night. Flor and her daughter prayed about gratefulness and health for their family. Flor taught Caro to say aloud and make the Sign of the Cross with her hand “*en el nombre del padre del hijo y del espíritu santo amén*” [“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen”], and Flor explained that by praying she showed respect for God. Flor noted that through praying, both mother and child interacted together in Spanish. Likewise, Rosa and Rober (male, 4 years, 1 month) interacted by praying to God

for all their family, for health and strength, and in gratitude. Rosa explained that she usually prays aloud in the morning and at night with Rober.

Martha's practice mirrored the worship that she and Martin (male, 3 years, 7 months) experience at church. Martha regularly began prayer with her young child by reading aloud a passage from the children's Bible, then a short prayer, and emulated content learned from church. More importantly, Martha said that the most valuable element of education is learning about God. Martha emphasized,

Para mi más que nada es como le había dicho para mi es de hablar que hay un Dios eso es para mí [es educarlo] para que él [cuando el crezca] este grande pues ya él [Martin] este sepa [que hay un Dios] para mi es eso [importante educarle].
[For me more than anything it is as I had told him, for me it is to speak that there is a God that is for me (to educate him) so that (when he grows up) he is great because he (Martin) already knows (that there is a God) for me that is (important to educate him).]

Similar to research that indicates that Latinx families practice their religion by verbalizing prayers with their young children, experiencing the language spoken in the Mass, and reading the religious *versículos* (verses; Cychk & Hammer, 2018), this study found consistently that these literacy practices were promoted through praying at home. Moreover, these mothers explained that they learned from church and transferred that knowledge to their young children during their interactions at home.

Another Latina mother that evidenced oral prayer as a literacy practice was Flor. During an important celebration in Perú, Flor told the story of this religious and faith-based celebration in Perú to Caro (female, 3 years, 6 months) "el 2 de Noviembre con mi

familia celebramos el día de los difuntos” [“on November 2 we celebrate the day of the dead”] which is about the importance of praying, setting, and creating a religious “altar.” Flor explained to Caro that this is a “tradición religiosa en mi familia en Perú para recordar a mis ancestros y su cercanía a la familia y mostrar respeto por ellos” [“religious tradition in my family in Perú to remember our ancestors and their closeness to family and to show our respect for them”]. Both mother and daughter put together a religious altar (elevated place where religious rites were celebrated and prayed, such as offerings and sacrifices to the gods) in her living room. Flor and Caro decorated the altar for the “Celebración de los Difuntos” [“Celebration of the Dead”], where both placed the Bible, portraits of her grandparents, water, food, candles, and offerings. Figure 7 shows an image that Flor shared virtually with me of the altar with her daughter Caro, with a text in Spanish which shows her act of faith, that translated means: “Peruvian tradition to pray to our deceased and put an offering for the day of the dead because they will come to visit us.”

Figure 7

Caro (3 years, 6 months) Praying in Front of the Altar



During the observation, Caro demonstrated her interest in the ritual and its elements by decorating the altar and by repeating the prayers. Flor demonstrated her faith practices to her daughter to as to instill these religious rituals and cultural and family traditions within her. She wanted her daughter to be involved with her religion and tradition, to practice her faith and honor her family, and to use Spanish when praying. For example:

Flor: Pon los arreglos de flores en la mesa y ahora espera que prendo la vela . . .
ahora Caro recemos por los abuelitos que nos cuidan en el . . .

Caro: En dónde están?

Flor: En el cielo siempre cuidandonos y vienen a visitarnos con su presencia espiritual por eso ponemos estas ofrendas, el agua, las flores, las fotos que colocamos les va a gustar a ellos, porque les gusta que los recordemos y nosotros por respeto los recordamos a ellos.

Caro: Y van a venir?

Flor: Ellos siempre están porque están en nuestra memoria y en nuestro corazón, ahora vamos a rezar el padre nuestro y tú repites conmigo, OK?

Caro: OK.

Flor: Padre nuestro que estas en el cielo . . .

Caro: Padre nuestro que estas en el cielo.

[Flor: Put the flower arrangements on the table and now wait for me to light the candle . . . Now, Caro, let's pray for the grandparents who take care of us in the . . . in the . . .

Caro: Where are they?

Flor: In heaven . . . always taking care of us and they come to visit us with their spiritual presence, that's why we put these offerings, the water, the flowers, the photos that we put up, they will like it, because they like that we remember them and we remember them, out of respect for them.

Caro: And are they coming?

Flor: They are always here because they are in our memory and in our hearts, now we are going to pray the Our Father and you repeat with me, OK?

Caro: OK.

Flor: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .]

Caro: Our Father who are in heaven]

Both performed the ritual in a meaningful way, while Flor imparted in Spanish to Caro the importance of the elements that make up this altar and prayer. Through this interaction, she recounted to her daughter about remembering ancestors and caring for the family. In this interaction between mother and daughter, the mother fostered early literacy development through her faith-based, storytelling, and religious literacy practices.

Through praying, all of these Latina mothers, except for Andrea, shared oral language with their young children. These distinctive literacy activities reflected how these mothers and their children experienced language and literacy development through interactions involving religion that might not be contemplated or construed as academic or educational but reflected ways of fostering early literacy development. For seven mothers, Renata, Ana, Micaela, Olga, Flor, Rosa, and Martha, praying aloud with their children in Spanish and praying in thankfulness to God was an everyday part of their oral language literacy practices at home. Regardless of their Christian religious denomination (Catholic or Evangelical) they shared their faith with their young children. Encouraging their young children in this type of oral language through faith-based practices provided experiences for these children in listening to specific language and cultural stories, noting intonation; learning vocabulary; forming sentences; and, most important for them, fostering language development in Spanish.

Latina Immigrant Mothers Incorporated Spiritual Music in Their Daily Routines to Promote Literacy

In this study, the Latina mothers included Christian music in their daily routine with their young children, as an important part of their experiences with their faith-based literacy practices. Four of the eight mothers, Martha, Andrea, Ana, and Renata reported singing in addition to their practice of praying.

For example, Martha sang contemporary Christian music to Martin (male, 3 years, 7 months) as a daily routine. Christian songs were important for Martha because it was her way to foster oral language development by reminding him of Spanish and exposing him to the Spanish lyrics. She associated these lyrics with telling a story by singing. To her, this was a valuable practice, and she expressed that she believed those lyrics helped her young child to further master Spanish while they sang together and grew in faith. The spiritual music with those lyrics was a way of experiencing language development with Martin. While they listened to a song together, she reminded her son of the importance of remembering Spanish and learning about God, specifically through Christian songs in Spanish. Martha identified the songs that she listened to with Martin. Martha's favorite artist was: "Oscar Medina the song 'Qué sería de mi vida'" ["Oscar Medina 'What Would Be of My Life'"], and she showed me the following lyrics of the song as an example:

Qué sería de mi vida	[If you hadn't rescued me
Si no me hubieras rescatado	what would become of my life
Qué sería de mi vida	Without your love and
Sin Tu amor y sin Tu paz	Without your peace
Gracias Cristo	Thank you, Christ,
Gracias Dios	Thanks God
Por mostrarme	For showing me
Tu infinito amor . . .	Your infinite love . . .]

She shared her belief in the importance of using Spanish when discussing stories about God:

La música que escuchamos es en [Español] y cuando le hablo de Dios es en Español, pero más como decimos nosotros en casa, hay que hablar Español en casa y allá afuera hay que hablar inglés Porque yo pienso que para que también [a mi niño] no se les olvide el español mientras hablamos de Dios. [The music we listen to is when I talk about God it's in Spanish, but more like we say at home, you have to speak Spanish at home and out there you have to speak English Because I think that for that too (my child) won't forget Spanish when we talk about God.]

For Martha, singing religious songs in Spanish was significant, as these practices served to expose her child to the Spanish language, which was important to her because it was part of where she came from and reminded her of her culture and traditions. Through the practice of singing and listening to music in Spanish with her son, the mother expected to pass the Spanish language along to him. These activities promoted literacy

through spiritual music, but also promoted language development and Spanish as their native language. Sometimes, these practices had a special role in experiencing Spanish language development because the participants were intentional about teaching their young child in Spanish. These activities promoted early literacy development, as they involved the interaction of the mothers with their young children by using vocabulary, as well as promoting listening, talking, and social interaction.

As mentioned previously, Andrea (Evangelical) did not pray daily with her child, as she considered Andy (male, 1 year, 6 months) too young to pray with him, so she focused on singing traditional “alabanzas” (Christian worship). Andrea engaged him through singing “Musica Cristiana, alabanzas and adoración” [“Christian music, worship and praise”] in her daily routine with Andy. Andrea, a self-identified Evangelical Christian, said, “A pues a mi niño el chiquito le canto alabanzas . . . Alabanzas cristianas” [“Well, I sang to my little child (Andy) Christian worship and praise”]. Andrea explained that praise and worship songs were understood as the act of making positive statements about God and his works. Andrea elaborated that in her Christian religion, praise is addressed to God and is focused on thanking and celebrating God. Andrea used contemporary Christian music as a tool to entertain Andy, to interact with him, and to provide the opportunity for Andy to listen to Christian songs and lyrics in Spanish. By listening to these songs, her child experienced language and early literacy development.

Ana was observed listening to contemporary Christian songs as background music in the morning at home. In her daily routine, Ana sang aloud for Juanito (male, 1 year, 4 months). For instance, she sang the song “*Dame tu ojos* [God],” by Marcela Gándara, while Juanito listened and watched with Ana while singing. Ana listened to “La mejor

música de alabanza y adoración, musica Cristiana” [“The best music for praise and worship, Christian songs”] and “La mejor música Cristiana” [“The best Christian music”]. Ana learned the chorus and lyrics by watching Christian music videos. Juanito was alert while listening, imitating sounds, and moving his hands when she sang in an entertaining way for him. Ana explained that she enjoyed singing these songs for Juanito, as these songs talk about God, obedience, spiritual life, praying, the importance of God in their lives, praise, believing in God, and doing good for others. These practices promoted Spanish language development through interaction. Even though Juanito is young, he listened and imitated his mother; through these experiences, his mother introduced him to language and Christian spiritual development.

Similarly, another mother, Renata (Evangelical), and her daughter Reni (1 year, 1 month), listened to contemporary gospel songs together. For instance, when Renata sang, Reni imitated her mother by repeating a word of the song “Gogo” for “Gozo,” and Renata explained that is part of the chorus of a Christian song named “Gozo, gozo yo quería” [“Joy, joy, joy I wanted”], and she continued with the lyrics: “pero vino Cristo el dador de la vida, y me dio el gozo, del que yo queria” [“but Christ, the giver of life, came and gave me the joy that I wanted”]. Also, Renata played musical instruments for Reni, such as the piano and sometimes the guitar. Renata explained,

siempre cantamos, y tocamos los instrumentos, porque el papá de Reni toca profesionalmente los instrumentos Pongo a Reni cerca del piano para que mirara, y encima de mis piernas se sienta, y con sus manos toca unas teclas, el piano es eléctrico, entonces escucha los sonidos . . . siempre escuchamos música cristiana. [We always sing, and play with the instruments, because Reni’s dad

plays instruments professionally I placed Reni near the piano to look, and on top of my legs she sits, and with her hands she plays some keys, the piano is electric, so she listens to the sounds . . . we always listen to Christian music.]

Christian songs have rich lyrics that incorporate theological text. Through singing, Renata exposed her daughter to the gospel of Jesus Christ; simultaneously, through the practice of oral language, she fostered emergent literacy. Through contemporary spiritual music, the mother and child were able to engage in multimodal literacy practices, such as playing the piano. When considering the age of the child, this relates to fostering her early development.

Martha's, Andrea's, Ana's, and Renata's homes spiritual music frequently played in the background. The daily comfort of these Latina immigrant mothers is music; they take refuge in it to remember their faith, messages from God, and their Spanish language, which they in turn share with their young children when they interact, tell stories, talk, or sing with them. The importance of spiritual music in the lives of mothers with their children had a positive impact since through it they experience language with their children at an early age.

Exposure to Church Experiences and Religious Print Materials Influenced Literacy Practices at Home

Through attending church, these Latina mothers earned and obtained materials (e.g., crafts made at church) that promote early literacy. Seven of the Latina mothers learned from church experiences and obtained religious materials that influenced their practices at home. Andrea explained that she was not going at this time due to time constraints, but in the past, she used to go more regularly. It is important to understand

that other experiences such as going to church, that take place outside, influence the practices at home, and later those experiences are applied at home; as a result, it is important to understand the positive role of these church-based experiences and materials in the mothers' implementation of literacy practices in their homes.

For instance, Renata attended an Evangelical church twice each week, at which time she socialized with the community in Spanish, and she learned music from church to share later with her daughter. In addition, Renata explained the importance of reading the Bible to her child (*religion evangelica e iglesia pentecostes*) [Evangelical religion and Pentecostal church] at home. Renata emphasized Bible stories:

para aprender y conocer dependiendo de qué se trate verdad. Por ejemplo cuando se trata de la biblia conocer cómo fue la vida [historia] de Jesús y comparándola a nuestra [historia] ahora. [to learn and know depending on the message, right? for example when it is about (reading) the Bible is to know how the (story) life of Jesus is and make comparisons with our own (story) life now.]

