FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE FOR TEACHING IN LATINO HOUSEHOLDS

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Conceptualizing the households of working-class Latino students as being rich in funds of knowledge has had transformative consequences for teachers, parents, students, and researchers. Teachers' qualitative, ethnographic study of their own students' households has unfolded as a viable method for bridging the gap between school and community. The focus of the home visit is to gather details about the accumulated knowledge base that each household assembles in order to ensure its own subsistence. Teachers also participate in study groups that offer a forum for the collective analysis of the household findings, and they form curriculum units that tap into the household funds of knowledge. New avenues of communication between school and home foster confianza, *or mutual trust.*

"Home visits are not new. I was doing home visits 20 years ago in the Model Cities program," asserted the principal of one elementary school. Her point is well-taken. The notion of home visits is neither

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novel nor unusual. Teachers may opt to visit the home of a student to discuss a particular problem, such as a student's disruptive behavior in the classroom, or to pinpoint difficulties with a particular subject matter. The teacher may simply introduce himself or herself to parents, and elicit their cooperation. Some school programs require home visits for the teachers to mentor parents on the teaching of reading or math to their children, to provide suggestions on how to help the students with their homework, or to distribute books and supplies.

In this article, we describe a very different type of household visit by teachers. These are research visits, for the express purpose of identifying and documenting knowledge that exists in students' homes. In contrast to other visits, these visits are part of a "systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers," as Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990, p. 84) define teacher research. We are convinced that these research visits, in conjunction with collaborative ethnographic reflection, can engender pivotal and transformative shifts in teacher attitudes and behaviors and in relations between households and schools and between parents and teachers (see González & Amanti, 1992; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

Instead of presenting, as is common in these reports, the (university-based) researchers' interpretations of ongoing work, we have chosen to emphasize the participating teachers' insights on the project: what they consider relevant and important to communicate to others, especially to other teachers, as a result of their own inquiry. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990) have noted that:

> Conspicuous by their absence from the literature of research on teaching are the voices of teachers themselves—the questions and problems teachers pose, the frameworks they use to interpret and improve their practice, and the ways teachers themselves define and understand their work lives. (p. 83)

In order to make explicit the transformative nature of the household visits, we have therefore selected a multivocal discourse that attempts to demystify the traditional authority of university-based researchers. As this research evolved, the authentic collaboration between teachers and researchers fashioned an alteration in the conventionally asymmetrical exchange between university and

schools. In brief, we attempt to provide insights that corroborate the assertion that elementary school teachers are capable of theoretical reflection as university professors (Savage, 1988).

In what follows, we first present an overview of the research project, highlighting what we refer to as *funds of knowledge*, a key theoretical concept in our work. This section is intended to provide the general context of the research and the goals of the investigation. A critical assumption in our work is that educational institutions have stripped away the view of working-class minority students as emerging from households rich in social and intellectual resources. Rather than focusing on the knowledge these students bring to school and using it as a foundation for learning, the emphasis has been on what these students lack in terms of the forms of language and knowledge sanctioned by the schools. This emphasis on "disadvantages" has provided justification for lowered expectations in schools and inaccurate portrayals of the children and their families.

We then introduce the teachers in the project and describe their participation in the study, including selected aspects of their research training. We follow with a summary of their insights, gained from their research efforts, regarding three key domains of change:

1. The development of teachers as qualitative researchers
2. The formation of new relationships with families
3. The redefinition of local households as containing important social and intellectual resources for teaching.

We conclude with a discussion of the minimal conditions necessary to conduct this work in other settings. As we will emphasize, we offer no "recipes" for replication elsewhere. Instead we suggest the importance of developing at each site a community of learners, where teachers are offered a format to think, reflect, and analyze with others and to produce the knowledge necessary to transform their teaching in positive ways. In describing such communities of learners, Ayers (1992) remarks that "people learn best when they are actively exploring, thinking, asking their own questions, and constructing knowledge through discovery" (p. 20). As teachers actively co-construct the theory and practice behind research-based

household visits, the challenging sense that knowledge is open-ended, active, and continuous can create new and meaningful environments of learning for all concerned.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A central goal of our project is to draw upon the knowledge and other resources found in local households for the development of classroom practice. We can summarize our three main project components as follows:

1. Community: featuring an ethnographic study of the origin, use, and distribution of funds of knowledge among households in a predominantly Mexican, working-class community of Tucson, Arizona
2. After-school "lab" or study groups: these are settings especially created to enhance the collaboration between teachers and researchers, to discuss research findings, and to plan, develop, and support innovations in instruction
3. Schools: featuring classroom studies to examine existing methods of instruction and implement innovations based on the household study of funds of knowledge and conceptualized at the after-school sites.

These three components allow us to conduct research simultaneously in several related areas and to shift our primary unit of study from classrooms to households or shift from a focus on teachers to a focus on the students, without losing sight of the interconnectedness of the settings or of the activities we are analyzing.

In terms of the community component, our emphasis has been on understanding local households historically. This approach involves understanding the sociopolitical and economic context of the households and analyzing their social history (see, e.g., Vélez-Ibáñez, 1988). This history includes their origins and development and, most prominently for our purposes, the labor history of the families, which reveals some of the accumulated funds of knowledge of the households. Funds of knowledge refers to those historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's

functioning and well-being (for details, see Greenberg, 1989; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). A key finding from our research is that these funds of knowledge are abundant and diverse; they may include information about, for example, farming and animal husbandry, associated with households' rural origins; or knowledge about construction and building, related to urban occupations; or knowledge about many other matters, such as trade, business, and finance on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.

