CIERA REPORT

Constructing Achievement Orientations Toward Literacy: An Analysis of Sociocultural Activity in Latino Home and Community Contexts

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CIERA REPORT #1-011
May 18, 2001

CIERA
Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement

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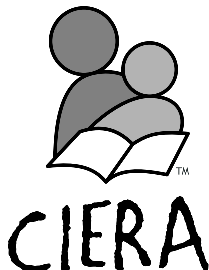
CIERA Inquiry 1: Readers and Texts
How do the family contexts in which immigrant Latino children participate contribute to developing an achievement orientation toward literacy and schooling?

Minority children are often thought to lack an achievement orientation. In this paper we discuss the home and community contexts of Latina/o immigrant children in a low-income community in Southern California, to demonstrate how sociocultural factors interact to produce motivation. Our findings reveal that even among demographically similar families, a diverse set of constraints and affordances are at play which significantly impact students achievement orientations toward literacy and schooling. Further, we find that the families' daily struggles to negotiate within a linguistically and culturally unfamiliar environment make the importance of literacy—particularly English literacy—quite transparent to children.



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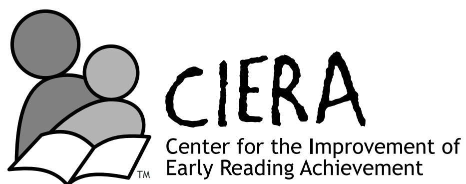
May 18, 2001



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Support for the preparation of this work was provided under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, PR/Award No. R305R70004, the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). However, the comments do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education and endorsement by the Federal Government should be assumed.

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Most teachers are interested in learning to motivate students, especially diverse learners, to read (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). However, studies show that teachers often believe minority children are not motivated to engage in academic tasks (Heath, 1983; Valdez, 1996). Minority parents are often thought to lack interest in their children's schooling and are blamed for their children's lack of engagement (Valencia, 1997). Recent work suggests that these contentions can be challenged (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, & Shannon, 1994). More recent studies of Latino families demonstrate that many strongly value formal education and schooling, identifying these as the main avenues for their children's social and economic mobility (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995).

In part, misunderstandings over motivation and achievement orientations are related to the way these constructs have been conceptualized. Dominant theories view motivational processes as occurring inside the individual. This approach fails to recognize that sociocultural and historical factors shape the context within which individuals act. From a sociocultural standpoint, motivation and behavior are created and displayed in interactions between the individual and the environment in specific contexts (Rueda & Moll, 1994).

In this paper, we examine how achievement orientations toward schooling and literacy are constructed in the home and community contexts of five low-income Latino families. Our findings support the need to look beyond the individual in considering motivational processes and to incorporate a sociocultural perspective on motivation and reading engagement.

A Theoretical Discussion of Achievement Motivation and Reading Engagement

Engagement with academic tasks is often said to be the observable manifestation of achievement motivation. Sometimes, it is identified by students' on-task behavior, lack of disruptions during lessons, or completion of activities. More recently, cognitive-oriented researchers argue that an engaged reader is one who is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). This requires that the learner be actively thinking about the reading task. Such definitions make engagement difficult to observe.

Defining and assessing such constructs with diverse learners are particularly difficult. The way a given individual shows interest or displays motivation to engage in a task is culturally defined (Sivan, 1986). Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez, and Shannon (1994) document how one child utilizing his classmates as learning resources (a common activity among the Mexican families they studied) was reprimanded for walking around the classroom. The teacher did not understand that the child was demonstrating his engagement with the task by seeking knowledge and verification from his social network of peers within the class. Not surprisingly, existing theories attempting to explain motivational processes have not been very successful at explaining motivational processes in ethnic minorities (Rueda & Dembo, 1995; Rueda & Moll, 1994).

Cognitive Contributions

Dominant theories of motivation emerge from a cognitive perspective that conceptualizes motivational processes as individual cognitive processes (for a review, see Covington, 1998). Theories stemming from this approach have provided important insights into the factors that produce achievement motivation. These have been broken down into three main components: (a) the students' goals and values related to the task (i.e., "Why am I doing the task?"); (b) the students' self-efficacy in relation to the task (i.e., "Can I do the task?"), and (c) an affective component (i.e., "How do I feel about the task?"; Wigfield, 1997).

Goal theory stresses the importance of students' goals to achievement motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). The reasons students have for achieving determine their level of effort and persistence, as well as the strategies they employ in a particular task. Dweck and Legget (1988) defined two major types of goals: *learning* goals and *performance* goals. Learning goals reflect a desire to master the task. Students with a learning goal orientation are intrinsically motivated to learn. They employ greater effort and measure their success in terms of their own growth. Performance goals, on the other hand, are related to extrinsic rewards such as grades and praise. Students with performance goals compare themselves with other students. They do as much as is required to outperform others. Results from a number of studies show that learning goal orientations lead to higher cognitive engagement (Nolen, 1988; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990).

Task values—a person's incentive for doing a specific task—are also important to motivation (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Four items help determine an individual's task values: (a) the intrinsic interest that the task holds for the individual, or how much the person enjoys performing the task; (b) the attainment value, or how important the individual considers the task to be; (c) the utility that the task brings in terms of the individual's future goals; and (d) the cost, or negative aspects, of performing the task (e.g., the demands of the task on the person; the other more attractive tasks that may have to be neglected).