Like Renata, Ana brought literacy practices from church to her home to enrich her child's experiences. Ana attended church three times each week with her whole family to worship. Renata explained that in this church they offered activities for her older children while she participated in the Spanish Mass. For Renata, church is the place where she learned, acquired knowledge, obtained literacy materials for children, and practiced literacy. These experiences led her to apply at home what she learned at church and to foster early literacy development.

For instance, Ana explained that she prepared written messages (see Figure 8) at home in the presence of her children, to practice and repeat, and that she eventually

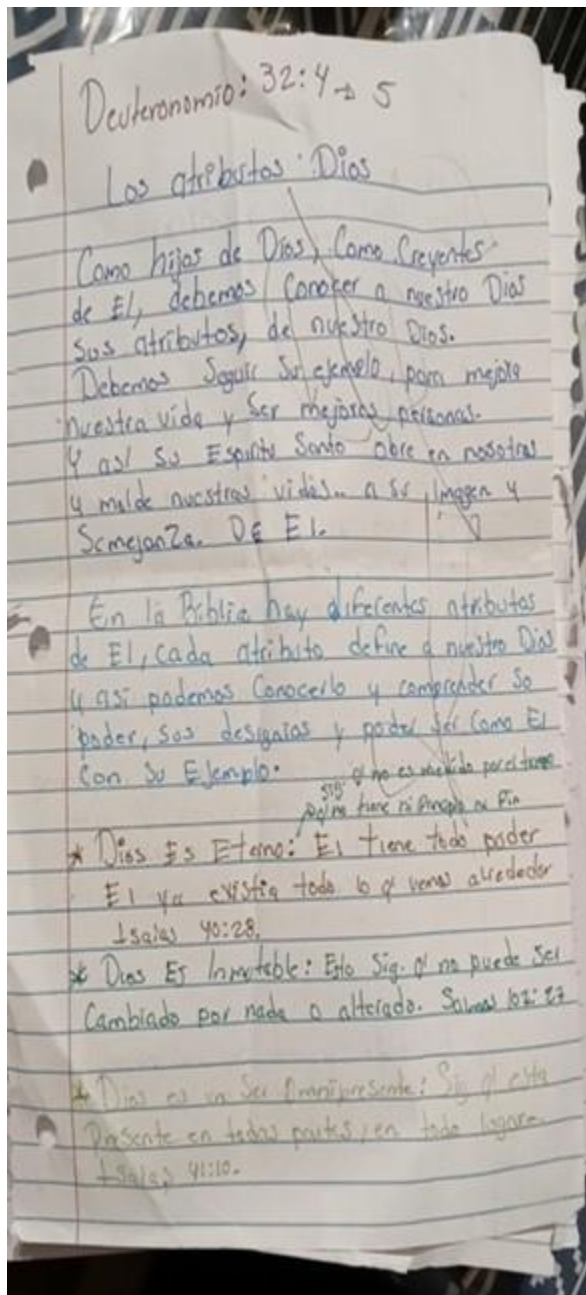
shared aloud in church. Those written messages were about current concerns or issues, or themes pertaining to church. For instance, the themes included “conocer los atributos de Dios y como aplicar seguir su ejemplo y ser mejores personas” [“know the attributes of God and how to apply to follow his example and be better people”]. Ana said:

Osea ese mensaje es el que se viene en el momento . . . por ejemplo en cuanto a lo de la iglesia, si me toca dar un pensamiento, un estudio [biblico] un mensaje yo suelo escribirlo, no de memoria, sino escribir lo que pienso, lo que encuentro en cuanto a la investigación que tengo que hacer lo llevo escrito . . . a esta iglesia que se llama, iglesia Pentecostal . . . cuando me toca . . . por ejemplo la semana pasada solo escribí solo como dos días un pensamiento. [I mean, that message is the one that is coming at the moment . . . for example, regarding the church, if I have to give a thought, a [biblical] study, a message, I usually write it, not from memory, but write what I think, what I find in terms of the research that I have to do I have written . . . to this church called, Pentecostal church. . . when I have to, not every day either, for example last week I only wrote a thought for about two days.]

Then she continued,

por ejemplo en estos momentos la congregación todo el grupo lo lee si yo les doy por ejemplo este tipo de pensamientos, o estudios son en cuanto a la iglesia en cuanto a la biblia y yo ya por ejemplo una cita bíblica y ya ellos buscan lo leen y en ese momento es mi momento [para exponer lo que he escrito], nadie me corrige nadie más habla solo es mi momento. [for example, right now the congregation reads it, the whole group read if I give them, for example, these

kinds of thoughts, or studies are about the church, about the Bible and, for example, a biblical quote and they already look for it, they read it and at that moment it is my moment (to show what I have written), nobody corrects me, nobody else speaks, it is just my moment.]

Figure 8*Ana's Religious Written Message*

Translated into English, the text in Figure 8 reads:

Deuteronomy: 32: 4-5 God's Attributes.

As children of God, As believers in him, we must know our God. We must know our God the attributes of him, of our God. We must follow his example to

improve our lives and be better people. And so, his Holy Spirit works in us and molds our lives in his image and likeness of him. In the Bible there are different

attributes of him, each attribute defines our God and thus we can know him and understand his power, his designs and be able to be like him with his example.

God is eternal. He means that he is not measured by time, that he has no

beginning and no end. He has all power, he already existed. Everything we see

around. Isaiah. 40:28 God is immutable. This means that he cannot be changed for

anything or altered. Psalms 102:27. God is an omnipotent, omnipresent being. It

means that he is present everywhere, everywhere. Isaiah 41:10.

Ana prepared the messages at home, and she read them aloud to her children

before going to church. In this way, this activity seemed similar to reading a book

because both involve reading aloud. By participating in this type of faith-based literacy

activity, this mother showed that each person can write and express an idea of value to a

public audience, such as at church.

Ana's church provided additional activities that support literacy development in

children. Ana said she learned some activities from church that she practiced at home

with her child. In church on Sundays, they had a small children's group. Ana called that

group "Grupo Dominical" ("Sunday Group"); in this group, the children learn about

stories from the Bible, topics from the Bible, and prayers, and they create crafts with

religious themes. The children learn fine motor skills, such as cutting, and they make crafts with written messages and stories about God. She showed me a picture of a door sign created by the children. Ana applied her knowledge of those activities at home. As the researcher, I did not participate in person in their church, and this study focuses on practices at home; however, the mothers shared their experiences, photos, and videos from church, and they shared in detail the materials and literacy experiences that they replicated at home (e.g., stories, songs, readings, messages, and crafts).

For Ana, the print literacy materials that are crafted at the church vary, including worksheets for children and crafts. For example, the craft created with her children is a door hanger sign with a message that says: “Dios responde mi oración” [“God answers my prayer”]. Ana had other religious print literacy materials at her home, such as a frame with a message, “Bless This Home with Love and Laughter,” and a Baptism certificate. Also, she had a ceramic holder with the “Lord’s Prayer” (see Figure 9) and another that says “Hope.” Ana considered it important to have religious messages around the home to remind her children to look for and read about God’s presence. Notably, these print artifacts are an example of biliteracy within the home. Having print materials like this helps to expose children not only to print literacy in Spanish but also to words in English. As English has a place in this home, the mother encouraged biliteracy at home.

Figure 9

Lord's Prayer in English in Ana's Home



This theme of church attendance and exposure to religious materials promoting literacy among young children of Latina mothers was included to highlight the sources (outside the home) from which these Latina mothers acquired some of their knowledge and experience about faith, religion, and stories, songs, and information. Additionally, it is important to recognize that mothers continue to learn literacy practices; by these ongoing adult learning activities, they reinforced their own learning. They continued learning in their church, growing in their knowledge, and adhering to a daily routine of prayer; through these religious practices, later these mothers fostered early literacy at home with their young children. The interesting thing is that mothers took with them their

young children, devoted time to these activities, and in some of the cases did this as a weekly routine to promote these religious practices that are accompanied by literacy. As mentioned, these practices were essential for these Latina immigrant mothers in their routine with their young children, and therefore it was also important to understand these other practices that take place outside and are then applied at home as literacy practices.

Latina Immigrant Mothers Used Faith-based Storytelling as a Literacy Practice With Young Children

The eight Latina immigrant mothers who participated in this study recounted stories to their young children as a tool, using their funds of knowledge, to inculcate oral faith-based literacies. There is an important distinction between oral prayers and storytelling. Oral prayers are usually directed to God, while through storytelling, these Latina mothers recounted biblical stories or faith-based stories to their young children. Studies have revealed that Latinx families' oral literacies encompass religious discussions and telling stories about Latinx culture (Billings, 2009; Caspe, 2009; Soto-Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014). These Latina mothers narrated stories in Spanish, interacted with their children, and taught them rituals focusing on religion. As shown in the following examples, storytelling influenced the content and context in which the mothers interacted with their young children at home, supporting the children's literacy development.

For instance, one of the mothers, Renata, told a biblical story to her daughter Reni (female, 1 year, 1 month) as part of her daily routine. When observed, Reni was listening attentively for a short period of time to her mother's spoken language. In this example, Renata recounted the biblical story to Reni of Noah's Ark and the 40 days,

. . . y Dios llamó a Noé y le dijo que en pocos días enviaría un diluvio sobre la tierra y llovería durante 40 días y 40 noches. . . . asignó a Noé para construir el arca . . . esta arca serviría para salvar a los animales . . . animales como los elefantes . . . entonces estaban a salvo. [. . . and God called Noah, and told him in a few days he will send a flood over the earth, and it will rain for 40 days and 40 nights. . . . he assigned Noah to build the ark . . . this ark would serve to save the animals . . . animals like elephants . . . then they were safe.]

This story telling was important for Renata to tell Reni because she instilled in her child the importance of maintaining faith, forgiveness, and belief in new opportunities, and because “La fe ayuda a permanecer firmes, a cumplir nuestros sueños ante tantas dificultades” [“Faith helps (us) to remain firm, to fulfill our dreams in the face of so many difficulties”]. For Renata, it was important that Reni listened, even at her young age, to her spiritual teachings. Through these biblical stories and oral language experiences, she taught Reni the Spanish language, and she encouraged Reni to respect God. It was evidenced that storytelling and faith-based literacy practices were embedded in this interaction. This kind of storytelling differs from book-related storytelling because it represents moments where the mother infused Christian morality into the current situation.

Another mother, Ana, talked with Juanito (male, 1 year, 4 months) about a religious story, in the living room while she fed him a snack. Ana told the story of Jonah aloud, explaining with detail and made it clear to me (who observed virtually) the way she spoke to Juanito when they were alone together in other settings. For instance, Ana said, “Jonás es el personaje principal del libro” [“Jonah is the main character in the

book”], and that the Lord “le mandó que fuera a la ciudad de Nínive a predicar” [“charged him to go to the city of Nineveh to preach”]. Then Ana continued explaining the story, emphasizing the message “the obediencia y desobediencia” [“of obedience and disobedience”]. While she recounted the story, Juanito stared at her, then played with a soft ball while listening, and then fell asleep next to Ana. This mother exposed him to language through storytelling, oral language, vocabulary, intonation, narration, and listening.

Another mother, Martha, told her son Martin (3 year, 7 months) her story of a religious holiday in Guatemala when having lunch at her kitchen and after finishing looking at a Christmas religious book. To frame this scene, the context of this story was Christmas in the United States. During the interviews, observations, *testimonios*, and artifacts indicated that for Martha, Christmas was a spiritual time for her. It made her feel nostalgic, as she was not close to the other members of the family while they prayed, shared, and celebrated Christmas. Martha told Martin the story about a Christmas memory she had from Guatemala. Through this narrative, the mother passed on her memories, experiences, and spiritual traditions to her young son. Martha told him “Mira, Martin, te voy a contar mi historia sobre cómo celebramos la ‘Navidad en Guatemala’ y la forma en que se prepara una celebración religiosa con la colaboración de los familiares y amigos” [“Look, Martin, I’m going to tell you my story about how we celebrated ‘Christmas in Guatemala’ and the way that a religious celebration was prepared with the collaboration of family and friends”]. She explained in Spanish the details about the preparation for Christmas, which included the involvement of family and food. The

following is a short part of the script to demonstrate the interaction between mother and child about the Christmas season:

Martha: Nosotros hacemos y comemos tamales, (Martin dice si, si, si) hacemos chocolate,

Martin: Chocolate?

Martha: Si chocolate para tomar en las navidades en mi casa, en las navidades, en la casa de tus tios y tus tias haciamos eso Nosotros en la Navidad hacemos muchos, muchos tamales

Martin: muchos tamales

Martha: Ponches

Martin: Ponches

Martha: Pasteles

Martin: Pasteles

Martha: Hacemos eee . . .chocolates

Martin: asi de chocolates?

Martha: asi convivimos con nuestra familia

Martin: con familias?

Martha: si con tus tias, . . .

Martin: tias?

Martha: si tios, primos

Martin: primos

Martha: ahh mmm sobrinos, amigos,

Martin: amigos

Martha: si amigos . . . y amistades

Martin: amistades.

[Martha: We make and eat tamales, (Martin says yes, yes, yes) we make chocolate,

Martin: Chocolate?