We are particularly interested in how families develop social networks that interconnect them with their environments (most importantly with other households) and how these social relationships facilitate the development and exchange of resources, including funds of knowledge (see, e.g., Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). A key characteristic of these exchanges is their reciprocity. As Vélez-Ibáñez (1988) has observed, reciprocity represents an "attempt to establish a social relationship on an enduring basis. Whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, the exchange expresses and symbolizes human social interdependence" (p. 142). That is, reciprocal practices establish serious obligations based on the assumption of *confianza* (mutual trust), which is reestablished or confirmed with each exchange, and they lead to the development of long-term relationships. Each exchange with kinsmen, friends, neighbors, or teachers, in our case, entails not only many practical activities (everything from home and automobile repair to animal husbandry and music), but constantly provides contexts in which learning can occur—contexts, for example, where children have ample opportunities to participate in activities with people they trust (Moll & Greenberg, 1990).

PARAMETERS OF TEACHER PARTICIPATION

Another key feature of the project is the close collaboration of anthropologists and educators, especially in the work with classroom teachers. We have been experimenting with after-school teacher study groups (labs) as contexts for informing, assisting, and supporting the teachers' work—contexts, in other words, for the

exchange of funds of knowledge between teachers and researchers (for details, see Moll et al., 1990).

These after-school settings function as mediating structures in forming strategic connections between the household fieldwork and classroom practice. After-school lab meeting locales alternate among the four schools and the university. Participants include the four teachers involved; a teacher/researcher who is on leave of absence from the school district and is pursuing graduate work in anthropology; university researchers in education, anthropology, and math education; and graduate students in education. Meetings take place every two weeks, although they are sometimes preempted due to school activities. Within the study group framework, a combination of ethnographic field methods are analyzed, and participant observation, open-ended interviewing strategies, life histories, and case studies are incorporated into the joint inquiry of household and community ethnography. In this way, the ethnographic experience becomes a collaborative endeavor, not based on a lone researcher venturing out into the field, but a multiauthored discourse constructed out of experiences as participant, fieldworker, teacher, and anthropologist. Mentoring functions switch back and forth as researchers and teachers each manipulate their own sphere of expertise. As teachers enter the households as learners, so the researchers enter the teacher study groups as learners. As previously noted, reciprocity as a theoretical construct has formed the basis for the exchange between households and schools, and this construct has been paralleled to incorporate the relationships between teachers and researchers. Within this interactive and constitutive process, the role of the teacher is defined in nontraditional ways. The redefined relationship is that of colleagues, mutually engaged in refining methodology, interpretation, and practice (see González & Amanti, 1992). In this way, "curriculum, research and learning become matters of authorship rather than authority" (Woodward, 1985).

As is often the case with anthropological research, certain insights and conclusions came in a post hoc fashion, and the evolution of the teacher study groups is a case in point. The original prototype of the teacher labs consisted of the discussion of household visits

and data. However, the actual fieldwork was not conducted by teachers, but by anthropologists. Ironically, although a participatory model of learning was advocated in work with children, the original teacher labs relied on a transmission model: information was presented, and teachers received it without actively involving themselves in the production of this knowledge (see Moll et al., 1990). It became apparent that although worthwhile information about the forms and functions of the households was being transmitted to the teachers through the study groups, true ownership of the data was not taking place. Teachers were disconnected from the actual context of the household. The admonition suggested by the Spindlers (1990)—that "learning about human cultures must occur empathetically and emotionally as well as conceptually or cognitively" (p. 108)—began to take on transcendent importance. The connection of the household and teacher could not come about through a field researcher as intermediary: The bond had to be formed interpersonally, evocatively, and reciprocally.

On the few occasions when teachers did accompany field researchers into homes, the teachers had a noticeably ready access to the households, which the anthropologists had to labor to achieve. For a child's teacher, entreé into the household in a position of respect and honor was the standard. The households evinced no suspicion of motives, nor mistrust of how the information was to be used, circumstances which had at times plagued the anthropologists. The common bond of concern for the child overrode most constraints. In addition, it was found that once the teachers were involved in a dialogue with the households, they were effortlessly asking much better *learning* questions about the child's activities. It became apparent that for the teachers to know the households, a ethnographic method of approaching the households could be productive. Thus, the stage was set for the entrance of teachers as ethnographers into the households of their students.

THE TEACHERS

Four teachers were recruited to work as teacher-researchers. Recruitment of teachers was carried out through personal and

previous research contacts. The number of teachers was purposely limited in order to maintain a small, tight-knit group, which would remain together for a prolonged amount of time. Initially the four teachers represented two schools, but by the beginning of the second year, two had moved to new schools. All of the schools are located within working-class, predominantly Mexican neighborhoods. Two Mexican-origin and two Anglo teachers participated in the study, all of them fluent in Spanish.

Anna Rivera, a bilingual classroom teacher for 15 years, is presently an elementary school principal, although she was a bilingual first-grade teacher at the time of the study. She completed her doctorate in Elementary Education and has taught the full range from prekindergarten to graduate courses at the university.