Beliefs regarding an individual's control over learning and performance also impact motivation. Students who attribute their performance to fixed characteristics such as intelligence tend to expend less effort on a task than do students who attribute their success or failure to controllable factors such as effort (De Charms, 1984).

Self-worth theory (Covington, 1998) suggests that, since intelligence is highly valued in our society and an individual's self worth is impacted by their perception of their intelligence, students who attribute performance to a fixed understanding of ability are often motivated to protect their sense of self worth. This is particularly true if they do not feel efficacious toward the task (Bandura, 1986). These students often choose to apply less effort in their endeavors for fear of failure. For these students, failure is indicative of low ability; if they expend a great deal of effort but do not perform well, then they lack ability. On the other hand, if they do not study adequately, then they can believe and have others believe that they did not apply themselves. Sometimes these students do expend effort, but they hide this fact from others and pretend not to care about the tasks. These students often appear disengaged in the classroom.

As discussed above, a cognitive view of motivation proposes a clear relation between beliefs, attitudes, and values as mediators of task engagement (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, in press). When applied to reading specifically, motivation is defined as "...the individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 3). Thus, cognitive work on reading motivation has focused on the types of literacy tasks in which children are asked to engage and how they engage in them. Cognitive work on reading motivation also considers the authenticity of the tasks (Worthy, 1996) and the social interactional aspects of literacy (Rowe, 1989).

Researchers at the National Reading Research Center have been especially influential in translating the research on motivation to the domain of reading and literacy, emphasizing affective (motivational) factors as essential characteristics of reading engagement. Thus, an engaged reader is thought to be motivated to read for diverse purposes but also an active and strategic knowledge constructor (Guthrie, 1996). Constructing knowledge requires having the conceptual knowledge from which to draw to make sense of the text, and effectively using strategies that facilitate understanding the text. In addition, a number of authors discuss the social aspects of engaged reading, suggesting that reading engagement involves talking about the task with others (Rowe, 1989). These four elements (motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction) provide a basis from which to build a theoretical framework for reading engagement.

Although these theories have proven helpful in explaining motivational processes in many children, they have proven less useful in explaining motivation in ethnically and linguistically diverse students, including Latino children. One problem is that many of these theories rely on mainstream notions of individual beliefs and goals and neglect the cultural and historical forces that shape these beliefs and goals. A second problem is that cognitive theories see motivational processes as occurring inside the individual, excluding related sociocultural factors.

A Sociocultural Approach: New Directions for Inquiry

A sociocultural approach emerging from the work of Vygotsky (1978; Rieber & Carton, 1987) views learning and development as culturally, historically, and socially mediated processes (Wertsch, 1995). Although this approach has been predominantly used to explain learning and cognitive activity, a few authors (Rueda & Dembo, 1995; Rueda & Moll, 1994; Sivan, 1986) have begun to apply it to affective processes such as motivation. Because activity is socially mediated, motivation does not take place in the mind of the individual; it is produced in social interaction.

These interactions are furthermore shaped by the context in which they take place and the sociocultural and historical nature of that context. That is, the features of a particular context (operationalized as an activity setting, or the who, what, when, where, why, and how of an activity) are products of sociocultural and historical forces that play an equally important role in the activity of the moment and in the interactions that take place while participating in the activity. Contexts shift endlessly from moment to moment as particular features of an activity setting change. Minority children's performance has often been found to vary within different contexts even when each context requires the same or very similar skills (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999). From this perspective, research on motivation requires observation of participation in action and consideration of the features of the context that produce the behavior.

Rogoff (1995) points out that the analysis of sociocultural phenomena incorporates three interrelated levels: the individual, the interpersonal, and the community. These levels can be foregrounded in order to facilitate analysis, although they can never be considered in isolation. This framework has guided our efforts to understand how achievement motivation is produced in out of school contexts.

Our study examined activities in Latino home and community contexts that produced engagement with literacy, as well as those that seemed to foster a value for schooling and literacy. We were particularly interested in documenting the literacy resources that these minority children's homes and communities provide for them as well as the values and beliefs embedded in the activities in which they engage.

Methods

The larger study from which this paper emerges examines the contexts that produce literacy engagement in low-income Latino children. Specifically, the study looks at 21 Spanish-dominant Latino children within classroom, home, and community contexts. The children are all students at a neighborhood school in one of the most impoverished inner-city immigrant communities in Southern California. Many families live in this community; others live in surrounding low-income communities but work here, where factory work abounds. Many of the parents in our study work in these factory jobs. Some earn minimum wage in these positions, but many are paid by the piece and tend to earn much lower wages. All of the parents in the study are immigrants to this country and speak little or no English. Some are undocumented. All of the children were born in the United States and vary in levels of English proficiency.

The Families

For this paper, we draw primarily from data on the five families that were most closely observed within home and community contexts: the Corral family, the Velarde family, the Torres family, the Arellano family, and the Guerra family. Respectively, the focal children are Alisa, Carmen, Lupita, Ricardo, and Carmela. The children were all first and second graders at the onset of the study. Table 1 gives demographic information on each family.