Martha: Yes, chocolate to drink at Christmas at my house, at Christmas, at the house of your uncles and aunts we used to do that . . . At Christmas we make many, many tamales

Martin: Many tamales

Martha: Ponche (a traditional fruit juice)

Martin: Ponche

Martha: Cakes

Martin: Cakes

Martha: We make eee . . . chocolates

Martin: That chocolate?

Martha: This is how we interact with our family

Martin: With families?

Martha: Yes, with your aunts . . .

Martin: Guys?

Martha: Yes, uncles, cousins

Martin: Cousins

Martha: Ahh mmm nephews, friends,

Martin: Friends

Martha: Yes friends and other friends

Martin: Friends.]

This conversation occurred when Martin listened and repeated after his mother, recounting the story about the Christmas celebration in Guatemala. Martin gave Martha his full attention and asked her questions, sometimes repeating words he heard from his mother. Through this conversation, Martin was making sense of the story while he was making connections, and he was learning when he repeated after his mother said the words. He was also practicing the turn taking that occurs in a conversation. Through the conversation about a traditional religious celebration, Martha intentionally taught Martin about Christmas celebrations in her country of origin. Because of Martin's older age, as compared with the other younger participants in the study, he was more verbally interactive and created more conversation. This interaction between Martha and her son was an example of the mother fostering literacy through a religious storytelling practice. Consistent with other studies, this study has found that these storytelling traditions and forms included the use of mothers' language with their young children in these familial relationships (Delgado Gaitan, 2004; Durand, 2010; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Poza et al., 2014). The mothers in this study passed on their knowledge of their faith-based and religious practices to the youngest generation in their family, their very young children, through storytelling, which is a central part of these Latina mothers' routines at home.

Latina Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions of Education and Values Guide Their Beliefs About Early Literacy

In this study, the eight participating Latina mothers shared an understanding of early literacy as a combination of knowing the language (i.e., speaking, listening, reading,

and writing), *alfabetizar* (learning the alphabet), learning, studying, and going to school; however, they also expressed that early literacy is interconnected with *educación*, which encompasses teaching values (i.e., respect and obedience) and proper behavior to their young children. For example, Flor, Renata, Andrea, and Micaela associated early literacy with *educación*: language, early speaking, learning, and studying. For them, early literacy encompasses not only the acts of reading and writing but also the values of respect and obedience. In the following subsection I discuss Latina mothers' perceptions of early literacy related to language, and then in the subsequent subsections, I will address in more detail the dimensions of early literacy embedded within the context of values.

Explicit Knowledge of Early Literacy Continuum, Language, and Print Concepts

In this study, it was found that all eight participating Latina immigrant mothers perceived that language is associated with early literacy. In Spanish, literacy most closely translates to *letrado* or *alfabetización*. As Ceda Santana explained,

In the Spanish language, the word *literacy* [emphasis in original] in its current use has no direct equivalent. The closest term is *letrado* which corresponds to *learned* person, whereas *iletrado* [illiterate] corresponds to *analfabeta*, literally *someone who cannot read or write . . .* The opposite, *alfabetizado*, usually refers to someone who has acquired the written code. *Alfabetizado* and *alfabetización* (the process of becoming *alfabetizado*) are common terms in Latin American literature. (qtd. in Kamil et al., 2000)

All these Latina mothers defined literacy based on the concept in Spanish “*alfabetizar*” and associated it directly with the term *literacy*, which specifically refers to the action of teaching to speak, read, listen, and write. They explicitly recognized the process of early

literacy development as the experience their young children have learning the alphabet, letters, words, and print text that eventually influences future learning of reading and writing. They also perceived that early literacy is a continuum, a process in which their children's young age plays an important role, since in these early stages of learning their young children are absorbing early literacy experiences. Furthermore, the Latina mothers recognized that through these literacy experiences, their children would eventually learn to communicate and, ideally, learn other languages and become *letrado/alfabetizado*.

In the semi-structured interview, Flor and Micaela expressed that they perceived early literacy as a practice in which they engaged with their young children at the very beginning of the language experience. Flor (daughter Caro, 3 years, 6 months) who had progressed further in school (through high school) than the other Latina mothers, was particularly familiar with the word *literacy*. Literacy for her was the activity of speaking, reading, and writing. Also, Flor believed that early literacy was particularly important when someone, such as her little one, began to speak. For example, Flor stated:

alfabetización incluye el proceso de aprender a leer y a escribir luego es para mí . . . para mí es el principio de comprensión de aprender a escribir, ir por pasos, ósea primero el abecedario . . . influye mucho en el proceso de hablar, empezamos la alfabetización en el momento que hablamos. [Literacy/*alfabetización* includes the process of learning to read and write, so it is for me . . . for me it is the beginning of understanding of, learning to write, we go by steps, like going through the alphabet first . . . it influences a lot in the process of speaking, we begin literacy at the moment that we speak.]

Flor recognized early language development as part of literacy. This is an example of the mother's recognition of speaking and writing developing out of the experience of early literacy development.

Ana and Rosa perceived and consciously recognized the connection between literacy and early language development, through the experience of learning the alphabet, words, and language. Rosa (son Rober, 3 years, 8 months), perceived that early literacy (*alfabetizar*) would help her child to build on his language skills: “alfabetismo asi chiquito es como ayudar al pues acomodar la palabra que diga . . . o yo mostrándole las letras o también objetos como para que pueda entender mejor” [“literacy at his young age, will help to build the words that he says . . . or me showing him the letters, or also objects so that he can understand better”]. Ana (son Juanito, 1 year, 4 months) was familiar with the word *literacy*, and she associated it with learning the alphabet and formal education: “en Español, y este es pues, enseñar a los niños pero es el alfabeto, es palabras, es nombres de cosas” [“in Spanish, and this is, well, it is teaching children, it is the alphabet, it is words, it is the names of things”].

Similarly, Micaela (daughter Mica, 1 year, 7 months) emphasized the importance of experiencing early literacy at her child's specific young age: “Pienso que la educación [alfabetización] temprana o la educación, pienso que tienen una mente joven que todo lo absorben y todo se les va quedando a ellos” [“I think that early literacy, or *educación*, I think that they (my young children) have a young mind that absorbs everything, and all (what they learn) they keep with them”]. This mother demonstrated explicit knowledge of the early literacy continuum and the language development that involves learning literacy. From a nuanced perspective, Micaela, perceived early language development

and literacy as important in a crucial stage of her child's development, acknowledging the rapid process, and pace of early learning at her child's age.

All of these Latina mothers described *early literacy* (*alfabetismo*) as learning the alphabet and language at the young age of their children.

Early Literacy Associated With Speaking, Communicating, Studying, and Other Languages

Renata, Andrea, Olga, Martha, Rosa, and Ana perceived that early childhood education involves speaking, communicating, studying, and learning other languages. It is important to emphasize that some of these mothers referred not only to developing language, but also to acquiring languages other than those used in the home. During semi-structured interviews, Olga (son Oliver, 2 years, 5 months) associated early literacy with communication. She reported:

yo creo que es muy necesario que ellos aprendan eso [early literacy] para que ellos puedan hablar bien porque la comunicación siempre [es importante] . . . asi uno descubre eso, es lo que yo veo que para ellos es muy necesario que [aprendan] esas cosas. [I think it is very necessary for them to learn that (early literacy) so that they can speak well because communication is always (important) . . . so one discovers that for oneself, it is what I see that for them it is very necessary that they (learn) those things.]

Olga believed her child's experiences in language, reading, and writing would give him value as an individual. Olga strongly emphasized that her child must be educated, as she believed her child's value will depend on his level of education. Importantly, Olga

expressed that she perceived early literacy to be a valuable tool that her children can keep and use in the future:

Es muy importante que el aprenda, que se eduquen y que ellos puedan escribir para que ellos puedan tener algo en la vida cuando ellos pueden escribir, y que al estudiar con esas herramientas que ellos pueden hacer pueden tener algo de valor con ellos. [It is very important that they learn that they educate themselves and that they can write so that they can have something in life when they can write, and that by studying with those tools that they can do they can have something of value with them.]

During semi-structured interviews, Olga associated early literacy with education; however, in addition, Olga, who also speaks not only Spanish but “Mam,” a language from Guatemala, continued:

. . . que se eduque a temprana edad porque yo creo que es muy necesario que ellos aprendan, eso para que ellos puedan hablar bien porque la comunicación es muy necesario Yo creo en la educación [early literacy] . . . eh . . . que los niños aprendan, aprendan otras cosas, como otros idiomas cuando son chiquitos. [. . . be educated at an early age because I think it is very necessary for them to learn, that so that they can speak well, because communication is always something important I believe in education (early literacy) . . . eh . . . that children learn, learn other things, like other languages at a young age.]

Similarly, when I asked Renata (daughter Reni, 1 year, 1 month) to define *early literacy* and give some examples, she included in her perception of literacy and education

learning other languages and studying and teaching respect to her young child. Renata explained her understanding of literacy:

. . . por ejemplo yo hablo dos idiomas, entonces es lo que yo entiendo de la alfabetización, que también no debe de olvidarse uno de donde uno proviene, es aprender otros idiomas, y enseñarle también (esos lenguajes) a nuestros hijos chiquitos para que ellos sepan de dónde vienen. [. . . for example, I speak two languages, so that is what I understand about literacy, that one should also not forget where one comes from, is to learn other languages, and teach (those languages) to our young children so that they know where they come from.]

Overall, the eight Latina immigrant mothers who were participants in this study perceived early literacy as associated with the word *alfabetizar*. These Latina mothers described that *early literacy* (*alfabetizar*) and its elements play an important role that eventually will help their child to build on their language skills and experiences to communicate. These Latina mothers also demonstrated their appreciation and acknowledgement of the process through which their young children would develop emergent literacy, or the beginning of literacy experiences. In their definition of early literacy, these Latina mothers also included the term *educación*, which involves teaching values as an integral part of helping these young children grow in early literacy.

Educación Connected With Early Literacy

In this study, as mentioned, the eight participating Latina mothers shared their perception that it was not only their role to teach *alfabetización* (literacy) but also to provide *educación* (which refers also to their values) simultaneously. They perceived these two concepts as being connected to their beliefs regarding their children's early

literacy development. For them, features of early literacy included understanding language, speaking, reading, writing, learning, studying, and going to school. However, the way that they perceived early literacy went one step further, and involved *educación*, which encompasses teaching their children values such as respect, obedience, and proper behavior. As discussed in Chapter 2, *educación* is a key concept in exploring socialization in Latinx mothers' homes (Caldera & Lindsey, 2015; Ccyk & Hammer, 2018). In this section, I address in more detail the dimensions of *educación* and early literacy that are embedded within Latina mothers' values.

The terms *perceptions*, *beliefs*, and *values* were interchangeable in these participants' usage and understanding. In our conversations, like my participants, I tended to use these terms interchangeably; however, I recognized that they mean different things. When participants were using these terms, I classified them as *perceptions*, *beliefs*, and *values*. Perceptions related to their understandings, beliefs related to their firm convictions, and values were connected to actions related to character building. These Latina mothers alternated between these terms, as all are part of their integral concept of *educación* [education] which relates to the importance of supporting early literacy development and *alfabetización* in their young children. To explore these Latina mothers' understanding of early literacy, it was necessary to explore the word *educación* that they included after describing the elements of formal schooling.

In their definitions and understandings of early literacy, they mentioned *alfabetización* and *educación*. The participants defined and articulated their perceptions about literacy; they also connected with the word *educación*, which combined with values. Researchers have claimed that members of Latina immigrant households might

define *education* more broadly than educators do (Durand, 2010; Poza et al., 2014). For instance, *educación* for Mexican Latina families includes not only academic literacy (e.g., knowing the alphabet, shapes, and colors), but also morality, proper behavior, good manners, and interpersonal aspects which are closely connected (Reese & Balzano, 1995). *Educación* is a concept that serves as a reference to understand how Latina mothers perceive early literacy combined with teaching with values at home. In this study, while the participants' perceptions and understanding of literacy were similar, the participants elaborated on various aspects and differences in their interpretation of *educación*.

The following subsections will demonstrate how the mothers' values explicitly influenced their views on education broadly, and literacy specifically, and how these values motivated their language practices at home in promoting early literacy in their young children. In the upcoming subsections, I will discuss their interpretation and understanding of values.

Values Associated With Early Literacy

The values that these Latina immigrant mothers shared were respect and obedience. These eight Latina mothers inculcated values through their storytelling, conversations, and *consejos* (giving advice). They used oral language with their young children to impart their beliefs and values. Latina mothers perceived that their role is to teach those values to their young children, particularly those values that were most important to them. Research has shown that in Latinx families, *educación* is related to *respeto* (respect; Valdes, 1996). As mentioned, *educación* includes not only academic

literacy; rather, these values were central to the mothers' beliefs when including early literacy experiences at home and educating their children.

Rosa considered it important to educate her son Rober (3 years, 8 months) to respect elders and other members of the community by teaching him how to speak Spanish correctly to adults, including the use of those pronouns that show deference. Rosa believed that education includes teaching her children appropriate behavior:

Para mí la educación es enseñarles, lo correcto . . . saludar también es una (forma de mostrar) respeto dependiendo de cómo les enseñé a mis hijos, lo digo por mí también porque mis padres siempre me enseñaron que mayores la gente siempre se respeta. . . . Tengo que decirles “tú” (informal) porque no son lo mismo (jerarquía) que yo, o sea, no puedo decirles “tú” (formal), ¡porque no tienen mi edad! [For me education is to teach them, the right thing . . . I always say (to my child) “Say hello,” because for me saying hello is also a (way of showing) respect depending on how I taught my children, I say it for myself also because my parents always taught me that older people always respect each other. . . . I have to tell them “you” (informal) because they are not the same (hierarchy) as me, that is, I cannot tell them you (formal), because they are not my age!]