Patricia Rendón has been teaching since 1969. She received her undergraduate degree in Ohio and taught there for 4½ years. With a background in languages, she moved to Medellín, Colombia, and later to Bogotá. She taught K-8 in different bilingual settings in Colombia for 9 years. Since moving to Arizona, she has been both a monolingual and bilingual teacher. She received her M.A. in 1991 and is presently a fourth/fifth-grade teacher in a bilingual classroom.

Martha Floyd-Tenery has been a teacher in various settings for 9 years. She has taught as an elementary classroom teacher, a bilingual resource teacher, an English as a Second Langugage (ESL) teacher for Spanish speakers, a teaching assistant in the Japanese Department, and as an English teacher at Anhui University in China. She has recently completed her doctoral studies in language, reading, and culture.

Raquel Gonzales has been a bilingual kindergarten teacher for six years. She is presently finishing her M.A. in counseling and guidance.

TEACHERS AS LEARNERS

Once teachers entered households as learners—as researchers seeking to construct a template for understanding and tapping into the concrete life experiences of their students—the conventional

model of home visits was turned on its head. No attempt would be made to teach the parents or to visit for punitive reasons. This shift constituted a radical departure from household visits carried out in other programs that incorporate the home visit concept (Vélez-Ibáñez, Moll, González, & Amanti, 1992). The after-school labs were restructured to accommodate these shifts, and the ethnographic method emerged as the vehicle for participant observations, rather than household visits. Within the lab setting, ethnography surfaced as more than techniques. It became the filter through which the households were conceptualized as multidimensional and vibrant entities. This new perspective reflected a corresponding shift in teachers' theoretical paradigms. As has been noted (Spindler & Spindler, 1990, p. 20), in teaching anthropology "a state of mind is more important than specific technique"; or as Segal (1990, p. 121) put it: "The question is: How can we go about teaching an anthropological imagination?"

Through the mediating structure of the after-school study groups, teachers were provided with the forum to engage in reflexive thought. Although specific techniques in participant-observation, fieldnote writing, interviewing, and eliciting of life histories were presented, the focus was continuously on the discourse, on the joint construction of knowledge. Ethnographic fieldwork became not one lone researcher grappling with overwhelming data, but a collaborative and reflexive process in which teachers and researchers shared insights and information. However, reflexivity in fieldwork is not unproblematic. Indeed one of the missions of the study groups became overcoming the paradox of gaining understanding without falling into the trap of inaction. In the face of the sometimes overwhelming social and structural factors that face the students and their families, it would be easy to simply "give up." One teacher (Martha Floyd-Tenery) voiced this sentiment as she reflected on her initial pessimism:

> I did not realize it at the time, but I used to believe that my students had limited opportunities in life. I thought that poverty was the root of many of their problems, and that this was something too big for me to change as a teacher.

Through the reflexive discourse of the study groups, this hopelessness was short-circuited. The teachers no longer felt isolated from each other, or the community, as this same teacher explains:

> This fatalistic obsession of mine has slowly melted away as I have gotten to know my students and their families. I believe this transformation is the most important one I have made. Its ramifications have reached far beyond the classroom.

TEACHING AN "ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATION": TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONERS

This is not to say that the road has been smooth. Initially, teachers reported a struggle with shedding notions of educational research based on quantifiable variables that must be meticulously controlled. Yet a realization gradually emerged that reflexively oriented work needs to "begin with the understanding that systematic thinking about one's own experiences is a valid source of some knowledge and insight" (Segal, 1990). A reliance on anything but empirical data and a shift to reflexive observation, in many cases, left the teachers feeling overwhelmed with the sheer complexity of the task.

Anna Rivera reported feeling "like a private investigator—like you're watching everything. What are they cooking? How do you make this, how do you do that? The home visit was totally different from what I had done before." The myriad of details, of participating and observing, of interviewing and audio-recording and note taking, of being both the teacher and ethnographer, was at the outset of the first interview a numbing experience. This hesitance soon wore off as teachers became more and more comfortable with the process. Martha Floyd Tenery reported after her series of interviews:

> I remember at first I was scared to death. Would the family be skeptical? What would they think of me? Would they feel uncomfortable? I remember thinking all kinds of things. And now, it seems, like, what is the big deal? I can do this, and I can do it well.

When questioned about their own particular transformations, teachers overwhelmingly cited two factors: the orientation to the

households as containing funds of knowledge and the reflexive process and debriefings after the visits. Anna Rivera affirmed that "most of the change had come during the study groups. I heard something, or I said something during the study group." Teachers in the study group affirmed their theoretical development as an aftermath of the actual practice of household visits. They reiterated that theory and practice are really two sides of the coin, and one without the other is limited.

The reflexive mode injected into the study groups noticeably altered the ways in which participants viewed their own participant observation as it engendered an examination of underlying beliefs and rationalizations. As other qualitative researchers have stated, "people who have never before articulated their beliefs and customs now are asked to do so and what may never before have been examined has now become verbally objectified, so that it is at least present for examination" (Ely, 1991, p. 197). One teacher, commenting on the reflexive process, stated:

> That was the only time I had ever talked about how I was teaching and why I was teaching that way, and how that related to how I perceive children to learn. At all the other in-services or teacher meetings I had ever attended, I was talked at. I was fed information, and it was more technique, *how* to do something, not why.