Table 1: Family Characteristics

Family	Parents' Birthplace	Parents' Occupation	Immigration Status	Children (Ages)	TC Grade
Corral Mother	 Mexico	 Garment worker	 Undocumented	 Alisa (9)* Marisol (1)	 1st
Velarde Mother Father	 Mexico Mexico	 Garment worker Garment worker	 Undocumented Undocumented	 Ramón (17) Carmen (10)* Raul (6)	 2nd
Torres Mother Father	 Mexico Mexico	 Garment worker Dairy packing	 U.S. citizen Permanent resident	 Juan (20) Lupita (9)*	 1st
Arellano Mother Father	 Mexico Mexico	 Garment worker Demolition	 Undocumented Permanent resident	 Ricardo (9)* Rosita (6)	 2nd
Guerra Mother Father	 Mexico Mexico	 Garment worker Parking attendant	 Permanent resident U.S. citizen	 María (22) Antonio (15) Marta (13) Clara (10) Carmela (9)*	 1st

* Target Child (TC)

Data Sources

Data on all 21 children were collected during a two-year period through a variety of sources. The children were observed on a weekly basis in their classrooms throughout the two-year period by a team of graduate students. The focus of these observations was on the types of reading activities in which children took part and their interactions and behaviors during these activities. Grade reports and standardized test scores were also collected for each child as indicators of their performance, and their teachers' perceptions of competence, attitudes, and behaviors were obtained. In addition, teachers were interviewed on issues of students' reading interest and engagement and their families' involvement in school. A measure of student reading motivation, the Student Motivation to Read Profile (SMTRP; Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), measured reading self-concept and value in reading; this was administered to each student in the language in which they were most proficient. Teachers also completed the Teacher Perception of Student Reading Motivation Questionnaire (TPSRMQ; Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998)—an assessment of their students' reading motivation—for each of the children. In addition, one teacher focus group and two parent focus groups were conducted to examine factors that motivate students to read. A two-part Eco-cultural Interview (Weisner, Coots, Bernheimer, & Arzubiaga, 1997) measure was also used with each family; this consisted of a structured interview and a semistructured interview. These interviews lasted approximately one hour for each part, and were completed with the children's primary caretaker. The interviews focused on examining the constraints and affordances available to each family within a given eco-cultural niche.

In addition to these measures, data collection for the five families on which this paper is focused included a significant amount of ethnographic data collected within home and community contexts. Research assistants entered family homes and participated in activities in the home (dinner, homework) and in the community (visiting library, doctor's appointments). Generally, visits lasted approximately three hours. Field notes were taken immediately upon leaving the site. The Corral, Velarde, and Guerra families were each visited five times. The Arellano family was visited eight times. The Torres family was most accessible and was observed an average of once per week for over a year. Data on home and community contexts were also drawn from the other data sources that informed the broader study.

Data Analysis

The quantitative measures were scored per published scoring procedures. The qualitative data were analyzed using a grounded approach. The initial theme of "constructing values for literacy and schooling" developed through ongoing discussions about findings among the research team. The data were then coded with respect to this broad category. Later, this broad category was divided into subcategories. The second theme emerged as we noted that children were beginning to differentiate themselves with respect to their reading performance and their interest in school-like literacy tasks at home. This observation prompted us to develop a number of case studies of the dif-

ferent families; we will contrast two of these case studies here. This paper's final section on parental strategies to motivate their children emerged directly from the data by clustering related themes.

Constructing Values for Schooling and Literacy

We found that families' daily routines (i.e., the typical activities in which they engaged and the conversations they had with children and with others in the presence of children) offered rich contexts within which values for schooling and literacy were constructed.

Parents' Aspirations

Parents had overwhelmingly high educational aspirations for their children. All indicated wanting their children to go "lo más que se pueda" (as far as possible). They wanted their children to receive university degrees "para que sea alguien" (to be somebody). All parents had received little schooling as youngsters and believed this to be the cause of their low economic security. Thus, they placed a high value on formal schooling and consistently made this value transparent to their children, demanding consistent school attendance, homework completion, good behavior in school, and academic progress. Alisa and Ricardo, who struggled with reading more than the other focal children, were consistently being urged by their parents to read at home.

These high aspirations often translated into high expectations. All parents believed that their children would benefit from the educational system in the United States and often compared it to the system in their home countries. As one parent put it, "Es un crimen que aquí hay tantos niños que no aprovechan de todos los beneficios que tienen en las escuelas." (It's a crime that there are so many children that don't take advantage of the benefits they have in school.)

The Central Role of Schools

Children's schooling played a central role in each of the households we studied in depth. Many household activities centered around schooling, from the daily routine of taking children to school and making sure they completed homework assignments to discussing school activities and listening to children's stories about their experiences, their teachers, and their classmates.

Parent-child discussions about future career goals were common as well. Parents often boasted with respect to what their children wanted to be when they grew up, indicating their interest in such topics. On one occasion, when Alisa Corral was asked what she wanted to be, she responded "can-

tante" (singer). Her mother's live-in partner asked, "¿No te gustaría ser abogada o doctora?" (Wouldn't you like to be a lawyer or a doctor?) Her mother added, "¿No que siempre decías que querías ser maestra?" (Didn't you always say you wanted to be a teacher?)

