

EARLY READERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF LITERACY IN THEIR LIVES

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ABSTRACT

The following article aims to present, from children's perspectives, the value of literacy and how they use it in their everyday lives. Through the use of ethnographic methodology, including observations, interviews and collection of artifacts, it seeks to examine how children rely on their literacy skills authentically, as they play and move between spaces and respond to stimuli in their environment. I followed six children as telling cases and used Strauss and Corbin's (1990) Grounded Theory to illuminate the findings. Two dominant themes emerged: connecting and participating in significant moments. These findings provide much guidance on how teachers and parents can more readily support young children in their literacy development. It also supports the notion that children's perceptions of the value of literacy are inextricably linked to how they use it within their personal contexts: at home, school, and the wider community. This also supports children's use literacy as a means of bonding with and participating in social experiences.

INTRODUCTION

While research is replete with the factors affecting children's literacy development, very few have sought to understand how children feel or value literacy in their everyday lives. For instance, within the Caribbean context, literacy research has been predominantly aimed at assessing the success of various literacy strategies with the goal of determining how they impact student achievement and, by extension, student performance on standardized tests.

The following study emerges out of a larger study, which followed the progress of a group of kindergarten children's literacy development over the course of year. This article takes a look at six children from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and highlights how they perceive literacy and how they value its use in their everyday lives.

CONCEPTUALIZING LITERACY

Literacy acquisition is influenced and shaped by multiple factors, such as socio-economic status, parent education levels, teachers practices, family experiences and, in some instances, ethnic practices in supporting young children's literacy development (Aram & Levin, 2001; Bauman & Wasserman, 2010; Huss-Keeler, 1997). Though literacy acquisition is frequently conceptualized as children's "linear progress" in the development of conventional literacy skills, other studies have also sought to "add color" to this perspective by broadening our understanding of the term literacy beyond a mere black and white continuum (Dyson, 2001). Through greater insight into the richness

and diversity of home, family, and community literacy practices, we have greater awareness that literacy moves beyond paper and pencil and now includes multimodal and artifactual representations (Flewitt, 2008; Pahl, 2001; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005).

BROADENING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF LITERACY; LOOKING AT HOME AND SCHOOL

Over the years, researchers have struggled to fully and clearly articulate what literacy is. The problematic issue in this regard often relates to who seeks to define it and the spaces we seek to confine it; whether school-focused or home-focused. Historically, the dominant mode of thought was to view literacy as solely the application of alphabetic principle and use of comprehension skills. While very important, there has emerged within the past few decades researchers who have sought to explore the concept of the purposes of literacy, the socio-cultural aspect of literacy, and more importantly to describe families' use of literacy in their everyday lives (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Pahl & Kelly, 2005; Souto-Manning, 2010).

Denny (1983), in her groundbreaking research on literacy within homes, refers to these unique familial experiences as family literacy practices. Interestingly, similar to Ladson-Billings (2005), Pahl and Kelly (2005), Snow (2006), and Souto-Manning (2010), Denny believed these experiences are rich, valid, and powerful and provide children with tremendous opportunities to learn about their world.

As stated by Snow (2006),

For some, literacy tasks engaged in at school constitute the prototype for literacy, whereas others argue that most literacy activities and much literacy learning occur outside school, in the home, in the context of religious observance, daily life tasks, and community involvement (p. 4).

Within the past forty years, research pertaining to emergent literacy indicates that emergent readers are significantly shaped by the home, community, culture, and other childhood environments because these provide the lens through which they view, interpret and respond to literacy experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Souto-Manning, 2010). It is these diverse contexts that provide children with prior experiences to draw on, interpret, and use as they seek to interact with literacy and engage in its range of forms (Ladson-Billings, 2005; McLachlan, 2007; Moll et al, 2005; Snow, 2006; Souto-Manning, 2010;).

Pahl and Rowsell (2012) and Souto-Manning (2010) concur that most literacy exposure for emergent readers occurs in the home and wider community. They explain that while literacy is experienced in many contexts for young children, the home environment provides more opportunities for literacy than even school (2012). It is for this reason that schools ought to build on the richness of the home literacy experiences of children in order to ensure children see the value of literacy across spaces.

As suggested by Anderson and Morrison (2007) and Ladson-Billings (2005), the significance of the family literacy practices and the tremendous impact they have on the literacy development of young children must be fully embraced in the classroom context when they assert “across socio-cultural groups, families can be rich contexts for children’s early literacy development” (p.3). Pahl and Kelly (2005) also explore family literacy moments as a third dimension that bridges home and school literacy practices. Their findings suggest that family literacy facilitates greater understanding of the rich, intimate experiences that occur between older and younger members of families and essentially minimizes the dissonance that may exist between home and school literacy practices.