The study groups offered a safe, nonjudgmental environment for thinking out loud about classroom practice as well as about household functions. Participants in the study groups were able to voice their changing ideas about households and the subsequent transformation that the observations and reflection provoked.

Throughout the study groups, anthropological inquiry was presented as more of a state of mind than a technique. However, the theoretical implications of technique became conspicuous in several ways, and an effort to systematize reflexivity emerged. As part of the ethnographic experience, teachers were asked to select two to three students from their classrooms. No formal attempt at representativeness was made. Households were visited three times, and the interviews lasted an average of two hours each. An interview of the target child was also conducted. Ages of the students ranged from kindergarten through fifth grade. Teachers were asked

to tape-record the interviews (if the family was comfortable with it) and to conduct the interview as conversationally as possible. Teachers were paid (when possible) as project participants for their extra duty time.

Following their forays into the field, teachers were asked to write up fieldnotes based on each interview, and these fieldnotes became the basis for the study group discussions. Teachers overwhelmingly remarked on the time-consuming nature of this process. After a hectic school day, taking the time to conduct interviews that often stretched two or three hours and to later invest several hours in writing fieldnotes was an exacting price to pay for a connection to the households. They cited this one factor as precluding wholesale teacher participation in this project. Yet, in spite of the strain of the task, the teachers felt that the effort was worth it. The reflexive process involved in transcription enabled the teachers to obtain elusive insights that could easily be overlooked. As they replayed the audiotapes and referred to notes, connections and hunches began to emerge. The household began to take on a multidimensional reality that had taken root in the interview and reached its fruition in reflexive writing. Writing gave form and substance to the connection forged between the household and the teacher.

A second ethnographic technique involved the writing of a personal field journal. Not all teachers opted to do this. One teacher who kept an extensive journal noted:

> Transformation occurs over a long period of time and is quite subtle in its nature. Elements of my transformation would have been elusive had I not documented them along the way. I recognize this as I look back and cannot remember having those feelings/beliefs.

Another teacher lamented the fact that she had not kept the journal. She did not follow the suggestion and bemoans the fact in retrospect. She said:

> I don't remember when I stopped feeling and thinking this way or that way. I don't think it was an overnight thing. I think all of that is just changing little by little. If I had kept a journal, I could go back and read and say, okay, this is where I first started thinking about it.

These comments highlight that an awareness of the documentation of the reflexive process began to take shape.

A third field technique involved questionnaires. Teachers felt that the use of questionnaires signaled a shift in approaching the households as learners. Entering the household with questions rather than answers provided the context for an inquiry-based visit, and the teachers considered the questionnaires a meaningful resource. They addressed such diverse areas as family histories, family networks, labor history, educational history, language use, and child-rearing ideologies. Within each topic, questions were left open-ended, and teachers probed and elicited information as the interviews proceeded. Interviews were, as teachers commented, more of a conversation than an interview, and one teacher noted that with the tape-recording of the interview, she was free to be a conversational partner without the task of furious note taking. Teachers used the questionnaire as a guide rather than a protocol, suggesting possible areas to explore and incorporating previous knowledge into formulating new questions. Interviews were not conducted as a unilateral extraction of information, as teachers were encouraged to make connections with their own lives and histories as they elicited narratives from the families.

These issues illustrate the critical effect that methodology had in learning a different way of visiting homes. Teachers often voiced the notion that "methodology helps to implant theory and represents its embodiment, particularly in this project, which is very experiential." The theoretical orientation to the households as containing funds of knowledge was critical in teacher transformation. But equally as important in the transformative process was the reflection generated by the collaborative effort of a collective ethnographic experience.

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE AS TRANSFORMATIVE PRINCIPLE

Teachers voiced two underlying transformative potentials in viewing the households as repositories of funds of knowledge. The first concerns a shift in the definition of *culture* of the households, and the second concerns an alternative to the *deficit* model of households.

The first shift owes its genesis to the prevailing trends in anthropological literature away from an integrated, harmonious, univocal version of culture. It seemed to us that the prevailing notions of culture in the schools center around observable and tangible surface markers: dances, food, folklore, and the like. Viewing households within a processual view of culture, rooted in the lived contexts and practices of their students and families, engendered a realization that culture is a dynamic concept, and not a static grab bag of tamales, quinceañeras and cinco de mayo celebrations (see González, 1992). Instead teachers learned how households network in informal market exchanges. They learned how cross-border activities made "mini-ethnographers" of their students. And most importantly, they found that students acquired a multidimensional depth and breadth from their participation in household life (Moll et al., 1992).