As the above example suggests, parents did not just leave questions regarding career goals up to children. They often proposed career goals for their children's consideration. These careers were often professional and carried respect within the community, such as teacher and doctor. Indeed, it appeared that for these families, a desired position was one that involved "ayudando a la comunidad para que progrese" (helping the community to progress). With children's and parents' talk centering around education, children were constantly immersed in an environment in which they constructed a value for schooling.

The Need for Literacy

Generally, in the home context, language and literacy were functional tools used to accomplish a task or to gain needed knowledge. Common literacy activities included interpreting and filling out institutional documents and forms, reading and writing letters from relatives in Mexico, and reading labels and signs in the community guiding what they purchased, what they ate, where they went, and how they got there.

Although the community in which these families live is predominantly Latino and diversity is evident in the many businesses that operate and advertise in Spanish (Rueda & MacGillivray, 1999), much of the print with which families interacted was in English. Community outings with Lupita Torres and her mother revealed that they utilized both receptive and productive modes of literacy and drew from both linguistic and cultural codes to negotiate meaning from the print encountered.

Although children are often active participants in transactions for which they are present, their role becomes crucial in situations in which English is required when they gain English literacy (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Vasquez et al., 1994). For instance, Lupita was seeing a medical specialist at a hospital where there were few available staff who spoke Spanish. Communicating with the doctor was difficult for Ms. Torres. She felt frustrated because many of her questions went unanswered. Although she often attempted to recruit her older son or the research assistant to accompany her, she was not always successful. Lupita's English skills were critical on these occasions. Although not yet fluent enough to handle more complex interactions, she was able to meet basic communication needs.

Unfortunately, these interactions were not accessible to us for observation. Ironically, in situations in which the researcher was present, she was viewed by the family as the most capable translator; thus she, rather than Lupita, was assigned the translator role. Managing affairs within this English culture was something with which all families constantly struggled. When the researcher visited a home, she was almost always asked to read a particular English document or asked for information regarding a particular service agency.

We observed that, as children took part in home and community activities and encountered the need to consistently negotiate print to perform daily tasks, such as ordering from menus and reading labels and signs, they had many opportunities to see the importance of becoming literate. As they saw their parents struggle to meet their family's needs due to difficulties with English language and literacy, these English literacy needs became that much more obvious.

Not surprisingly, parents understood firsthand the need for English literacy and expressed to us repeatedly their desire for their children to learn to speak, read, and write in English. The children also expressed a strong belief in the need for literacy, reporting in the SMTRP that "Knowing how to read well is important" (Ricardo, Alisa) and "very important" (Carmen, Lupita).

We found this telling in light of the popular notion that children in bilingual education programs do not develop the motivation to learn English. Indeed, English is sometimes so highly valued that the value of maintaining the primary language is obscured, as was the case with some of our focal children. The following conversation between the researcher and Alisa took place in her room after about 30 minutes of playing. During this time, Alisa had spoken only in English, even after repeated attempts by the researcher to engage her in Spanish.

RA	How come you are speaking to me only in English? Do you speak to your mom in English?
Alisa	No. She doesn't know English.
RA	How come you're talking to me in English?
Alisa	Because you know English.
RA	I know Spanish too.
Alisa	Yes, but you know English too and English is better.

The functional nature of literacy in the home context is distinct from the decontextualized literacy of the classroom. So different are the uses of literacy in home and school contexts that children may not recognize what the book-reading and writing activities of the school have to do with the functional types of literacy activities in which they engage in their homes and communities. For example, even though Ricardo and Alisa reported in the SMTRP that "knowing how to read well is important," the teachers' responses to the TPSRMQ indicate that both rarely engaged with reading and writing activities in the classroom. Indeed, Table 2 shows that the children scored very similarly in the value for reading factor regardless of differences in their reading self-concepts and in their teachers' perceptions of their reading engagement and performance.

School-Like Reading in the Home

Children who have had positive experience with school-based literacy activities may be more likely, given access, to bring school literacy practices home. Lupita, described by her teachers as an avid reader, felt efficacious with respect to reading. Her responses to the SMTRP indicate that she believed herself to be a better reader than her classmates. She has self-imposed a 20 minute minimum of daily reading at home. In contrast,

Ricardo, who indicated that "when I read out loud I am a poor reader," rejects bringing this activity home.

Table 2: Comparison of Motivation to Read Factors and Performance Measures

Children	SMTRP*		TPSMTR†			Grade in Reading
	Value in Reading	Reading Self-Concept	Reading Activity	Reading Autonomy	Social Reading	
Lupita	35	35	3.5	3.0	3.5	A
Carmen	36	29	3.3	3.0	3.5	A
Alisa	33	29	3.0	2.5	2.5	C
Ricardo	35	21	2.0	2.0	1.8	F
Carmela	36	35	3.3	2.8	3.3	A

* Student Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et al., 1996)
† Teacher Perception of Student Reading Motivation Questionaire (Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998)

Access to books in the home is another factor in motivating children to read at home. In spite of the highly "at risk" conditions in which these families live, there is still variance in the resources available to the children. Children who rarely wished to read at home had significant barriers to access. For instance, Ricardo, whose mother complained that she could not get him to read books at home, had only about five books in the home. The Arellano family had little knowledge of the educational system and thus was not aware of the importance of having books in the home in helping children to become successful readers in school. Further, they did not have access to instrumental knowledge regarding the types of literacy activities most valued at school. They were not aware of having a public library within walking distance of their home, and they had never been shown how to check out books.