This is particularly significant because, not only do children learn attitudes, positive or negative, towards literacy in the home, but they also acquire some of the requisite concepts to begin formal reading and writing. This affects how they relate to literacy when they enter the classroom. No doubt, children from homes with a wealth of literacy practices relate to literacy experiences differently from children who come from homes that do not have traditional forms of literacy (books, newspapers, etc.) readily available. This dynamic has an impact on future academic success, as children from homes which support literacy acquisition have a greater chance of doing well academically as compared to those from homes where positive literacy experiences are not promoted (Bauman & Wasserman, 2010). In reference to this, Hannon (1995) explains:

The family’s literacy values and practices will shape the course of the child’s literacy development in terms of the opportunities, recognition, interaction and models available to them” (p. 104).

MULTIMODAL EXPRESSIONS OF LITERACY

In this era of hashtags and dot-coms, it has become even more evident the complex use, look, and feel of literacy within the home. This shift, as outlined by many researchers, requires us to look beyond the more traditional concept of the term, and think “outside the box” as we explore new, alternate, and multimodal literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2009; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Walsh, 2009).

According to Flewitt (2008),

Multimodal literacies is a concept that takes into account the whole range of modes that young children encounter in a variety of texts (words, images, and sounds in printed and electronic media and in face to face interaction) and the range and combinations of modes they use to make and express meaning (gesture, gaze, facial expression, movement, image, music, sound effects, and language” (p.123).

Multimodal literacy does not dismiss the value of literacy as defined in its more traditional sense of encoding and decoding text; rather, it builds on and extends the concept. As Hobbs and Frost (2003) explain, multimodal literacy further supports the need for traditional literacy. According to the authors, in order to be able to function in our rapidly changing society, one needs to be able to use alphabetic principles as a point of reference to understand other forms of representations.

Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001) acknowledge that most of the research focused on literacy has often been limited in that it would focus on English speakers as they learned the “alphabetic writing principle” and formal representations of reading and writing (p.12). Despite this, perhaps one of the greatest transformations in the teaching of literacy in the 21st century is that our concept of the term has evolved and ultimately challenged the traditional understanding of literacy. No longer is it seen as being solely about language. As it stands, the term has come to encompass the barrage of technological and digital innovations of our time.

Kress (2003) reiterates this stance. Agreeing with Whitehurst and Lonigan (2001), Kress maintains that it is impossible to define literacy without considering new technologies and the implications they have on literacy practices. Following this argument, Pianfetti (2001) points out that our society requires us to reconceptualize our ideas of literacy by shifting our focus from solely traditional texts to digital, visual, and other forms of technologies. As Flewitt (2008) explains, children engage in multimodal forms of literacy in their daily lives. It is not bound by time or space. Whether driving on the road, watching a play at the theater, painting pictures in art class, making a sandwich at home, composing a song, or choreographing a dance at dance class, children are surrounded by and engage in literacy in different forms very frequently. So ubiquitous are multimodal forms of literacy that Ward & Wason-Ellam (2005) explain that even in traditional literate environments multimodal literacies are evident. In libraries, there are several opportunities to engage in multimodal forms of literacy. Toddlers singing songs, dancing, and viewing puppet shows and older children role playing, drawing and crafting demonstrate that libraries are also quite rich in alternate forms of literacies.

Despite the great changes in literacy and forms of literacy representation, there is evidence that school pedagogies do not reflect this. Marsh (2007) discusses this position and draws on evidence, which speaks to the fact that school curricula and syllabi typically do not reflect the changing nature of literacy and the varying representations of text. According to Marsh (2007), the predominant thought is that technologies take on a supporting role and are seen as an “in addition to” aspect rather than being the foci of lessons. She acknowledges that while some teachers have expanded their perspective on what literacy is and perhaps would like to draw on multimodal literacies in their lessons; they are challenged and “boxed in” by the school curricula.

Hobbs and Frost (2003), in reference to this argument, affirm Marsh’s (2007) position when they too explain the great reluctance on the part of educators to acknowledge the richness and worth of “new” forms of literacy. They claim “...literacy educators have long elevated one form of literacy over others” (p.333). According to Flood, Lapp, Squire et al. (2003), this occurs because teachers have an “irrational loyalty to reading and writing” (p. xvi).