Similarly, Flor connected her perception of literacy with her belief of *educación*, which involves respect. Respect for her is to respect adults, authority, and God. Flor indicated that she educated her children in literacy the way her parents did for her; she educated them through “con mi ejemplo” [“her example”], as she believed that “lo que uno hace en casa se refleja afuera de casa” [“what someone does at home is reflected outside the home”].

In the same vein, Ana believed *educación* connected with teaching values, such as respect, which she considered her major responsibility. Ana introduced her young children to the value of respect by demonstrating appropriate behavior and manners; for example, she taught them to use phrases such as saying “hi,” “thank you,” and “you are welcome.” Also, Micaela believed *educación* included talking about rules and teaching manners: “. . . lo principal para nosotros, los hispanos, es decir me puedes hacer el favor y decir muchas gracias son dos palabras que tenemos y que son básicas para nosotros decir eso . . . ” [“. . . fundamental for us, the Hispanics, is to say can you do me a favor, and to say thank you very much, these are two (phrases) that are the basic manners, and we must say that . . .”].

Renata expressed similar ideas, explaining:

Bueno para mí la educación es como educar aconsejar a nuestros hijos, cómo encaminarlos a que ellos aprendan de ya sea en el estudio o en la forma de conducta de ellos. Para mí eso es la educación, para que ellos sean alguien en la vida sean respetuosos con la gente y con todas las personas alrededor. [Well, for me, *educación* is how to educate advise our children, how to guide them so that they learn either in the study or in the way they behave. For me that is *educación*, for them to be someone in life, be respectful with people and with all the people around them.]

These eight Latina mothers, in addition to teaching their children to read and write, placed value on teaching proper behavior to their children. They shared the value of respect and proper behavior, inculcating in their children’s values that involved academic learning and behavior outside the home. For example, Micaela believed that

educación was one of her main responsibilities, and that it does not end with teaching her child to read and write; rather, it involves teaching respect and proper behavior to her daughter. Similarly, Renata described her perception of her role in education, putting emphasis on teaching the importance of both studying and proper behavior: “. . . para mí la educación es como educar a nuestros hijos, cómo encaminarlos a que ellos aprendan de ya sea en el estudio o en la forma de conducta de ellos” [“. . . for me, education is how we (mothers) educate our children, how we guide them so that they learn either in the study or in their behavior”]. For these Latina mothers, being respectful is an important way of preparing young children to be with other adults, as may experience when they go to school, eventually, and interact with an adult who represents authority.

Besides the value of respect and proper behavior, these Latina immigrant mothers included the importance of obedience when interacting and experiencing early literacy with their children. For Martha, *educación* implied practicing values besides being respectful with adults in preparation when her child goes to school; for Martha, “la obediencia y el respeto” [“obedience and respect”] were fundamental in *educación*. Martha connected the term early literacy to *educación*. She perceived that *educación* is following the rules set by respected authority. She explained that *educación* is received both at home and outside the home and considered it both good and necessary for a child to grow in knowledge and values. Martha said that at home they also have rules, such as assigned chores, but outside the home, she perceived that education at school requires that children must follow the rules set by an authority, such as the teacher: “Para mi hay dos tipos de educación; como cuando lo educas en tu casa y la educación como es afuera como es en la escuela, eso para mí son dos partes importantes” [“For me there are two

types of education; like when you educate him at home and the way education is outside as it is at school, that for me are two important parts”]. Another mother, Olga, like the other participants, perceived that some of her responsibilities were to educate her child on helping with chores at home and being obedient, as these would prepare her for a school setting.

Olga discussed the role of obedience: “Las mujeres guatemaltecas cuando ellas [nosotras estamos] están con los niños cada día se educa a sus hijos que trabajen [chores at home] que sean obedientes niños para que vayan a la escuela” [“Guatemalan women when they (we) are with the children every day educate their children to work (chores at home) to be obedient children to go to school”].

Similarly, Rosa educated her young child (Rober, 3 years, 8 months) at home in following the rules, and obedience, in preparation for him to eventually attend school and follow the authority of a teacher or other adult in an educational setting. She said:

Porque yo sé si yo lo educo en la casa él [Rober] va a ir a la escuela le va hacer caso [obedecer] a las maestras o va a otra casa yo siempre trato de aconsejar y que de decir miyo . . . fuera de la casa las cosas cambian entonces yo le digo pide si quieres algo pide . . . yo pienso que esa es parte de educación. [Because I know if I educate (consejos) him at home he (Rober) is going to go to school, he is going to listen (obedience) to the teachers or he is going to another place, I always try to say advise my child . . . outside the house things change so I tell him ask if you want something ask for . . . I think that that’s part of education.]

All eight Latina immigrant mothers who participated in this study shared their perceptions and beliefs regarding early literacy, revealing their understanding that

literacy includes *alfabetización*/literacy and *educación*. They believed it to be important to teach their young children's these values, such as respect, proper behavior, and obedience, and that these factors together encompass *educación*.

Mothers' Projected Goals for Children and Beliefs About Education

The eight Latina mothers in this study expressed their desire that their children's education in the United States would include family-taught values of hard work and school-reinforced academics. This combination would allow their children opportunities throughout their lifetime. Flor explained that she believed in the lasting value of education:

yo creo como mama Latina, creo que la educación es importante, entonces creo y quiero darle esas bases a ella para que ella [hija] piense y sepa que la educación es algo que se va a quedar con ella, como decia mi mama! Mi madre decía que lo que tú estudias nadie te lo quita, nadie te lo quita y eso se va contigo hija a donde tu vayas te vaya bien o te vaya mal en la vida la educación pues se queda contigo para siempre. [As a Latina mother, I believe that *educación* is important, so I believe and I want to give her these foundations so that she (her daughter) thinks and knows that *educación* is something that will stay with her, as my mother used to say! My mother used to say that what you study nobody takes away from you, nobody takes away from you and that goes with you, daughter, where you go, things go well or badly in life, *educación* stays with you forever.]

Another mother, Rosa, during her *testimonio*, she explained verbally to her child the importance of studying because the work she had was so difficult. Therefore, she believed early literacy and *educación* are important: “mi hijo debe estudiar mucho, ir a la

escuela y conseguir un buen trabajo” [“my child must study hard, go to school, and get a good job”] so when the child grows up, his experience of adulthood will not be as difficult as Rosa’s. She expressed that “El trabajo en el campo de la agricultura es más difícil de lo que mi hijo piensa” [“The work in the field of agriculture is more difficult than my son thinks”]. Rosa educated her son Rober (3 years, 8 months) with Mexican values, as Rosa’s parents had shown her the value of hard work; she tried to educate Rober “para que trabaje” and “estudie fuerte en el futuro” [“to work” and “study hard”] in the future.

When asked why education is important for Renata, she believed that education would lead her children to have a better life when “ellas crezcan” [they grow up”]. Although this may be a common expectation among parents, it was especially important that their education be a priority for an immigrant mother who risked everything to come to United States.

Renata believed educating her children would provide a path that would lead them to a practical job so her children could be self-sufficient. Her desires for her children are a result of her own experiences because she hoped to save them from the challenges she encountered as a Latina immigrant mother. For example, Renata believed that when Reni (female, 1 year, 1 month old) grows up, she will not have difficulties finding a good job. She gave advice to both of her children about the importance of studying hard and getting good grades in the future. She believed education was important; as she said, it will allow each of her children to be someone with “valor” [“value”] (an expression of “being someone”/being considered important in life). Renata put priority on education. Renata’s

priority for her child is to study in the future, especially English (in a formal school) so that Reni can study, graduate, and adapt to her new culture.

Martha, during her *testimonio*, shared that she perceived that the transition to the United States challenged her to give more priority to education; she had to learn the basics in English and adapt to a new culture. Martha's strong belief that education is important was also influenced by her journey to the United States; even with all the challenges she experienced during her journey, it was worth having better educational opportunities outside the home for her young child.

This is another illustrative example of why it is so important to acknowledge the mothers' lived experiences, and in some cases, extreme challenges. Campano et al. (2016) and Cibils (2017) presented the narratives of Latina immigrant mothers' experiences and challenges in ways that also demonstrated the potential tools and powerful values they possess to enhance their literacy practices with their young children. This study, as well, acknowledges the importance of cultural values and the ways in which they impact participants' perceptions of literacy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the reader with the research findings by documenting and analyzing how the early literacy practices occurred in the homes of the participants, and how the Latina immigrant mothers interacted with their young children to foster early literacy. Combining the participants' interviews and stories, as well as my rich data from our virtual conversations and observations, home visit, and revision together of their profiles, artifacts and routine logs, I illustrated how these interactions between Latina mothers and their young children were occurring in the home regarding early literacy

practices. Contrary to other studies' findings that may contribute to the undervaluing of Latinx immigrant families and their literacy practices, this study explored and found evidence of these diverse Latina immigrant mothers (from Perú, Guatemala, and Mexico) initiating, using their funds of knowledge, and engaging in multiple valuable home literacy practices.

Regarding early literacy practices, the data revealed that Latina mothers supported their children's early reading practices through daily interactions in Spanish, sometimes centered on books and other reading material, and through embedded cultural practices. Additionally, the theme of faith-based literacy practices was prevalent throughout this study, as the mothers involved their young children in literacy experiences related to faith-based and religious activities. The mothers' stories of immigration (*testimonios*) and their beliefs about the values underlying education were shown to be present in all elements of these Latina immigrant mothers' at-home early literacy practices with their young children.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the implications of the findings and my recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore, identify, and understand the at-home literacy practices of Latina immigrants who are mothers with young children, from birth to age 4, who live in a rural area. This study explored experiences, perceptions, values, and beliefs about early literacy through these Latina immigrant mothers' stories. This chapter begins with a brief explanation of the demographics, data research collection methods, and context. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature on language and literacy practices at home, emergent literacy, sociocultural perspectives, parental involvement, Latina mothers' literacy practices with young children, and a connection with their immigration background. It includes implications that may be valuable for use by educators, early intervention agencies, and non-profits who work with Latina immigrant mothers and with their young children. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a summary.

The study was conducted in the Mid-Atlantic region in United States with eight mothers and their young children. To capture and understand the early literacy practices and literacy experiences at home of Latina immigrant mothers with their young children, I collected data for approximately five months during fall and winter 2021–2022. I met with them in person one time and then met with them virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This study captured the interactions in which early literacy practices occurred in the routines of the mothers and their young children at home. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, observations, *testimonios*, and

artifacts. The artifacts included logs of daily routines written by the mothers, digital video clips, photos, and digital literacy artifacts shared by the participants.

In order to fully understand the practices of these participants, Latina mothers and their young children at home, it is important to understand the context of world events during the data collection. This study was completed at a unique period in history due to the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, the circumstances were not typical. These Latina mothers were in isolation with their young children at home; they lacked access to educational services (e.g., daycare, school, libraries, and other places children would normally go). They could not visit other mothers in the community, and, in general, they had limited access to interpersonal social contact to avoid COVID-19 transmission. As a result, the pandemic presented a unique literacy context, while also creating some limitations to my additional physical access to the participants' homes.

Significance of the Study

This study was unique in examining Latina immigrant mothers because the data were collected in their primary language, Spanish. Data collection in the participants' primary language facilitated hearing their voices, building their trust in the researcher and the project, and understanding their appreciation of early literacy. The collection of data in Spanish was important, as the participants seemed to respond authentically since a translator was not needed, and the conversation flowed more naturally.

In addition to the data collection being conducted in the participants' primary language and in their homes, several other factors set this study's scope and approach in contrast to those of previous studies. This study was unique in examining Latina immigrant mothers in the context of a rural area, which they identified as a small town.

Prior research has contributed in certain ways to the study of at-home literacy practices of Latinx families but has described children of older ages who are in school, has focused more on larger cities (Farver et. al., 2013; Miano, 2011), and may be limited in application to the age group and context I studied, in the sense that the prior research has focused on children who are older and not at home during the day. Further, my research is significant because it demonstrates that literacy development occurs not only in the context of school but also at home with an involved parent (Miano, 2011; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). Additionally, my study shows that early literacy experiences occurred in these homes, in Spanish, with materials in English. Further, these early literacy practices occurring with text in English and verbalized in Spanish create opportunities to foster biliteracy. As a result, these findings revealed additional considerations for understanding early literacy practices in Latinx homes.