Success within our educational system requires more than just a willingness to engage in literacy activities. It requires the cultural capital to know which types of reading behaviors are valued and rewarded. Immigrant families generally do not have this cultural capital and need access to this instrumental knowledge. Not surprisingly, Carmen, Carmela, and Lupita, all of whom were successful in school literacy tasks, had older siblings who attended U.S. schools and family members who spoke English; in short, they had greater access to information about school. In contrast, Ricardo and Alisa were the oldest children in their respective families, and their parents did not have family members to whom they could turn for support regarding their children's schooling.

Still broader sociopolitical constraints often impact children's opportunities to do well in school and parents' opportunities to access services and support for their children. Legal status appears to be a significant constraint. Undocumented parents, such as Alisa's and Ricardo's, do not have and cannot obtain library cards. They avoid situations in which they fear their legal status could be revealed. Their fear has a basis in reality because of the visible role of the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) in the garment industry where they work, and because they encounter the strong anti-immigrant sentiment in the media on a daily basis. When people live in an environment that they can only view as racist and anti-immigrant, when they

sense that human rights are secondary to political demarcations of power, we cannot understand their educational achievement and motivation by looking only within individuals. The unit of analysis must take into account the broader constraints that are placed upon these individuals by society.

Alisa's lack of interest in storybook reading at home illustrates the importance of access to engagement with reading. Alisa's mother complained often about her daughter's poor reading skills, attributing them to a lack of motivation to read and study at home. Yet Alisa's teacher painted a very different picture regarding her reading behaviors in her first-grade class. In this classroom, the teacher maintained a large selection of books and provided a context for "open reading" in which the students were allowed to engage with books in any way they chose. Her teacher explained:

> She wasn't reading on grade level. She thought she was because she was reading all the time. She used to love to get the little books that have one line of text and she would memorize those and read to the kids.

The teacher then related an occasion in which families were invited to attend a family literacy activity at the school. Those who participated would be given a book to take home. Alisa's mother was out of town, and she did not have anyone to attend. The teacher explained that Alisa was very interested in obtaining the book and asked for specific details on how to fill out the parent form. Although she was told that the form was for parents to fill out, she persisted, filled out the form on her own, and accepted the invitation as if she were her mother—all in the hopes of receiving the book. These are not the actions of a child who lacks the motivation to read. Without access to interesting books at home, even the most motivated reader turns to other activities (Pucci, 1994).

Beyond the Mechanics: Literacy in the Home and Community

Children also engaged in nonconventional forms of literacy in home and community contexts—forms of literacy that typically go unrecognized at school. For instance, the children demonstrated a keen awareness of how to get around in their community by using billboards and buildings as markers. Parents often relied on their children to lead them in the right direction. Children also engaged in oral activities. They shared stories with their parents about what went on at school. They often retold stories shared with them by teachers. They also participated in the sharing of jokes during dinner. The Guerra family sometimes engaged in discussions about political issues as they watched the news in the evenings. Furthermore, all children had an extensive Spanish vocabulary.

The children showed great enthusiasm for these types of nonconventional literacy activities. Unfortunately, the classroom lessons we observed generally did not privilege these types of skills. In teacher-directed lessons, teachers did not tap these rich resources that children brought with them to school. However, when given opportunities to direct their own learning, such as in open reading activities, children demonstrated their resourcefulness in drawing from their "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Nett, &

Gonzalez, 1992) to create meaning from text. For instance, these children were sometimes found code-switching between English and Spanish when sharing stories during free reading at the classroom library center.

Diversity in Sociocultural Contexts Among Families

The importance that parents placed on formal schooling was evident in the many sacrifices they made to ensure what they believed to be the best education for their children. Although the families were demographically similar, each had unique circumstances that impacted their needs and the ways they were able to support their children's schooling. Here we will attempt to show how activities and interactions are shaped by each family's unique sociocultural experience and how they provide a context within which a value for formal schooling is constructed. We stress that, within each family, our observations revealed rich contexts for literacy learning and motivation, but our emphasis here is on the constraints and affordances provided with respect to the types of literacies valued in school. We contrast the Torres and Arellano families to illustrate this point.

The Torres Family

Mr. and Ms. Torres have two children—Carlos, who attends California State University, Los Angeles, but lives at home, and the focal child, Lupita. They have lived in the same apartment in the United States for almost 20 years. A temporary cardboard divider and a curtain separate their small one-room apartment in two, making a small bedroom and a small living room area. Until recently, both parents had worked at the same factory for many years, earning minimum wage. A year into the study, Ms. Torres was laid off, making their financial condition difficult.