Cathy Amanti, a teacher who participated in an earlier pilot phase of this project and is now on leave pursuing a graduate degree in anthropology (and is a researcher on the project), evokes what this realization signified (from González & Amanti, 1992):

> The impact of participating in this project went far beyond my expectations. My approach to curriculum and my relationship with my students are two areas where the impact was most profound. In the area of curriculum, as a teacher of predominantly Mexican and U.S. Mexican students, I believed in the importance of acknowledging and including aspects of my students' culture in my classroom practice. However, though teachers are trained to build on students' prior knowledge, they are given no guidelines for how to go about eliciting this knowledge. Also, the multicultural curriculum available in schools perpetuates an outdated notion of culture as special and isolated ritual events and artifacts, the kind featured in *National Geographic*. Its focus on holidays, "typical" foods and "traditional" artifacts covers a very narrow range of my students' experiences and ignores the reality of life in the borderlands, which often falls outside the norms of traditional Anglo or Mexican culture.
>
> Participating in this project helped me to reformulate my concept of culture from being very static to more practice-oriented. This broadened conceptualization turned out to be the key which helped me develop strategies to include the knowledge my students were bringing to school in my classroom practice. It was the kind of

> information elicited through the questionnaires that was the catalyst for this transformation. I sought information on literacy, parenting attitudes, family and residential history, and daily activities. But I was not looking for static categories, or judging the households' activities in these areas according to any standards—my own or otherwise. I simply elicited and described the context within which my students were being socialized. What this meant was that if the father of one of my students did not have a "job" I did not stop the inquiry there. The format of the questionnaires encouraged me to continue probing to discover any type of activity that the father and mother were doing to ensure the survival of the household.
>
> If we were simply eliciting labor history associated with categories of work in the formal economic sector, we would risk both devaluing and missing many of the experiences of our students and their families. This has clear implications for how we approach culture. If our idea of culture is bound up with notions of authenticity and tradition, how much practice will we ignore as valueless and what will this say to our students? But if our idea of culture is expanded to include the ways we organize and make sense of all our experiences, we have many more resources to draw upon in the classroom.

The second transformative effect of the funds of knowledge perspective deals with debunking the pervasive idea of households as lacking worthwhile knowledge and experiences. Teachers were particularly concerned about reiterating this theme, as they felt that many educators continue to hold an unquestioning and negative view of the community and households. Closely related to this point, teachers said that some educators approach the community they work in with an attitude of "How can they help *me*? This places the entire burden on the community to reach out to the school." One teacher (Martha Floyd-Tenery) states: "It's never 'How can *I* do this?' They feel if parents don't show up for school events it means they don't care. But there could be many reasons why the parents can't come to these meetings such as conflicts with work, or not knowing the language." However, this same teacher recognizes that she still thinks and says many things that could be construed as emanating from a similar mindset. "You have to disprove what you've been taught," she said. Another teacher (Anna Rivera) remarked on "unlearning" her previous training in household visits:

"Can you imagine what kind of subtle message comes across when someone comes into your home to *teach* you something?"

Each teacher, as she came to know the households personally and emotionally, came away changed in some way. Some were struck by the sheer survival of the household against seemingly overwhelming odds. Others were astonished at the sacrifices the households made in order to gain a better education for their children. They all found parents who were engineers, teachers, and small business owners in Mexico, who pulled up stakes and now work in jobs far below their capabilities in order to obtain a "better life and education" for their children. They found immigrant families living with 15 people in a household, with all adult males and females working, in order to pay for rent and everyday necessities. As Raquel Gonzales notes,

> I came away from the household visits changed in the way that I viewed the children. I became aware of the whole child, who had a life outside the classroom, and that I had to be sensitive to that. I feel that I was somewhat sensitive before the visits, but it doesn't compare to my outlook following the visits.

What follows are four brief case study examples[1] based on the teachers' experiences in doing research in their own students' households.

THE ESTRADA FAMILY (Anna Rivera)

I have been in contact with the Estrada family since August 16, 1991. During the last year and a half I have visited the family during five formal interviews, two birthday parties, one quinceañera (an adolescent girl's debutante party), and several informal visits. I summarize here what I have learned about this family, and describe how I used that knowledge in my teaching, and reflect upon what changes I have undergone.

My first contact with the family occurred before the first day of school. I was preparing the classroom for the first day of school when I heard a knock at the door. In walked a family who wanted to introduce themselves to their new school. Mr. and Mrs. Estrada wanted their third-grade daughter to become acquainted with the

school and her teacher, me. In Spanish, they shared that they believed education to be important and that they decided to visit their third-grade daughter's classroom and their kindergarten daughter's classroom in order to make the transition to a new school a positive experience. They had in tow a 4-year-old son because they wanted him to know what was expected.

Through the interviews, I learned that the family was quite extensive. I met the middle-school-age son, two high-school-age daughters, a maternal grandfather, and a maternal uncle, all of whom shared the same household. The trailer they lived in was located among 14 other trailers in a recently developed trailer park.

The living room included a bookcase of reference books in Spanish. The father had been trained in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, as an electrical repairman. He worked on refrigerators, air conditioners, and other appliances while in Hermosillo. In Tucson, he works for a local tortilla factory delivering tortillas to grocery stores.

The living room bookcase also includes recipe books and craft books. The family had owned and operated a small convenience store in Hermosillo. Mrs. Estrada was in charge of managing the store, including ordering, bookkeeping, and selling. In fact, they had named the store in honor of the third-grade daughter.

They moved to Tucson because they wanted to improve the opportunities for their children. Mrs. Estrada had family in Tucson and had lived here for a while as a child. Mr. Estrada came in search of a job and living quarters and then made arrangements for his family to join him about six months later. The children left their schoolmates and moved here in 1988.