In this study, the participants revealed much about their reading choices, verbal interactions, daily communication, faith-based activities, beliefs, and values imparted in their daily routines, stories of their immigration and adaptation to the United States, and their everyday lives through the artifacts they chose to share and the logs they filled in about their daily activities with their young children. Even though I was not able to visit their homes multiple times due to the circumstances of the pandemic, the participants and I maintained frequent contact virtually, and they shared multiple lived literacy experiences. Some of the important moments were when the mothers shared some of the immigration *testimonios* as they told how they entered the United States and adapted to the new culture, relying on their faith to continue their journey. This provided a close and insightful understanding into the early language interactions between themselves and

their young children; it revealed the real work they were lovingly doing as they were playing together, having conversations when having lunch together, advising their children to be respectful and obedient, reading books in Spanish, and telling stories about their culture. The collection of *testimonios*, in conjunction with the other forms of data collected, led me to better understand their early literacy practices, the importance of education in their life, and ways they used language to early literacy in their homes. Although the *testimonios* and immigration stories were helpful in understanding the participants' circumstances, they were not the center of the home literacy experiences as the study unfolded.

This study shows the various dimensions of how Latina immigrant mothers in a rural area experience literacy at home with their young children and revealed three major themes:

1. Latina immigrant mothers with young children engaged in reading practices with a variety of books at home.
2. Latina immigrant mothers foster oral early literacy development through faith-based, religious storytelling.
3. Latina immigrant mothers' perceptions of education and values guide their beliefs about early literacy.

These themes related to the premise that the Latina immigrant mothers were involved with their young children by engaging with language, fostering literacy experiences, and bringing insightful appreciation of their concepts of early literacy. All these themes contribute to promoting literacy at home, where the Latina immigrant mothers eagerly supported their young children in this endeavor.

Interpretation of the Findings

The three common themes represented prominent practices in these Latinx homes, demonstrating consistent perceptions and values across the early literacy practices of these Latina mothers. Each theme is described in detail in the following sections.

Latina Immigrant Mothers With Young Children Engaged in Reading Practices With a Variety of Books at Home

In this study, all eight Latina immigrant mothers used print materials largely in English and interpreted the text and images in Spanish, using different styles to foster early literacy. Their styles of reading and their choices of books were determined according to the age of the child, with a clear shift happening at around 2 years old in terms of reading materials. The Latina mothers with children from birth to 2 years of age used materials including but not limited to alphabet picture books, cloth books, and books with one or two words per page. The mothers with children from 3 to 4 years old introduced books with more content, more text, and detailed pictures. While other researchers focused on the reading styles, I found that these Latina mothers fostered reading early practices by using text in English.

Additionally, the mothers' styles of reading were adjusted according to the age of the child, with a clear modification occurring at around 2 years old. While reading, the mothers made several pauses to either repeat, emphasize, modulate their voices, or make corrections to elicit the child's attention. When reading, the mothers asked direct questions, expecting short answers, and the mothers asked their children to repeat some words after them, to repeat the sounds, and to point to the appropriate image. The mothers with children over 2 years old elaborated more on the stories, in combination

with pointing to the pictures. They formulated longer questions and engaged in less repetition, but still repeated the information to ensure their children were paying attention and absorbing their interaction. Overall, the differences were in interactions, with older children from 3 to 4 years old being more participative verbally than the younger children. Younger ones were alert and focused on the mother when reading; the children listened, made sounds, gestured, said a few words, or pointed to pictures with the need for their mother's assistance.

It was evidenced in this single case study that these Latina immigrant mothers were active participants in their young children's early literacy experiences, particularly during shared book reading practices, in Spanish at their home. This study contributes to the literature on this topic because it brings more insight into home literacy practices and is unique because it operated from a strength perspective, compared to other studies that operated from a deficit perspective. For these Latina immigrant mothers, the purpose of reading was to intentionally experience Spanish language embedded within their culture, fostering early literacy development.

Similar to as described in prior research, the Latina immigrant mothers in this study enhanced language development as they shared books with their young children (Coba-Rodriguez & Jarrett, 2020). In contrast to other studies, the Latina immigrant mothers in this study were aware of promoting reading experiences with their young children, with the goal of fostering Spanish language development. This is in direct contrast with other studies that found the use of "language as a practical tool to communicate with one another versus a tool to promote children's language

development” (Sawyer et al., 2018, p. 363). The difference in this finding is important because these mothers’ intent was to promote language and early literacy.

From a sociocultural approach, it can be asserted that the Latina mothers who participated in this study imparted the value of reading to their young children through interactions that involved their home culture (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Saracho, 2002a). The mothers read only in Spanish, regardless of whether the text was in English. This is significant and unique because they used these materials creatively by relying on the images and interpreting the story according to the best of their knowledge. This literacy practice fostered early literacy from a language in a country that was not native to these Latina mothers. While most of the materials were in English, four mothers did have a few bilingual and Spanish texts. The mothers included these texts to immerse their children culturally by experiencing Spanish books. They read all these texts in Spanish with their children.

In this study, Latina immigrant mothers demonstrated the presence of reading materials at home, but primarily books in English; they had only limited access to books in Spanish. From an emergent literacy perspective, which is a substantial theory that expands on literacy development (Morrow, 2018), these mothers encouraged activities that included interacting with and experiencing print, noticing print literacy with their books in their home, and actively pointing out words and letters, all of which enrich and foster emergent literacy development. It is important to note the creativity and complex literacy strategies, such as conducting conversations in Spanish, by expressing in their home language what was represented in English, which these mothers used to manage the

print text in another language and to overcome the language barrier to foster early literacy.

The Latina mothers supported intentional reading experiences and learning opportunities. According to research, through consistent exposure to print and multiple interactions with the primary caregiver (Valencia-Garcia et al., 2008 as cited in Ayón et al., 2018), and experiencing play and learning simultaneously (Saracho, 2002b), the young child begins to understand print and the surrounding world. Play was a fundamental part of the learning of the children in this study. While print exposure and adult interactions help the young child to experience and develop early literacy, other forms of print exposure, including playing, exposure to books, exploration, and adults reading to young children, also foster their early literacy understanding.

Latina Immigrant Mothers Foster Oral Early Literacy Development Through Faith-based, Religious Storytelling

Faith-based practices, storytelling, and religious literacy practices were involved in the experiences of all the 16 participants—eight Latina mothers with their eight children (eight mother-child dyads)—related to early literacy. The time devoted to telling stories, listening, and talking with their children about their faith and religion was critical for all the eight Latina immigrant mothers, and these practices were associated with early literacy development for their young children. Faith, religion, values are common themes with which family members engage in Latinx communities (Purcell-Gates, 2007; Reese & Balzano, 1995). The Latina mothers, who self-identified as “Católica” [“Catholic”] or “Evangélica” [“Evangelical”] used early literacy practices to express various aspects of their beliefs and pass on their faith to their young children.

As research has shown, Latina mothers value their religious traditions, such as praying, in their daily literacy activities (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). As discovered through my observations, interviews, *testimonios*, and artifacts, these Latina immigrant mothers learned additional content from church and applied this when telling stories, talking, playing, and interacting with their children at home. This is evidence that their literacy environment is shaped by connection to the community, including church. This content emerged from storytelling, religious celebrations, and praying in Spanish, all of which are connected to their culture and have clear connections to fostering emergent literacy.

From a sociocultural approach, it is important to mention that the mothers recognized that engaging in literacy practices involved and were based on their home cultures and language. These literacy practices would promote their children's literacy in their new country, as their children would be expected to speak and write primarily in English in their formal education and their future careers. As mentioned previously, the mothers' stories of immigration (*testimonios*) and their beliefs about the values underlying education (*educación*) were prevalent in some elements of these Latina mothers' at-home literacy practices with their young children.

Latina Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions of Education and Values Guide Their Beliefs About Early Literacy

While all the Latina mothers expressed their firm beliefs and perceptions about early literacy when raising their young children at home, across all ages, they referenced the importance of *educación*, which encompasses teaching values and proper behavior to their young children. For children to be *educado* (educated), the mothers must instill their

values, in addition to literacy, in their children, as these values will support them when they must transition to a formal educational setting. Significant values supporting this transition include respect for adults and God, obedience to authority, and care and love for the family.

Specifically, the results of this study included the following perceptions: (a) Latina mothers perceived that language is associated with early literacy and perceived as a continuum; (b) Latina mothers perceived that early education involves speaking, communicating, studying, and learning other languages; (c) Latina mothers perceived the importance of teaching *alfabetismo* and *educación* as an integral part of education; and (d) Latina mothers' values are associated with early literacy. In this study, the eight participating Latina mothers shared their perceptions that it was not only their role to teach *alfabetización* (literacy) but also to provide *educación*. They perceived these two concepts as being connected to their beliefs and teaching practices regarding their children's early literacy development.

Their strong efforts to impart values and their endeavors to teach early literacy made this group of Latina mothers noteworthy, as they imparted knowledge without much formal education and with limited resources enhanced by knowledge, values, and beliefs. These Latina mothers' *testimonios* solidified their beliefs about education for their young children, as their stories of immigration strengthened and intensified their beliefs about the need for a formal education. These immigrant mothers imparted to their young children their knowledge, values, language, and *educación*, all of which enhanced their children's early literacy experiences in a new culture.

Latina Mothers Perceived That Language Is Associated With Early Literacy and Perceived It as a Continuum

In this study, it was found that all eight participating Latina mothers perceived that language experiences were associated with early literacy. In Spanish, *literacy* most closely translates to *letrado* or *alfabetización*. These mothers defined literacy based on the concept *alfabetizar*, associating it directly with the term *literacy*, which specifically refers to the action of teaching to listen, speak, read, and write. As Ceda Santana explained, “in the Spanish language, the word *literacy* in its current use has no direct equivalent . . . the closest term is *letrado* which corresponds to *learned person*” (qtd. in Kamil et al., 2000). The Latina mothers recognized that through their at-home literacy experiences, their young children would eventually learn to communicate and, ideally, become *letrado/alfabetizado*, and learn other languages. This study’s conclusion emphasizes that their perceptions and beliefs were influenced culturally, and that clearly impacted their daily early literacy practices with their young children at home, living in the United States.

Also, the eight Latina mothers participating in this study perceived that early literacy is a continuum, since in these early stages of learning their young children are absorbing early literacy experiences. These Latina mothers described *early literacy* (*alfabetismo*) as learning the alphabet and experiencing print and language, and they expressed that these elements play a key role that will eventually help their children to build on their language and communication abilities. Importantly, they recognized the process of early literacy development as the experience their young children have

learning the alphabet, letters, words, and print text that will eventually influence future learning of reading and writing. Again, this is an example of *alfabetismo* and *educación*.

As research has indicated, experiencing literacy is not a linear process; from the emergent literacy perspective, the child develops literacy on a continuum from these meaningful experiences (Rohde, 2015; Whitmore et al., 2004). Acknowledging their perceptions of the early literacy continuum brings further insights about these mothers' endeavors to support early literacy. Not only did they recognize the importance of language development, but they also enabled children to engage in many opportunities of early literacy such as reading, talking, recounting stories, and imparting values to foster literacy. For these Latina mothers, these important early literacy experiences were the beginning of experiencing literacy.

Latina Mothers Perceived That Early Education Involves Learning Other Languages

Six out of eight Latina mothers acknowledged that early education involves speaking, communicating, and particularly learning other languages. Importantly, these Latina mothers referred not only to developing language but also to acquiring languages other than those used in the home. These Latina mothers described that *early literacy* (*alfabetizar*) and its elements play an important role that eventually will help their children to build on other language skills and give them experience to communicate with others in their own community and the outside the community (Saracho, 2002b).

In their context as immigrants, these Latina mothers also demonstrated their appreciation and acknowledgement of the process through which their young children would develop the beginning of literacy experiences while learning Spanish and eventually English. The mothers, as much as they wanted their children to learn Spanish

to maintain their Spanish roots and to communicate with their relatives, they also wanted their children to learn English to participate in this new culture.

Latina Mothers Perceived the Importance of Teaching Alfabetismo and Educación as an Integral Part of Education

In this study, the eight participating Latina mothers shared their perception that it was their role not only to teach *alfabetización* (literacy) but also to provide *educación* (which refers more to their values) simultaneously. They perceived these two concepts as being connected to their beliefs and teaching practices regarding their children's early literacy development. For them, features of early literacy included understanding language, speaking, reading, writing, learning, studying, and going to school. However, the way that they perceived early literacy went one step further and involved *educación*, which encompasses teaching their children values such as respect, obedience, love for the family, and proper behavior. *Educación* is a key concept in exploring socialization in Latinx (Latina) mothers' homes (Caldera & Lindsey, 2015; Cycyk & Hammer, 2018).

Researchers have claimed that members of Latinx households might define *education* more broadly than educators do (Durand, 2010; Poza et al., 2014). For instance, *educación* for Mexican Latinx families includes not only academic literacy (e.g., knowing the alphabet, shapes, and colors) and experiences, but also morality, proper behavior, good manners, and interpersonal factors which are closely connected (Reese & Balzano, 1995). This example is suited for Mexican families; however, it can be applicable to this study while making allowance for some intercultural differences, as the understanding of *educación* is similar enough among the cultures of the Latina mothers in this study. It is important to note this combination for Latinx families because

it is a unique part of their culture and impacts the way they perceive education. These perceptions are reflected in the literacy practices that they experience with their children. For them, early literacy encompasses not only the acts of reading and writing, but also the values of respect and obedience as integral parts of education.