Mr. Torres's experience entering the work force at an early age has given rise to his belief that working distracts from education and that wages are more attractive and immediately gratifying to youngsters than the long-term benefits of education. Thus, Mr. and Ms. Torres discourage their son from seeking employment to assist the family. This topic is discussed often in the household and illustrates that education is one of their primary goals.

When Carlos took late evening classes at the university, the family insisted on picking him up in their one car because riding the bus home at a late hour would be quite dangerous. Mr. Torres barely had time to arrive home after a long day's work before going out again to pick up his son. Although the family preferred that their son take early classes, they did not complain when he took late classes. They simply did what needed to be done to ensure their son's educational success. When the two-hour bus ride to and from campus began to weigh heavily on Carlos, they purchased a used car with their savings. When they learned of the sometimes two-hour wait to access a computer on campus, they purchased one on credit.

Lupita participated in the activities supporting her older brother's persistence in education. She is constructing a value for education that stems from her family's sacrifices. Similar sacrifices are made for Lupita. Household chores and activities are strategically arranged to take place between Monday and Saturday each week. Sundays are then free for Ms. Torres to dedicate to Lupita, taking her to the library, to the nearby Burger King that has a play area, or to walk around the many stores within walking distance. Lupita was placed in an English-only class, even though neither she nor her parents spoke English, following the passing of Proposition 227 in California. To compensate for the lack of bilingual assistance in the school, Ms. Torres was observed helping Lupita with English homework activities by utilizing a Spanish-English dictionary to decipher the meanings of the words. This was a frustrating experience, given the need to decipher virtually every word in the assigned worksheets and the combination of a dictionary with very small print and a lack of resources to replace Ms. Torres's broken glasses. During this first year of English-only class, homework (which usually included two or three worksheets from prepackaged materials) commonly took three or four hours to complete each night.

Achievement motivation is not all it takes to succeed. Real constraints often limit access to education or make success difficult to achieve. During the first year of the study, Ms. Torres's layoff occurred shortly after the family went into debt for the purchases of a car and a computer to support Carlos's university attendance. This financial situation was exacerbated when Mr. Torres was fired on the spot from his job of twenty years over a disagreement with his boss. The anxiety and stress that this loss of employment created was immediate and serious. Carlos announced that he would be enrolling the following semester at the junior college rather than at the four-year institution in which he was in his third year.

Like the Torres family, the other families made many adjustments in their daily lives to support their children's education. These adjustments and deliberate actions on the part of these families to support education and literacy represent their attempts to construct a value for education; the net result is the production of an achievement orientation toward schooling. Yet even among these demographically similar families, we found that some families were better able than others to make these types of adjustments. Some families faced sociopolitical constraints that shaped the activities in which they engaged and thus the ways their children constructed a value for schooling.

The Torres family, for instance, had some knowledge of school. Both parents received a few years of primary education in Mexico and had a family history with education—family members who completed high-school equivalence in Mexico and a brother who went on to university. Recent employment changes aside, they had maintained a steady, albeit minimum-wage, income for years. Both were also legal residents and had established a strong, although small, social network that provided social support for negotiating mainstream U.S. culture. Their older son also served as cultural and linguistic broker, provided childcare when needed, and served other important roles in the family. Furthermore, Ms. Torres had made an important contact with a teacher at the school who often mediated for her when she had concerns about her child's education and gave her information and advice regarding how best to support her children with their education.

The Arellano Family

The Arellano family's sociocultural experiences offer an important example of the constraints that many families face in operationalizing their value for education. The Arellanos are much younger than the Torres family. They came from rural areas in Mexico. Ms. Arellano immigrated without papers at the age of 13 in 1989. Upon her arrival, she entered the work force. Like many undocumented workers, she has not been able to secure steady employment. Instead, she has to roam the garment factories on a daily basis to see if they need extra workers. Sometimes she is fortunate to find work that lasts for weeks, but at other times she must make her rounds through the factories after dropping her children off at school. On some days, she is asked to stay at one of those factories; on other days, she arrives home tired without having found work, ready to begin making the rounds again the following day. Typically she is paid by the piece, making much less than minimum wage.

Mr. Arellano is a permanent resident thanks to the amnesty act of 1988. He has never attended school and cannot read or write in any conventional sense. He works 12-hour days for a demolition company, sometimes earning up to 10 dollars an hour. But the work is sporadic, and sometimes he is out of work for months at a time. Although he has been in the country long enough to apply for citizenship (which would allow him to secure his wife's legal status), his lack of conventional literacy in the face of the literacy requirements of the citizenship exam impedes this from happening.

The family, which includes our focal child Ricardo and his younger sister Veronica, has always lived in the same community, although they have moved on a few occasions and are always looking for better living arrangements. At the time of this study, they lived in an apartment above a factory that rents out rooms to different families. A common dining room, kitchen, and bathroom are shared among the families. The Arellanos had recently moved to this apartment because the room was subdivided to provide a small second room that they could use as the children's room. Ms. Arellano indicated that they thought the children were getting too old for the entire family to share the same room.