During my visits, I have observed each family member take responsibility. The three older children are assigned the care of a younger sibling. The two sisters in high school are each responsible for one of the two younger sisters, whereas the brother in middle school is responsible for the youngest brother. The family is very resourceful. Everyone helps with the household chores, including producing tortillas for eating and for selling. The males are the ones in charge of maintenance, and the father shares his tools with the sons.

During a birthday party, I observed that the family had choreographed their duties. The father and the son in middle school took care of the piñata, which meant that the son had to stand on the roof of a van to hold one end of the line while the other end was attached to the roof of the trailer. The daughters organized the children for the piñata breaking. Each family member served food and beverages.

What do these observations have to do with my teaching? Specifically, I used the knowledge about owning and managing a store to create a math unit on money. For three weeks, we explored the social issues of money, along with mathematical concepts about money.

Beyond that, I used the information I learned about the home in incidental matters that color the curriculum. I knew where my student lived and who her neighbors were. I made connections in class: "I want you to practice hitting a softball. I bet you can use that empty lot near your home to practice with your classmate who lives across the street"; and, "How about if you work on your science project with your classmate who lives next door to you?"

The knowledge I gleaned also had an impact on the student. She knew I had been at her home to talk with her parents. She understood that her parents and I communicated. This influenced the other students also. They recognized me in the trailer park. They came over to chat with me. They knew I knew where they lived and played.

What changes have I undergone? Fundamentally, I have redefined my conception of the term *home visit.* I was trained during my first years of teaching (some 15 years ago) that my goal during a home visit was to teach the parent. I had an agenda to cover. I was in control.

Now I go to learn. I have some questions I want to explore, I might want to learn about some particular home activities like what the family does for recreation. However, these questions are open ended. I start an interview and follow the conversation to wherever it might lead. I am an active listener. I am a listener who returns to pick up the conversation from the last visit.

Most significantly, I am becoming a listener who reflects. During the last year and a half I have made time to do the visits and have

made time to reflect about what I have learned. I have first-hand knowledge that I have gained through my research with the families. I use this knowledge as background when I am reading about minority families in books or articles. I read an article and compare what it states to the knowledge gained from my work. I contrast and sometimes confirm, but more often challenge what I read.

I must admit that this whole process is a demanding one. I am choosing to place myself in situations where I have to listen, reflect, communicate, act, and write. I believe I am learning, developing, and creating, and that is what makes this research worthwhile.

REFLECTING ON CHANGE (Martha Floyd-Tenery)

As I reread some of the early journal entries I made for this project, I realize how I have changed my views of the households. As I read these entries, I realized that I had discussed my students in terms of low academics, home-life problems, alienation, and SES, and that I was oriented toward a deficit model. I no longer see the families I visited that way. Since I am looking for resources, I am finding resources, and I recognize the members of the families for who they are, and for their talents and unique personalities. We now have a reciprocal relationship where we exchange goods, services, and information. I have also dispelled many myths that are prevalent in our region.

One example of a dispelled myth is that Mexican immigrants have poor educational backgrounds. To the contrary, I discovered that some schools in Mexico were academically ahead of the United States, and discipline was stricter. Instead of finding parents who do not emphasize education, parents wanted *more* homework, more communication with the schools, and stricter discipline. All five families (that I interviewed this year) informed me that education was one of the reasons they came to the United States. Another myth dispelled by the interviews is that Mexicans have limited work experience. The parents of my five students had held the following occupations: Grocery store owner, bank executive, carpenter, mechanic, dairyman, grave digger, military, factory supervisor, farm worker, international salesman, mason, and domestic worker.

Strong family values and responsibility are characteristics of the families I visited. In every case, the household included extended family membership. Fifteen family members lived in one house, including the student's grandmother, mother, two aunts, and their husbands and children. My students were expected to participate in household chores such as cleaning house, car maintenance, food preparation, washing dishes, and caring for younger siblings. I learned what this insight meant when one of my students was unable to attend school drama and chorus rehearsals one day. In my journal entry detailing this project, I noted the following incident:

> Wednesday (11/25/92). The music teacher commented (to me), "You know, Leticia has missed two chorus rehearsals." Before I could answer, the school drama teacher stepped in to add, "Oh, she's very irresponsible." She had signed up to be in the Drama Club and had only been to two meetings. I said "Wait a minute . . ." The drama teacher corrected herself, and said, "Well, she's *acting* irresponsibly." I then told her how Leticia's younger brother was being hospitalized for a series of operations, and when the mother had to leave, she left Leticia in charge of caring for her two younger siblings. In fact, her missing after-school rehearsals was an act of responsibility, obedience, and loyalty to her family.

I believe that this episode, and many other similar occurrences, help me to separate truths from myths by relying on what I have seen and heard from my students.

THE RAMÍREZ FAMILY (Patricia Rendon)

The reason I chose this family was basically because the mother was available during school hours so that I could visit during school time. When I was free, and my student teacher was available, I was able to walk over there and meet with her, so my criterion for choosing the family was more for practical reasons than anything else. Once I got there, I really enjoyed sitting and talking to her. She was very eager to talk and very open about sharing her experiences, her family history, her impressions about what she has gone through. I felt it was as therapeutic for her as it was informative for me. I believe that these are visits more than interviews. I didn't have

a clipboard writing everything down. Once the tape recorder is on, it is easy for the interview to flow.