Latina Mothers' Values Are Associated With Early Literacy

The values that these mothers shared were respect, obedience, and *afecto/cariño* (love for the family). These Latina mothers imparted values through their storytelling, conversations, and through *consejos* (giving advice). The mothers used oral language to introduce their beliefs and values, connecting the inculcation of these values in their children to early literacy. Also, these eight Latina mothers perceived that their role is to teach those values that are most important to them to their young children. As mentioned, *educación* includes not only academic literacy; rather, these values were central to the mothers' beliefs about the importance of educating their children and included early literacy experiences at home. These Latina immigrant mothers' firm beliefs about early literacy (*educación* and *alfabetización*) were influenced by their challenging experience as immigrants, their lived experience of cultural diversity, and their limited schooling. For these Latina mothers, their strong belief about education had a strong impact on their interactions with their children.

During a *testimonio*, one mother shared that she perceived that the transition to the United States challenged her to give more priority to education; she had to learn the basics in English and adapt to a new culture. This study has shown why it is so important to acknowledge the mothers' lived experiences, and in some cases, extreme challenges. These Latina mothers' *testimonios* confirmed their beliefs about education for their

young children. The stories of immigration strengthened and intensified their beliefs about the need for formal education. The mothers believed that education for their children at this young age is a priority, as it will connect them with their past, help them to engage in the present, and prepare them for the future. Finally, these immigrant mothers embraced and imparted to their young children their knowledge, values, language, and *educación*, all of which enhanced their children's early literacy practices at home in a new culture. Campano et al. (2016) and Cibils (2017) presented the narratives of Latina immigrant mothers' experiences and challenges in ways that also demonstrated the potential tools and powerful values they possess to enhance their literacy practices with their young children. This study, as well, acknowledges the importance of cultural values and the ways in which they impact participants' perceptions of literacy.

All these circumstances, characteristics, connections, literacy experiences, and insights deepen my empathy and appreciation and provide me with a unique perspective on this study as a researcher, with the data I collected, and in the relationships that I created across the data gathering. These factors matter in the sense that they shaped the research study. I was able to examine not from a deficit perspective but from a strength perspective about these Latina mothers' literacy practices with their young children in their homes.

Implications

Implications for Theory

From a deficit perspective, focusing on one aspect of the Latina mothers' circumstances, such as low-income status, immigrant status, limited English, lack of education, or other factors, greatly narrows the perception of and ignores other cultural

variables and the rich diversity of literacy practices at home. In contrast, exploring from a sociocultural perspective (i.e., strength perspective) opens the possibilities of enriching the understanding of early literacy practices in the home; focuses on Latinx cultures, and the variations between those cultures.

Implications for Future Research

Further research could explore other factors in Latina immigrant mothers' own experiences with literacy education. Specific factors to consider include reading practices (e.g., number and category of books), access to and use of technology, education level, English proficiency level, and employment (e.g., type and experience). This research could enhance our understanding of how the Latina immigrant mothers' experiences impact their children's early literacy practices.

These Latina mothers received literacy education support from older siblings, such as examples of literacy experiences from their schools, exposure to English, and print materials to read at home. Although the focus of this study was on mothers with their young children, it would be of great interest to explore the impact of older siblings and their interactions with their younger siblings. Those Latina mothers who had older children relied on their past experiences in education with their older children to inform their at-home education of their young children (Sawyer et al., 2018). Many of the mothers already had notions of what the American education system was like, largely informed by the experiences of their older children in the system. Examining how these older children's interactions with younger children affect the younger children's literacy would shed light on bilingual interactions. Also incorporated into further research could

be the role and influence of other adults, such as the father or grandparents, in the child's early literacy experiences.

The Latina immigrant mothers in this study were from three countries in Latin America: Perú, Guatemala, and México. However, exploration of literacy and biliteracy practices of Latina immigrant mothers originally from other Latin America countries (estimated 20) is also needed to understand the rich and diverse experiences of literacy practices that may occur in other Latina mothers' homes. The literacy practices of three cultures and nationalities does not allow for generalizations about all Latina American cultures. In addition, given the scope of this study and timeframe required to complete a broader study with more nationalities, English speakers, and non-English speakers, it may be beneficial to devote more time to examining literacy practices in more diverse and multilingual Latina mothers' homes.

Further research to explore the effects of religious practice on promoting early literacy would also be beneficial. Additional research exploring Latina mothers and their families that experience these practices or other faiths would provide other and rich perspectives of faith-based contexts. Exploring the specific artifacts, forms and styles used for multiple religious purposes or interactions across religions would be an interesting contribution to the field. It would be interesting to compare the specific practices of faith-based groups and non-religious groups to identify the impact in the literacy experience of Latinx children.

Additional opportunities for research might include the involvement of other groups such as bilingual families, Latinx families who are not immigrants, and those

from non-Latinx cultures who have large populations in the United States (e.g., Haitian, Middle Eastern, African, etc.).

Implications for Practice

The focus of this study on immigrant Latina mothers and their young children reinforces the important role that primary caregivers have in early literacy development at home. One of the goals of this study was to enlighten professionals in education (e.g., preschool teachers, providers, trainers, daycare providers, early childhood teachers/providers, reading specialists, and those who work in agencies such as libraries and resource centers) regarding the children's early literacy experiences at home that eventually will influence the transition to their educational settings.

An important implication of this study for practice is the need for daycare providers, early intervention teachers, and preschool teachers to advocate for the Latinx immigrant families and view them from a position of a strength rather than from a deficit perspective. It is important for professionals to spend time understanding the prior experiences of these mothers and their young children. They could ask about the types of activities and materials that they had and used in their home with their young child; and they might identify what the mothers thought were the most engaging and effective ways that worked best with their child. Finally, it would be most important to find out what the mothers' expectations were for their children as they transitioned to their next out-of-home experience (i.e., daycare, preschool). Having these conversations with the Latina immigrant mothers can be helpful in making the next educational experiences, including those involving literacy, more positive, effective, and productive for these young Latinx children.

Existing research has typically discussed home practices of older children or literacy practices in a formal educational setting. In contrast, the current study has examined literacy practices with young children (birth to age 4) within an in-home setting. It has implications for additional conversations about home literacy practices between daycare providers, Head Start program directors, and other professional early caregivers. With this information, more emphasis will be placed on incorporating multiliteracy experiences into these formal literacy education settings.

The recognition of early literacy practices and experiences of Latina mothers and their children could enrich the relationships between institutions/schools and Latinx immigrant populations and could provide opportunities for these institutions/schools to be better prepared to serve many families entering/transitioning to school.

Limitations

This single case study was designed and conducted to explore and understand the early literacy practices of Latina immigrant mothers. Although this study provided a detailed and careful account of the early literacy experiences at home in the context of Latina immigrant mothers with young children, some limitations may be considered. As this study was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was only one in-person visitation where an observation and interview occurred. All other observations and interviews were conducted virtually. Having more in-person visitations could have been beneficial, allowing me to observe additional literacy practices at home, such the everyday literacy interactions with other family members, perhaps identifying other languages used, and the frequency of the specific literacy practices. Additional in-person visitations would have provided more opportunities to explore extended conversations,

in-depth observations of the home setting, the children's writing, potential interactions between the researcher and child, extended observations, and additional relevant questions in the moment. Virtual interactions served the purpose of this study, but additional in-person interactions would have enhanced a deeper relationship between the researcher and both the mothers and their children. Other limitations of the study included length of time, sample size, and limited population explored. It is important to note that these qualitative research findings are not generalizable, and the results may not reflect the experiences of all Latina mothers in the United States living in other rural areas.

Conclusion

In concluding this research exploring Latina mothers' early literacy practices with their young children, it is my hope that the findings contribute to the greater body of knowledge of early literacy practices involving the mother and young child at home with diverse populations. I hope that educators working with Latina immigrant mothers and young children to prepare for entry to school will understand these early literacy experiences to support a successful transition to an educational setting.

This study can help both families and educators who are working with children from another country as they experience another language for the first time in a school setting. The transition and adaptation of young children who enter an educational setting for the first time is a path that needs to be supported even more when a young child is exposed to various meaningful early literacy experiences in Spanish at home.

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Appendix A

Spanish and English Version: Protocols

Entrevista semiestructurada adaptada de prácticas de alfabetización y desarrollo de la alfabetización (de Purcell-Gates 2007 y Owocki y Goodman, 2002)

Entrevista 1

Hola, me alegro de verte. Me gustaría hacerle algunas preguntas sobre sus primeras experiencias de alfabetización con su hijo/a. Comenzaré a hacer preguntas con respecto a su información demográfica (por ejemplo, su edad, país de origen, idioma en casa) y luego continuaré con las preguntas sobre actividades de alfabetización en su hogar. Estoy grabando esta entrevista y tomaré algunas notas. En cualquier momento puede detenerme o decirme que desea detener esta entrevista. ¿Tiene usted alguna pregunta? Entonces, comencemos.

Spanish/English questions/preguntas

Literacy activities & materials in the home

1. How would you define literacy (alfabetismo)? In English we call this literacy, and it is usually a word that means reading and writing—you might see this word a lot in schools but we don't really have a word for this in Spanish. What would you call this? Do you do other things that you consider literacy with your child?
 - a. What are some examples of what you consider literacy/reading/writing?
1. *¿Cómo definirías la alfabetización (alfabetismo)? En inglés, a esto le llamamos alfabetización, y generalmente es una palabra que significa leer y escribir. Puede que veas mucho esta palabra en las escuelas, pero realmente no tenemos una palabra para esto en español. ¿Cómo llamarías esto? ¿Hace otras cosas que considera alfabetización con su hijo?*
 - a. *¿Cuáles son algunos ejemplos de lo que considera alfabetización / lectura / escritura?*
- 2 What types of things do you read in your life at home? For example, magazines or books (in Spanish or in English)
- 2 *¿Qué tipo de cosas lees en tu vida en casa? Por ejemplo, revistas, libros (en español o en inglés)*
- 3 What are the main purposes that you read for? For example: entertainment, obligation, learning, family obligations, church, shopping, daily tasks, care-health, political participation, official purposes like getting a visa or work permit, paying taxes, at your job, relaxation, information, shopping, worship?

3. *¿Cuáles son los principales propósitos para los que lees? Por ejemplo: entretenimiento, obligación, aprendizaje, obligaciones familiares, iglesia, compras, tareas diarias, cuidado de la salud, participación política, propósitos oficiales como obtener una visa o permiso de trabajo, pagar impuestos, en su trabajo, relajación, información, compras, adoración?*

4. What type of reading material do you have at home? For example: recipes, newspapers, magazines, books, internet/cellphone, notebook, academic books, storybooks.

4 *¿Qué tipo de material de lectura tienes en casa? Por ejemplo: recetas, periódicos, revistas, libros, internet / teléfono celular, cuaderno, libros académicos, libros de cuentos.*

5 What are your thoughts and feelings about reading, please explain your answer?

Qué piensas acerca de leer con tu niño, y cuáles son tus sentimientos acerca de leer?.

6. With whom do you read? Children? Spouse? Friends? Relatives? Co-workers?

6 *¿Con quién lees? ¿Niños? ¿Esposa? ¿Amigos? Parientes? Compañeros de trabajo?*

7 How often do you read to your child? Please specify time, minutes of reading (aprox), morning or when going to bed at night.

7*¿Que tan seguido lees a tu niño? (Especifica la hora, los minutos de lectura (aprox), en la mañana o al ir a acostarse).*

8. What type of books do you read to him/her or to them?

8. *¿Qué tipo de libros le lees a él o ella?*

9. If you can explain with your words, how would you describe your way of reading to your child?

9.*Si puedes explicar con tus palabras, cómo describes tu forma de leer a tu niño/a?*

10. Do you have printed material at home that your child can see? For example, a calendar of the week, letters of the alphabet with magnets, grocery shopping list, activity list for the week, positive prayers / messages, religious prayers. Does the child notice the printed material? How? The material is In English or in Spanish? Do you encourage the child to read it? How? Can you give me more details about that interaction?

10. *Tienes en casa material impreso que tu niño/niña pueda ver? Por ejemplo un calendario de la semana, letras del alfabeto con imanes, lista de compras de comida, lista de actividades de la semana, oraciones/mensajes positivos, oraciones religiosas. El niño presta /pone atención, nota que hay material impreso (escritos en papel)? Cómo crees que lo nota? El material está en Inglés o en Español? Tú lo incentivas a leer lo que tienes impreso? Me puedes dar más detalles de esa interacción?*

11. What literacy activities do you think are the most valuable when interacting and teaching your child?

11. *¿Qué actividades de alfabetización, o relacionadas a la educación crees que son las*

más valiosas al interactuar y enseñar a tu hijo?

12. What other activities do you do with your child related to Literacies, or experiences that foster literacy? For example: music, painting, cooking, playing, hand-crafts, gardening, visiting pets stores, praying in church, and others.

- a. How do you participate with them? For example, talking, narrating stories, singing, playing, other?

12. Qué otras actividades realiza con su hijo relacionadas a interactuar, vivir experiencias que consideres que educan a tu niño/a o que lograrían educar a tu niño/a? Por ejemplo experiencias relacionadas a: música, pintura, cocina, juegos, manualidades, viveros, visitar tiendas de mascotas, rezar en la iglesia y otros?.

13. Do you read non-print materials, or do you use electronic devices to read. (For example: cellphone, computer, T.V. For example: using subtitles.

13. ¿Usted lee en otros medios que no sean de material impreso, por ejemplo, por su telefono celular, computadora, computadora, televisión, por ejemplo: usando subtítulos.