When their second child was born, the family could not afford to pay childcare for two; thus, Ricardo was placed in kindergarten early at the age of three and a half. He was placed in an English-only class from the start, and although Ms. Arellano had agreed to such a placement, she seemed unsure of whether her child had received bilingual instruction. As others have documented (Valdez, 1996), it is not uncommon for non–English speaking families to be less than clear about the documents they sign at school. Linguistic and cultural barriers, as well as lack of instrumental knowledge about U.S schools, limit parents in making informed decisions about their children's schooling.

At the time of the study, Ricardo had been retained in the third grade because he was having difficulty learning to read and had been referred to a Resource Specialist Program (RSP), in which he was pulled out of class on a daily basis for reading instruction. Teachers commented that Ricardo was easily distracted and did not participate in class discussions. Ms. Arellano remarked that despite her attempts to get Ricardo to read at home, he never

wanted to read. He resisted initial attempts by the research assistant to engage him in reading, participating in the activity with obvious reluctance, rolling his eyes and becoming very serious and quiet. The RSP pullout program to which he was sent daily was a clear reminder to him of his poor reading skills. His knowledge of his status as a reader was corroborated by his responses in the motivation to read survey, in which he indicated being a "poor reader" and reading "not as well as his friends." Despite these negative perceptions about himself and reading as an activity, he did engage with the researcher in one-on-one reading activities. Ricardo responded well to this experience, which was highly social—looking at and discussing the pictures and sharing personal stories related to the text. In this setting, Ricardo began to relax and enjoy the activity. In response to the researcher's query, he indicated that they did not discuss stories in this manner at school.

The family's lack of instrumental knowledge regarding schooling in the United States became evident as the research assistant attempted to explain some basic information, such as the three tiers in our system: elementary, middle, and high school. Ms. Arellano also seemed unaware of the importance of returning homework assignments, as she explained that her daughter in kindergarten had received a dissatisfactory note on her report card regarding homework completion. She remarked that she made sure that her daughter did the homework every day and that she spent time helping her, but that they stacked up because they often forgot to return them. From her perspective, homework was a home activity to be monitored by the parent. Completion of the assignment was important, whereas returning the assignment was less so given that they were kindergarten-level activities that she could help her daughter learn. Unlike the Torres family, the Arellanos had not built a relationship with school personnel who could explain school rules. Often the children's teachers did not speak Spanish, and communication between parents and teachers took place only twice a year at formal parent-teacher conferences, during which interpreters were provided. The Arellano family clearly had fewer resources available to make their commitment to their children's education work for them.

Parental Strategies That Motivate

Of the five families we studied in depth, the more successful at producing intrinsic motivation to read in a conventional sense were the Velarde family and the Torres family. Carmen Velarde and Lupita Torres often chose to engage in reading and writing at home, even when it was not required homework. In this section, we describe four strategies that the parents in these two families used to motivate their children to persist in school and to engage in school-like literacy tasks.

Modeling

The Velarde family constructed their value for education as they participated in activities surrounding the mother's struggle to better herself education-

ally. The Velarde family made many adjustments in their home in order to support her night school attendance and her time commitment to study and complete homework assignments. Toward the end of our study, these efforts were rewarded as she passed the GED high school equivalence exam. Ms. Velarde beamed, sharing that her daughter Carmen took her diploma to school for show and tell because she said she was very proud of her mother.

Ms. Torres also modeled reading engagement for Lupita, often reading to herself in the evening. She would read from an old history text given away at her daughter's school or from other government books she borrowed from the library to help take the citizenship test. She comments, "Más que nada lo hago para que ella se embuye. Yo me siento a leer mis libros y así ella se sienta y lee sus libros." (Mostly I do it so that she will become motivated. I sit to read my books and that way she sits and reads her books.)

Consejos

Offering consejos, or advice, to their children is an important way for both families to support the development of an achievement orientation toward schooling. Consejos regarding persistence in education typically came from both parents as well as family members that were presently enrolled in higher education. These family members offered advice in the form of instrumental knowledge as well as offering an important model of academic achievement.

In the Torres family, for example, children were active participants in stories regarding their parent's struggles in the work place. These stories provided a context within which their consejos made sense. "Yo siempre les aconsejo que deben de estudiar para que no tengan que pasar las humillaciones y las vergüenzas que se tiene que pasar en estos trabajos." (I always advise them that they should study so that they don't have to take the humiliations and the embarrassments that you endure in these jobs.) The Torres family actually found their son a job one summer in a tortillería (tortilla factory) "para que aprenda lo que es trabajar en un lugar como ese" (so that he learns what it's like to work in a place like that). This strategy of sharing their negative experiences in the workplace and promoting schooling as a means to a better life was typical of all five families.

In addition to stories of inadequate working conditions, the children in the Torres and Velarde families were often told stories of the successes that family members or others in the social network had achieved. These successes were explained as a result of their formal schooling and their subsequent high-paying jobs. This strategy was not available to families who do not have among their social network individuals who have completed high levels of formal schooling.

Imagining Future Success

Mrs. Torres shared that she tried to encourage her son when he complained of being tired of his university experience by helping him imagine what his

life would be like when he completed his university program. "¡Que ganas tengo de ver a mi muchacho encorbatado, sentado en su escritorio, así grande!" (I can't wait to see my son with a tie on, sitting at his desk, a big desk!)