I found out during the interview that she had undergone radical changes in her life. She had been born in Nogales, Sonora, and came here as a married woman without very many rights. Apparently her husband was quite dictatorial, and whenever there was a decision to be made, he made it, and that was it. When her husband decided to go back to Mexico, she decided to stay, I feel because she had a need to become her own person.

Another interesting characteristic that I noticed about her was that her daughters were more like her peers. She values their company and their ideas. A case in point is an incident that occured when her older daughter was about 10. A neighbor went on vacation and left Mrs. Ramírez in charge of her house and gave her the keys to the car, assuming that she knew how to drive. Mrs. Ramírez took this opportunity to teach herself how to drive. She made the statement that she saw many elderly women driving, and she thought to herself, "If they can do it, I can do it." She put all the girls in the car with her oldest daughter in front and started to teach herself to drive. The daughters know how to read English, so she depended on them to help her read the signs and to know where to go.

She also takes her daughters' ideas into consideration when they make a decision as a family, and she is very careful that they have the right kind of care. Mrs. Ramírez was working for a while when her children were younger, but the woman who was caring for them was not doing an adequate job, and so she had to quit her job. She did this even though it meant that she would have to go on food stamps and welfare. She felt that her daughters' care was more important than her having a job.

At the time of the interview, Mrs. Ramírez was looking for a job but was not able to find one, and she thought it was because of her lack of English skills. She was looking around for some English classes to take nearby, and she would also go out every day, walking and looking for work that she could do. Mrs. Ramírez had several requirements for her job: she did not want to take care of children or to clean houses, and she wanted something that was close by where she would not have to drive too far. She was limiting herself

to a certain extent, but she was being exclusive in the kind of work that she could do because she felt that her job should be one where she could improve herself. She chose assembly types of work to apply for, and the last time I spoke to her, she had gotten a job at a lock assembly plant. Her youngest daughter is 8, so she feels that the children are now able to be alone after school until she gets home at 6:00.

Mrs. Ramírez is on welfare at this point in her life, but definitely does not want to stay in that position. This is the reason why she was so discriminating about the kind of job that she wanted to do. She felt that if she did work like watching children or cleaning houses, she would never be able to better herself. She feels that the job she has now is a step to something higher. I think that this is a common thing in many women's lives, where they are dependent on government aid, but they do not want it to be a permanent situation. She also commented that many women in her situation link up with a man just to have financial security, and she refused to do that, because she feels that it is not a good example to her children. Visiting her validated my respect for many Latin women. Mrs. Ramírez is one of those people who knows what she wants and is patient, trying to accomplish it. Sometimes people will say that the Latin culture dictates that you let fate or providence dictate your actions, but I feel that she is an example of a person who takes the bull by the horns and does not sit back and wait for things to happen.

FINDING A COLLEAGUE (Raquel Gonzales)

I was very affected last year when I found out that the mother of one of my students had been a teacher in Mexico and that approaching the household as if I were going to "save" them would have been a gross error. She came in to volunteer in my classroom, and I felt that she was a little uncomfortable. I said something to her about, "Well, you're a teacher, you can show us how you do it." She said, "Let me watch a couple of days and see how you do it." The next day, she had her own little group, and she took it over. I feel that by establishing the relationship with her, she was able to function up to her potential. We talked in the study groups about a

theoretical interpretation of confianza, and the theory gave me an orientation of what to look for.

These case studies illustrate the multidimensional facets that the students take on when teachers become aware of household networks, survival strategies, and procurement of resources. Even more important, the case studies can be read with an eye toward the theoretical development of teachers. Teachers were not given predigested methods to use unreflexively. Emerging from the teachers' own theoretical understanding of ethnography, home visits became participant-observation, and insights from the households were tied into broader regional, social, economic, and gender-related patterns. An anthropological imagination paved the way for teachers to probe beyond the surface issues of welfare, missed appointments, and overcrowded living conditions to inspect the underlying constructions that rendered the surface structures meaningful and understandable. In addition, as teachers came to view their students as competent participants in households rich in cognitive resources, they came away with raised expectations of their students' abilities.

PROBLEMATIC AREAS

We have highlighted many of the affirmative and constructive aspects of our project. However, this is not to say the project has been unproblematic. Teachers have encountered a number of obstacles that impinge on the implementation of field research. The most often cited dilemma is, of course, time constraints. During a typical day, teachers are barraged on a number of fronts with demands on their time and energy. Adding to this already overloaded schedule, an effort to visit students' households, write fieldnotes, and meet in study groups can be an exacting price to pay for making a connection to the home. Once the connection is made, other problematic situations can arise. Some households have felt the confianza between teacher and household grow to such an extent that the teacher has (although rarely) been placed in the role of confidante, furnishing advice and resources in times of crisis.

One of the more important connections to be made concerns the tapping of the funds of knowledge for use within classroom pedagogy. Although all of the teachers are convinced that these funds exist in abundance, extracting their potential for teaching has proven to be an intricate process. Curriculum units based on the more conspicuous funds, such as ethnobotanical knowledge of medicinal herbs and construction of buildings, have emerged, but developing a tangible, systemic link to classroom practice has been more elusive (however, see Moll et al., 1990, 1992). The general consensus is that teachers are in need of time and support to move from theory to practice, or from field research to practice. They strongly affirmed that the labs or study groups provide an important way of maximizing time and combining resources and of conceptualizing the pedagogical connection between classrooms and households.