14. Does anyone read for your child besides you? Please, talk to me about it.

14¿Alguien lee a su hijo además de usted? Cuénteme un poco de eso.

15. Do you write? (In English or in Spanish?) What type of writing do you do at home? (examples: journal, calendars, notes) and what materials do you use for writing?

15. ¿Escribes? (¿En inglés o en español?) Qué tipo de escritura haces en casa? (ejemplos: diario, calendarios, notas) ¿Qué materiales utilizas para escribir?

16. What kinds of things do you write on the phone, tablet, computer, or other device?

16. ¿Qué tipo de cosas escribe en el teléfono, tableta, computadora u otro dispositivo?

17. What are the main purposes that you write for? For example: entertainment, learning, family obligations, church, shopping, daily tasks, care-health, community participation, relaxation, information, shopping, worship?

17. ¿Cuáles son los principales propósitos para los que escribe? Por ejemplo: entretenimiento, obligación, aprendizaje, obligaciones familiares, iglesia, compras, tareas diarias, cuidado de la salud, participación comunitaria, relajación, información, compras, adoración.

18. What challenges do you experience in relation to writing?

18. Cuáles son los desafíos o retos que tu vives o experimentas acerca de la escritura, o cuando escribes?

19. Do you write daily? Tell more about that

19 ¿Escribes diariamente? Cuéntame más de eso.

20. Describe why is important for you being able to write in Spanish.

20¿Describe por qué es importante el poder escribir en Español?

21. Does anyone read your writing, if so who?

21. ¿Alguien lee lo que tú escribes? Si es así quien sería la persona?

22. Tell me about the opportunities that you have for writing with your children? Can you give me examples of these interactions?

22. Hábleme de las oportunidades que tiene para escribir con su niño, si es el caso, puede darme ejemplos de cómo ocurren estas interacciones?

23. Do your children make attempts to write? If so, what it looks like, if not do you have any ideas of why they are not interested in writing

23. ¿Sus hijos intentan escribir, si es el caso, hágame de cómo ocurre esto, cuéntame por qué piensas que no tiene mucho interés en escribir.

24. How do your children learn about writing?

24. ¿Cómo aprenden sus hijos sobre la escritura?

25. What are your hopes for your children's writing?

25. ¿Cuáles son sus esperanzas para la escritura de sus hijos?

26. What are the main literacy activities do you think are the most valuable when interacting and teaching your child?

26. ¿qué principales actividades de alfabetización crees que son las más valiosas al interactuar y enseñar a tu hijo?

27. Describe to me the type of technology you have in your home, for example how many computers, laptops, Ipads, cell phones, or others.

27. Describame el tipo de tecnología que tiene en su hogar, por ejemplo cuántas computadoras, laptops, Ipad, teléfonos celulares, u otros.

28. What programs for children do you use on the computer, for example Starfall, or ABC-mouse and others. Please describe to me that interaction with your child

28. ¿Qué programas para niños utiliza en la computadora, por ejemplo Starfall, o ABC-mouse y otros. Por favor describame esa interacción con su niño/a.

Appendix B**Protocol # 2****Adapted Semi-structured interview of Literacy Practices and Literacy development
(from Purcell-Gates 2007 & Owocki and Goodman, 2002)****Interview 2**

The interview will begin with conversation examining language interactions including use of language, use of English and Spanish, perceptions of literacy, values, and beliefs about literacy. Also, we will discuss about the materials that represent literacy at home, the role of literacy at home, experiences related to play, and literacy in a rural community.

I will initiate the interview in the following way:

Hi, it is great to see you again. I would like to ask you some questions about early literacy experiences with your child. I will begin asking questions regarding language, use of English and Spanish, play, and interactions with your child. Then I will continue with questions regarding literacy experiences, your perceptions, values, and beliefs. I am recording this interview and I will take some notes. At any time, you may stop me or tell me that you want to stop this interview. Do you have any questions? Then, let's begin.

Please see next page and you will find the Spanish and English version of this Semi-Structured Interview.

Entrevista II

La entrevista comenzará con una conversación que examinará las interacciones del lenguaje, incluido el uso del idioma en casa, los momentos de juego de su niño/a, el uso del inglés y el español con su niño/a, y la percepción, los valores y las creencias sobre la alfabetización temprana. También discutiremos acerca de los materiales, el papel de la alfabetización y la alfabetización en una comunidad rural.

Initiaré la entrevista de la siguiente manera:

Hola, es un gusto verte nuevamente. Me gustaría hacerle algunas preguntas sobre sus experiencias de alfabetización temprana con su hijo. Comenzaré a hacer preguntas sobre el idioma, el uso del inglés y el español, el juego y las interacciones con su hijo pequeño. Luego continuaré con la pregunta sobre las experiencias de alfabetización, sus percepciones, valores y creencias. Estoy grabando esta entrevista y tomaré algunas notas. En cualquier momento, puede detenerme o decirme que desea detener esta entrevista. ¿Tiene usted alguna pregunta? Entonces, comencemos.

Language and Play Interactions Questions

1. What language do you use at home with your child? Is this the language that you grew up speaking?
1. *¿Qué idioma usa en casa con su hijo? ¿Es este el idioma que creciste hablando?*
2. Is it important to you that your child speaks Spanish? How about [child's name] reading and writing in Spanish when they are older?
 - a. Why do you think this?
2. *¿Es importante para usted que su hijo hable español? ¿Qué tal leer y escribir [nombre del niño] en español cuando sea mayor? a. ¿Porque piensas esto?*
3. Do you feel it's important to you that your child learn English? Why is that?
3. *¿Sientes que es importante para ti que tu hijo aprenda inglés? Por qué?*
4. Are you learning to speak English? And if Yes, how? Since when? What is the reason?
4. *¿Estás aprendiendo a hablar inglés? Y si es así, ¿cómo? ¿Desde cuando? Para qué?*
5. What have you noticed about that growth in language? Can you tell what are the main words that your child says? Do you consider important the vocabulary, why?
5. *¿Qué has notado sobre ese crecimiento en el lenguaje? Menciona cuáles son las palabras que más utiliza tu niño/a? Consideras importante el vocabulario? Por qué?*
6. What abilities do you feel are most important for your child to learn this year?
6. *¿Qué habilidades/fortalezas cree que son más importantes para que su hijo aprenda este año?*

7. Who around your home speaks English to _____ (child's name)?

7. ¿Quién en su casa habla inglés con _____ (nombre del niño)?

8. Does your child say words in both languages?

a. Which words does _____ (child's name) know in English/Spanish?

8. ¿Su hijo dice palabras en ambos idiomas? a. ¿Qué palabras sabe _____ (nombre del niño) en inglés / español?

9. At what age did your child begin to speak? If you think that you encouraged your child to talk, tell me what activities you do, that you think, that help him in language development? For example, you sing, tell stories, read books, show the alphabet, play games, talk, tell stories and tales, use body language, talk while cooking, while doing chores, or other activities (as a Latinx mother what do you think you do different with your child?).

9. A qué edad empezó a hablar tu niño/a? Si consideras que tú lo motivaste a hablar, cuéntame qué actividades realizas, que tú crees, que le ayudan en el desarrollo del lenguaje? Por ejemplo, cantas, cuentas historias, lees libros, enseñas el alfabeto, juegas, conversas, cuentas historias y cuentos, usas lenguaje corporal, hablas mientras cocinas, u otras actividades que como madre Latinx practicas con tu hijo/a.

10. Can you tell me the way you interact with your child? For example do they play together? What do they play, do they play with other children?

10. Me puede contar la manera en que interactúas con tu niña/o? Por ejemplo juegan juntos? A qué juegan, juegan con otros niños?

11. Does your child play different roles alone or with you? (e.g., dentist, doctor, chef, teacher, baby sister, big brother,), can you give me examples?

11. Su niño/a solo o con usted juegan a desempeñar distintos roles? (e.g., dentist, médico, chef, teacher, baby sister, big brother,), me puedes dar ejemplos?

12. How do you describe play? Have you thought about what types of play do Latinx moms have with their children? (e.g., symbolic game), Can you describe the type of play with you and your child? Do you let your child play alone and explore? What do you notice when your child plays alone (e.g., he speaks in English or Spanish, who does he imitates).

12. ¿Como describes el juego? ¿Has pensado, qué tipos de juegos tienen las mamás Latinas con sus niños/as? (e.g., juego simbólico), puedes pensar en el tipo de juego que practicas con tu niña/o. Dejas que tu niño explore, y juegue solo? Qué notas cuando tu niño juega solo (e.g., habla en Ingles o en español, ¿a quién imita?).

13. When your child plays independently, what activity do you do meanwhile?

13. ¿Cuándo tu hijo juega independientemente, qué actividad realizas tú mientras el juega?

14. Do you use materials while they play? For example, costumes, settings, body language, toys, and dolls.

14. Usas materiales mientras juegan? Por ejemplo, disfraces, escenarios, lenguaje corporal, juguetes, y muñecos.

Child's activities

1. What are some of the things your child likes to do and talk about?

1. Cuáles son algunas de las cosas que a su hijo le gusta hacer y hablar?

2. In what circumstance does your child talk more comfortably?

2. ¿En qué circunstancias habla su hijo más cómodamente?

3. What languages does your child speak? What language is spoken in your home? Does your child hear different languages at family gatherings or in the community?

3. ¿Qué idiomas habla su hijo? ¿Qué idioma se habla en tu casa? ¿Su hijo escucha diferentes idiomas en las reuniones familiares o en la comunidad?

4. What kinds of reading (consider books for his/her age) does your child participate in alone or observe at home? In what languages?

4. ¿En qué tipo de lectura (considere libros para su edad) participa su hijo solo u observa en casa? ¿En que idiomas?

5. What kind of things is your child learning? Such as, learning new words, new games, ways of playing, any ability.

5. ¿Qué tipo de cosas está aprendiendo su hijo? Tales como aprender nuevas palabras nuevos juegos, nuevas habilidades.

Mother's literacy experiences related to literacy

1) Did you have materials to go to school? What was school like for you as a child?

1) ¿Tenías materiales para ir a la escuela? ¿Cómo fue la escuela para ti cuando eras niño?

2) What kind of schooling have you completed? Your parents?

2) ¿Qué tipo de educación has completado? ¿Tus padres?

3) What kinds of expectations did your family have for you in terms of schooling and academic achievement?

3) ¿Qué tipo de expectativas tenía su familia para usted en términos de escolaridad y rendimiento académico?

4) When you were a child, what kind of texts or things did people in your family or house read regularly?

4) *Cuando eras niño, ¿qué tipo de textos o cosas leían regularmente las personas de tu familia o casa?*

5) What is your perception about experiencing literacy with your child at home?

5) *Cuál es su percepción acerca de la experiencia de alfabetización y educación con su niño en casa.*

Rural Area and Literacy

1. Talk to me about the area that you live in? How do you call this area?

1. *Hablame del area, lugar en el que vives, cómo describes, como llamas esta área?*

2. Talk about education in this área, how is your experience with your child related to education and literacy in your area?

2. *Hablemos acerca de educación y alfabetización en esta área, cómo es tu experiencia con tu niño/a en esta área.*

3. *Do you consider a rural área where you live, can you describe more about the area that you currently live in?*

3 *¿Considera la zona rural donde vive, puede describir más sobre la zona en la que vive?*

Closing the interview:

1. Tell me which literacy practice do you consider unique as a Latinx mother with a child in a rural area?

1. *Cuéntame qué practica de alfabetización/educación la consideras única como madre Latinx con un niño/a en un área rural?*

2. Why do you think it is important to experience literacy in early ages?

2. *Por qué crees que importante tener experiencias de alfabetización a una temprana edad?*

3. What would you like educational members, or teachers to know about your a) perceptions, or b) values, or c) beliefs regarding early literacy at home with your child?

3. *Qué quisieras que los maestros en educación supieran de tus a) percepciones, o b) valores, o c) creencias en relación con la alfabetización temprana en tu casa con tu niño/a?*

Appendix C

Protocol # 3: Testimonio

The approach of the *testimonio* process (Beverley, 2004) stems from the question “What brought you here to the United States?” “*¿Qué te trajo aquí a Estados Unidos?*” and continues as an uninterrupted narrative of the participant’s immigration experiences. This *testimonio* will be audio recorded and the participant can stop at any time.

The participant will continue her narration about her background story with details, school experiences, family experiences, resources, literacy beliefs, emotions about her struggles with the child in US or in the origin country, community experience in US and occupation if she is willing to talk about.

In case the mother needs more guidance during her narration, I will provide some topics for her. For example, these are the type of topics that will appear during the conversation with the mother:

Are you currently working? If yes, tell me about your job/occupation. How is your schedule? Do you have to read or write in your current job? Do you ever bring your child to your workplace? Do you speak Spanish or English in your job? Does your job promote learning English? What type of job would you like to have in the future? Are you able to drive to places? Do you have access to literacy places such as libraries, zoos, museums, and others? What are the major struggles to learn English? What are the circumstances/reasons that made you take the decision of coming to this area?