Seemingly, Lupita at this early age had also begun to visualize and imagine what her life would be like and to place herself in a high-status role with significant autonomy. She told us that when she becomes a doctor she will be in her office and will tell her secretary that she will charge her other patients, but that she will not charge her mother. Ms. Torres believed that this was an important way to encourage her children to continue to strive for their educational success. She indicated using this strategy with her son when he was feeling tired and overwhelmed with this schooling.

Advocating on Their Children's Behalf

Although Carmen and Lupita sometimes faced negative experiences in school, they were encouraged to believe that parents could negotiate on their behalf to make the system work for them. The Torres family, for instance, always told Lupita that if teachers did not pay attention to her or act in ways she believed appropriate, she was to immediately tell them so that they, as her parents, could go and speak on her behalf. Indeed, three of the five families shared stories in which they spoke up on their children's behalf. When children see that their parents are able to successfully mediate for them and make the school system work in their favor, they may develop an internal locus of control. That is, they may begin to believe that they have control over their own success or failure.

For two of our focal children, this belief was illustrated in their willingness to question their teachers' actions in the class and to speak to someone regarding their concerns. On one occasion, Lupita, the only student entering her English-only class who had been previously receiving bilingual instruction, was given a test in Spanish when all other students were given the same test in English. Lupita came home complaining that she had been discriminated against and was very upset by the incident. Her mother and her older brother immediately went to the school the following day to inquire about the incident. They sought information from Lupita's former teacher, who had become part of their social network and often provided them with important information and support. The teacher explained to them that it was most appropriate for Lupita to take the exam in Spanish given her recent transfer to English instruction so that she could be properly assessed. Her explanation satisfied the family and the story was told to the researcher a number of times as evidence of Lupita's developing sense of having her rights respected and her understanding that her parents would be there to mediate on her behalf.

In another example, Carmen's teacher shared an incident with us in which Carmen had come to tell her in confidence that her family was enduring harsh economic difficulties, thereby utilizing her resources to seek support for her family.

> Carmen knows that I keep little snacks. She confided to me that they were eating beans, mostly beans everyday. So together she and I filled a little bag with those snacks and then I made a point during that time to take things like lunch meat.

Conclusion

The previous discussion suggests that minority home and community contexts are rich with resources from which an achievement orientation toward schooling and literacy is produced. All of our focus families were literate in ways that allowed them to function within their communities, but these forms of literacy were rarely acknowledged within school contexts and thus could not serve as bridges between community and school literacies. Even so, both the affordances and constraints of their varying levels of conventional reading and writing produced contexts that made the importance of literacy, particularly English literacy, evident to children.

Clear differences are evident in the extent to which children put these orientations into practice by engaging in activities that foster conventional literacy development; these differences can be traced to the affordances and constraints that vary even among these demographically similar families. This implies that educators who want to support literacy among immigrant families such as those we studied must give greater consideration to the dynamic sociocultural and political constraints and opportunities facing low-income, non–English speaking families. Moreover, they must recognize the variability even within culturally similar circumstances; different environments are not equal.

It is also noteworthy that these children's and families' interactions with print are based on real needs that make the functions of literacy transparent. Likewise, their intercultural interactions with others in the community make transparent the need to negotiate the dominant cultural and linguistic norms. These functions are often obscured in classroom activities; this may contribute to children's failure to recognize their value. As Lave & Wenger (1991) suggest, the transformation from peripheral legitimate participation to full participation in communities of practice requires that the cultural practices and their values and goals be transparent and accessible to the novice.

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About CIERA

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) is the national center for research on early reading and represents a consortium of educators in five universities (University of Michigan, University of Virginia, and Michigan State University with University of Southern California and University of Minnesota), teacher educators, teachers, publishers of texts, tests, and technology, professional organizations, and schools and school districts across the United States. CIERA is supported under the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, PR/Award Number R305R70004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Mission. CIERA's mission is to improve the reading achievement of America's children by generating and disseminating theoretical, empirical, and practical solutions to persistent problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading.

CIERA Research Model

The model that underlies CIERA's efforts acknowledges many influences on children's reading acquisition. The multiple influences on children's early reading acquisition can be represented in three successive layers, each yielding an area of inquiry of the CIERA scope of work. These three areas of inquiry each present a set of persistent problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading:

CIERA INQUIRY 1
Readers and Texts

Characteristics of readers and texts and their relationship to early reading achievement. What are the characteristics of readers and texts that have the greatest influence on early success in reading? How can children's existing knowledge and classroom environments enhance the factors that make for success?

CIERA INQUIRY 2
Home and School

Home and school effects on early reading achievevment. How do the contexts of homes, communities, classrooms, and schools support high levels of reading achievement among primary-level children? How can these contexts be enhanced to ensure high levels of reading achievement for all children?

CIERA INQUIRY 3
Policy and Profession

Policy and professional effects on early reading achievement. How can new teachers be initiated into the profession and experienced teachers be provided with the knowledge and dispositions to teach young children to read well? How do policies at all levels support or detract from providing all children with access to high levels of reading instruction?