A final dilemma concerns the evaluation of the project. The assessment of the ethnographic process, the study groups, and the curriculum units cannot be carried out along conventional (experimental or quasi-experimental) lines. Transformation does not have a time frame. Qualitative evaluation methods have been most amenable to the methodology, and teachers were willing to document their own intellectual journeys through the use of personal journals, debriefing interviews, analysis of fieldnotes, study group transcripts, and classroom observations. In sum, how to provide convincing evidence of positive change is a constant project issue.

CONCLUSION

At the end of a presentation in a local school district, one educator remarked cynically, "We don't need teachers to learn to be anthropologists. We need them to learn to teach." We suggest that the point is not whether teachers learn to become anthropologists or good ethnographers. The teachers themselves have made this very clear, as Pat Rendón comments, "I don't want to be an anthropologist. I want to use what resources I can to become a better teacher." The issue is how to redefine the role of teachers as thinkers

and practitioners. We have argued in this article that it begins by teachers themselves redefining the resources available for thinking and teaching through the analysis of the funds of knowledge available in local households, in the students they teach, and in the colleagues with whom they work.

As the teachers' field research has evolved in such a way as to provide ownership of the process, they have been able to construct themselves as agents of change. In significant ways, these teachers have begun to fuse the role of technicians in their practice as educators. As Giroux (1985) has indicated, educators as transformative intellectuals can recognize their ability to critically transform the world. In a parallel fashion, as teachers have transcended the boundaries of the classroom walls, so have parents transcended the boundaries of the household. In a few but significant instances, parents have come to view themselves as agents capable of changing their child's educational experiences. As parents responded with personal narratives concerning their own unique and singular life course, a heightened historical consciousness began to emerge. The welcome communicative event of articulating the trajectory that brought parents to be where they are facilitated an awareness of the historical character of their experiences. In this way, the notion of dialogue as an emancipatory educational process (Freire, 1981) was injected into the households. As other researchers (Lather, 1986; Savage, 1988) have stated, ethnography can be seen as a tool for social action that can enable persons to transform the confines of their circumstances. In the powerful dialogue that this ethnographic interview can engender, parents can and did find a passageway to the schools. As the teacher validates the household experience as one from which rich resources or funds of knowledge can be extracted, parents themselves come to authenticate their skills as worthy of pedagogical notice. Most significant, teachers have reported that parents have felt an increased access to the school. No longer is the institution viewed as an impenetrable fortress ensconced on foreign soil. Rather, the teachers' incursion into previously uncharted domains has been reciprocated by the parents. Parents have felt the surge of confianza which has unlocked doors and overcome barriers.

Clearly the project's payoffs are multifaceted and complex. The emergence of teachers as qualitative researchers is clearly one by-product. A second involves the increased access to the school felt by parents. A third is the changed relationships between teachers and the students whose households they visited. A fourth, and for our purposes, a significant goal, is the emergence of curriculum units based on the household funds of knowledge. Teachers have been able to sift through the household resources and have found multiple elements that can be used as the bases for math, science, language arts, or integrated units. The classroom application is an evolving portion of the funds of knowledge inquiry. We have opted not to focus on this aspect in this report due to its multiple dimensions. However, teachers have invariably noted that each household contains an array of activities, strategies, and topics that can form the kernel of units to engage students. For example, teachers have formed mathematical units based on construction knowledge, ecology units based on ethnobotanical knowledge of the home, a unit on "Sound and Its Properties" based on music, and a comparative history of clothing, including topics such as inquiry into absorbency of fabrics, among other instructional activities.

For teachers interested in developing a similar project in other locations, we propose the following minimal conditions based on our experiences, and as discussed in this report:

1. Theoretical preparation: The theoretical concept of funds of knowledge provided a new perspective for the study of households as dynamic settings with abundant social and intellectual resources.
2. Home visits as participant observers: The key is to enter the homes in the role of "learner," willing to interact and prepared to document what one learns, to produce new "first-hand" knowledge about the families and community.
3. Study groups: These meetings become the centers for discussion, reflection, and analysis of the household visits and a catalyst for ideas about teaching.
4. Voluntary participation: All teachers agreed that participation in the project must remain voluntary, so that teachers have maximum control over the project and the work does not become an undesirable imposition on teachers.

The teachers identified other aspects of the project as being important to its success, although not necessarily essential, such as the use of questionnaires to help guide the household interviews and observations, the collection and elaboration of fieldnotes, and collaboration with anthropologists or other educational researchers. There was also consensus that the project must be reinvented anew at each site, in relation to its social and historical conditions.

We suggest that these minimal conditions can engender a dialogue of change and collaboration among teachers, parents, students, and researchers. The dialogue of the ethnographic interview can provide a foundation for the development of critical consciousness. The discourse that the interview sparks highlights the theoretical assertion that knowledge is not found but constructed, and that it is constructed in and through discourse (Foucault, 1970, 1972). As the participants in this project become co-learners and co-constructors of knowledge, environments for a probing disposition of mind can be meaningfully and effectively created.

NOTE

1. The first two examples were authored by the teachers; the final two were narrated to Norma González. All household and family names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

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