¿Estás trabajando actualmente? Si es así, cuénteme sobre su trabajo / ocupación. ¿Cómo va tu horario? ¿Tiene que leer o escribir en su trabajo actual? ¿Alguna vez lleva a su hijo/a a su lugar de trabajo? ¿Hablas español o inglés en tu trabajo? ¿Tu trabajo promueve el aprendizaje del inglés? ¿Qué tipo de trabajo le gustaría tener en el futuro? ¿Puedes conducir a lugares? ¿Tiene acceso a lugares de alfabetización como bibliotecas, zoológicos, museos y otros? ¿Cuáles son las mayores dificultades para aprender inglés? ¿Cuáles son las circunstancias / motivos que le hicieron tomar la decisión de venir a esta zona?

It is expected that the mother will discuss about immigration, and probably she describes her experiences with literacy and education as an immigrant mother with a young child in a rural area.

The participant may narrate how she arrived here, her education struggles in the country of origin, the economic circumstances to educate her and her child, and the family education in general. The *testimonio* will be a combination of stories, testimonies, experiences, and beliefs that the participant learned in her life, and she can orally recall.

The conversation will conclude with the researcher saying: is there anything else that you would like to share with me? *¿hay algo más que le gustaría compartir conmigo?*

Appendix D

Adapted Observation Protocol (Jack, 2018)

The following protocol was used in each observation.

The objective of these observations has various purposes: (1) to observe and understand the Latinx mothers and their young child interact; (2) to describe the setting-home; (3) to describe the literacy experiences occurring in the participant's home with her young child; (4) to observe the type of language, bilingual practices, writing and reading practices; (5) to explore ways of social interactions, and play activities at home that foster early literacy, (6) to describe the types of resources, capture the types of print materials and multimodal factors (e.g., e-books, textbooks, print, materials for coloring, writing, painting, technology used at home to promote emergent literacy).

In the first in-person observation, the participant will give the researcher a tour around the home (i.e., mother selects the areas to visit in the home) to have a sense of the environmental setting. In the virtual observations, the web-camera will be placed strategically so the researcher will visualize the whole setting. When necessary, the mother will switch to the camera on her digital device to get closer to see specific material. All observations will be audio or video recorded. The participant will know in advance that she will be observed multiple times. The mother will be prepared with the technology device, and with her young child.

The observations will be conducted in different times of the day. In a different time in the day, the mother and the child may have other activities that reflect diverse literacy experiences, for instance during early breakfast, cooking, dancing, playing, or praying that may foster literacy development. At the end of this observation, the researcher will thank the participant for sharing her activities with her child.

As follows the researcher will say to the participant:

Hi, _____(name), thank you so much for allowing me to observe (in person or virtually) your home and your literacy practices. During the observations, I will be observing, and sometimes communicating with you, in the company of your child. I am here to learn more about your home experiences and how they support your child's literacy development. You may see me recording notes and at times asking again questions or revising if my audio or video recording are working appropriately. I will not interrupt you if you are engaging with the child, but you can talk to me at any time. Also, at any time, you may stop me or tell me that you would like to end this observation. Please feel free to ask me any questions during this observation. Let's continue.

- 1). Can you tell and show me more about how the literacy activities that you described during the interview happen in your home and please show me how these activities occur, also, you can show me the materials that you use with them?

2) You mentioned in our previous conversations or previous interview (e.g., about specific activity such as reading). Can you show me how you interact with those materials with your child?

Thank you for showing and sharing that information with me; now we will discuss about the date of our next observation.

Information for the researcher that serves to anticipate possible scenarios that may occur during the observations:

- Interactions during music time, cooking time, doing handcraft time activities.
- The mother encourages the child verbal interactions by asking questions, encouraging elaborations, telling stories, teaching manners/respeto (respect) and supporting continual exchanges. (The student investigator will observe other cultural interactions that may not be necessarily the ones that are included in this list).
- The mother gives opportunities to initiate and actively influence verbal exchanges. What are the commands or instructions that she uses to accomplish a task? Does she use long or short phrases? Does she use Spanish or English, or both? Does she combine the languages?
- The mother read in Spanish with the child. How does the mother talk with the child during the observation time? (Adult talk, changes of her voice, uses the word please or thank you constantly? Does she use different or extended vocabulary)?
- How the mother gives instructions or command for example does she set clear expectations and establish routines that encourages positive relationships with adults? (It will be included clear examples to consider the possible cultural components of this question).
- The mother encourages the child to use language to verbalize her or his feelings. What expressions or phrases she uses? Does she only use Spanish? Does she use body language to express emotions instead of oral language?

It is anticipated that in the home tour, the researcher will be able to see the elements that the mother use when the mother interacts with the child, for instance:

- Latinx musical instruments and lyric-musical Spanish songs
- Toys, books for the child, materials in Spanish they use to read, write
- Material for language instruction using technology- for example Star fall in Spanish- (in Spanish and English)

Readability: Flesch Reading Ease: 46.7. Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 10

Protocolo de observación adaptado (Jack, 2018) (Spanish version)

A continuación, el protocolo de observación que se utilizará en cada observación. El objetivo de estas observaciones tiene varios propósitos: **(1)** observar y comprender la interacción de las madres Latinas y sus hijos pequeños; **(2)** para describir el entorno del hogar; **(3)** describir las experiencias de alfabetización que ocurren en el hogar de la participante con su hijo pequeño; **(4)** observar el tipo de lenguaje, prácticas bilingües, prácticas de escritura y lectura; **(5)** para explorar formas de interacciones sociales y actividades de juego en el hogar que fomentan la alfabetización temprana, **(6)** para describir los tipos de recursos, capturar, observar los tipos de materiales impresos y factores multimodales (por ejemplo, libros electrónicos, libros de texto, impresos, materiales para colorear, escribir, pintar, tecnología utilizada en el hogar para promover la alfabetización emergente).

En la primera observación en persona, el participante le dará al investigador un recorrido por el hogar (e.g., la madre eligió las áreas para visitar en el hogar) para tener una idea del entorno ambiental. En las observaciones virtuales, la cámara web se colocará estratégicamente para que el investigador visualice todo el entorno. Cuando sea necesario, la madre cambiará a la cámara de su dispositivo digital para acercarse a ver el material específico. Todas las observaciones serán grabadas en audio o video. La participante sabrá de antemano que será observada varias veces. La madre estará preparada con el dispositivo tecnológico y con su hijo pequeño.

Las observaciones se realizarán en diferentes momentos del día. En un momento diferente del día, la madre y el niño pueden tener otras actividades que reflejen diversas experiencias de alfabetización, por ejemplo, durante el desayuno temprano, bailar, jugar, orar, leer, que fomenten el desarrollo de la alfabetización. Al final de esta observación, la investigadora agradecerá a la participante por compartir sus actividades con su hijo/a.

Las observaciones se realizarán en diferentes momentos del día. En un momento diferente del día, la madre y el niño pueden tener otras actividades que reflejen diversas experiencias de alfabetización, por ejemplo, durante el desayuno temprano, bailar, jugar, orar que posiblemente fomenten el desarrollo de la alfabetización. Al final de esta observación, la investigadora agradecerá a la participante por compartir sus actividades con su hijo/a.

De la siguiente manera el investigador le dirá al participante:

Hola, _____ (nombre), muchas gracias por permitirme observar su hogar y sus prácticas de alfabetización. Durante las observaciones, estaré observando y comunicándome con usted en compañía de su hijo/a. Estoy aquí para aprender más sobre sus experiencias en el hogar y cómo apoyan el desarrollo de la alfabetización de su hijo. Es posible que me vea grabando notas y, en ocasiones, haciendo preguntas de nuevo o revisando si mi grabación de audio o video está funcionando correctamente. No te interrumpiré si estás hablando con el niño, pero puedes hablar conmigo en cualquier momento. Además, en cualquier momento, puede detenerme o decirme que le gustaría

finalizar esta observación. No dude en hacerme cualquier pregunta durante esta observación. Continuemos.

- 1). ¿Puede contarme y mostrarme más sobre cómo las actividades de alfabetización que describió durante la entrevista suceden en su hogar y por favor mostrarme cómo ocurren estas actividades, también, puede mostrarme los materiales que usa con ellas?
 - 2). Usted mencionó en la entrevista anterior (p. ej., sobre una actividad específica como la lectura), ¿puede mostrarme cómo interactúa con esos materiales con su hijo?
- Gracias por mostrar y compartir esa información conmigo; ahora discutiremos sobre la fecha de nuestra próxima observación.

Gracias por mostrar y compartir esa información conmigo; ahora discutiremos sobre la fecha de nuestra próxima observación.

Información y guía para el investigador que sirve para anticipar posibles escenarios que puedan ocurrir durante las observaciones:

- Interacciones durante la hora de la música, la hora de cocinar, la realización de actividades de manualidades.
- La madre fomenta las interacciones verbales del niño haciendo preguntas, alentando las elaboraciones, contando historias, enseñando modales / respeto (respeto) y apoyando los intercambios continuos. (El estudiante investigador observará otras interacciones culturales que pueden no ser necesariamente las que se incluyen en esta lista).
- La madre brinda oportunidades para iniciar e influir activamente en los intercambios verbales. ¿Cuáles son los comandos o instrucciones que usa para realizar una tarea? ¿Utiliza frases largas o cortas? ¿Usa español o inglés, o ambos? ¿Combina los idiomas?
- La madre lee/habla en español con el niño. ¿Cómo habla la madre con el niño durante el tiempo de observación? (¿Habla un adulto, cambia de voz, usa la palabra por favor o gracias constantemente? ¿Usa vocabulario diferente o extendido)?
- ¿Cómo la madre da instrucciones o manda, por ejemplo, establece expectativas claras y establece rutinas que fomentan las relaciones positivas con los adultos? (Se incluirán ejemplos claros para considerar los posibles componentes culturales de esta pregunta).
- La madre anima al niño a usar el lenguaje para verbalizar sus sentimientos. ¿Qué expresiones o frases usa? ¿Ella solo usa español? ¿Utiliza el lenguaje corporal para expresar emociones en lugar del lenguaje oral?

Se anticipa que, en el recorrido domiciliario, el investigador podrá ver los elementos que utiliza la madre cuando la madre interactúa con el niño, por ejemplo:

- Canciones en español lírico-musicales, cuentos populares
- Juegos y juguetes para el niño, incluidos dispositivos o materiales en español que usan para leer, escribir
- Material para la enseñanza de idiomas utilizando tecnología, por ejemplo, Star fall en español (en español e inglés).

Appendix E

Member Validation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), Participant Validation (Ravitch & Carl, 2021)

Member validation is the process in which the researcher's interpretations presented to the participants of a review for discussion of their validity (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The researcher will say to the participant the following:

Hi, again, thank you so much for allowing me to talk and meet with you. During this conversation, I will be asking you to read some parts of the transcripts, or participant profiles, and digital images, and discuss about them. I would like to know if the participant is comfortable with the information to be shared and if it is a true reflection of the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and experiences.

During this process, I will use my audio recording and written notes. The participant and the investigator will meet virtually.

Please at any time, you may stop me or tell me that you would like to end this member validation section. Please feel free to ask me any questions at any time. Let's continue.

The questions that will guide the participant validation (Ravitch & Carl, 2021) are as follows:

Does this transcript or profile reflect and resonate with your perspective? How might differ and why?

Is there anything that this transcript/profile does not capture?

Is there any problematic in the interview, the transcript, or profile?

Does my interpretation resonate with you? In what ways?

Is there any part of the profile, interview, digital photos, that you preferred to be deleted?

Is there specific areas you would like to clarify?

Are there any assumptions that you see during the profile or conversations?

Is there specific areas you would like to clarify?

Readability: Flesch Reading Ease: 58.1 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 9.5

Spanish versión: Validación del participante E (Ravitch & Carl, 2021),

Miembro-participante validación (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015)

La validación de miembros es el proceso en el que las interpretaciones del investigador se presentan a los participantes de una revisión para discutir su validez (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). El investigador le dirá al participante lo siguiente:

Hola, nuevamente, muchas gracias por permitirme hablar y reunirme con usted. Durante esta conversación, le pediré que lea algunas partes de las transcripciones, o los perfiles de los participantes y las imágenes digitales, y discuta sobre ellas. Me gustaría saber si el participante se siente cómodo con la información que se compartirá y si es un fiel reflejo de las creencias, percepciones y experiencias de los participantes. Durante este proceso, usaré mi grabación de audio y notas escritas. El participante y el estudiante investigador se reunirán virtualmente.

Por favor, en cualquier momento, puede detenerme o decirme que desea finalizar esta sección de validación de miembros. Por favor, siéntase libre de hacerme cualquier pregunta en cualquier momento. Continuemos.

Las preguntas que guiarán la validación de los participantes (Ravitch & Carl, 2021) son las siguientes:

- ¿Esta transcripción o perfil refleja y resuena con su perspectiva? ¿Cómo podría diferir y por qué?
- ¿Hay algo que esta transcripción/perfil no refleje lo que usted cree?
- ¿Hay alguna problemática en la entrevista, la transcripción o el perfil?
- ¿Te suena, te parece mi interpretación de tus características? ¿De qué maneras?
- ¿Hay alguna parte del perfil, entrevista, fotos digitales, que prefieres que se elimine?
- ¿Hay áreas específicas que le gustaría aclarar?
- ¿Hay alguna suposición que notas durante el perfil o las conversaciones?
- ¿Hay áreas específicas que le gustaría aclarar?

Readability: Flesch Reading Ease: 58.1 Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 9.5

Schedule of Daily Routine

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