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH SETTING

The study was conducted in a kindergarten classroom in one of the largest primary schools in the Cayman Islands. The Cayman Islands, a dependency of Britain, is a small island in the Caribbean that boasts one of the highest per capita incomes globally. Highly dependent on tourism and banking, this group of islands recruits and attracts a high number of expatriates each year which results in a culturally diverse and increasingly multilingual population.

Similar to the diversity reflected in the society, so too is it that schools are quite cosmopolitan. In the classroom where I conducted this study, several nationalities were represented. Many of the children were from Cuba, Jamaica, Honduras, the Cayman Islands, and Canada. There were also many bi-cultural children whose parents came from different islands and countries.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

My role in this research was that of participant-observer. As suggested by Bryman (2008), in this role I was a “fully functioning member of the social setting” because I was both researcher and the classroom teacher. The other research participants in this study were six students who were purposefully selected as case studies to illuminate the findings of the research. My selection of participants was purposive in that I wanted to have an equal number of boys and girls represented; however, I had no other criteria for the students I selected.

Having been given consent from 17 parents, and assent from 15 children, the names of the 15 students were sorted according to gender. Three names were randomly selected from the list of girls and three names from the list of boys. All children were between the ages of four and five years.

DATA COLLECTION

To gather the data for this study various qualitative methods were used. These include observations, artifacts, field notes, and interviews with parents and children. Data was collected over the course of ten months, both in children’s homes and at school. Artifacts collected include visual images, samples of children’s writings, instruments used during literacy moments, and audio recordings.

Throughout the period of data collection, field notes captured my observations of significant moments of the children’s literacy experiences. The home visits allowed me to get some sense of the literacy practices of the family and to understand the unique ways families used literacy. The final means of data collection were interviews with parents, children, and other significant members of home environment. These interviews resulted with a sense of how family members used literacy (both conventional and multimodal) and how they supported children in developing both conventional and unconventional literacy skills.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) Grounded Theory Method was used. This method allowed me to extricate dominant themes which helped me to determine how children used literacy and how they valued literacy as they moved about their everyday lives. In order to extricate the themes, audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed, images captured were labeled, and field notes were sorted and coded.

As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the process of data analysis was quite lengthy, tedious, and painstaking. To do this, three overarching steps were followed. These include open coding, where the data collected was perused and placed in categories according to similarities or differences in meaning, concept, or idea; and axial coding, where the relationship between the codes generated in the open coding step were accessed. This step required that words and concepts similar in meaning be categorized. In the final step, selective coding, the core concepts emerging from the data were identified. These core concepts were then highlighted as the dominant themes.

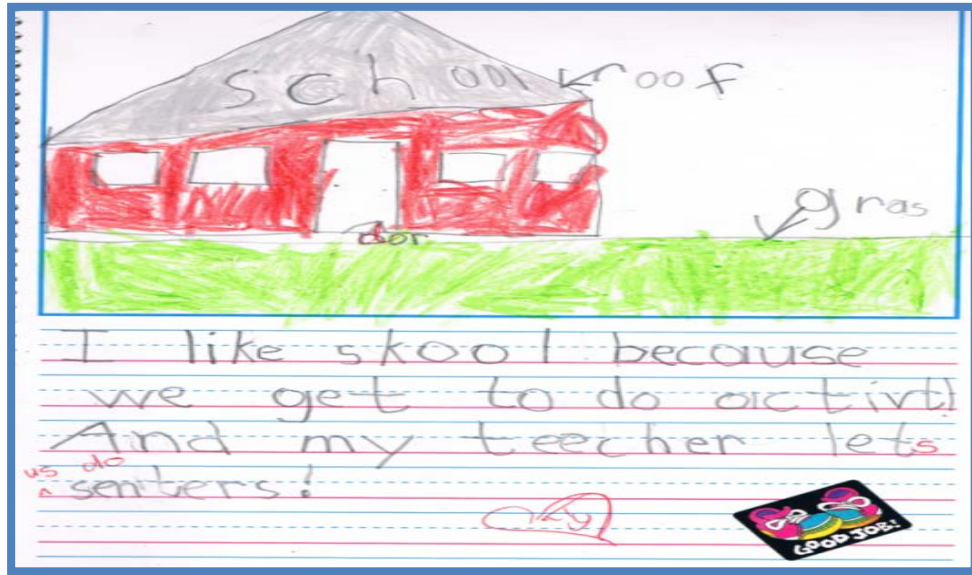
FINDINGS

Two themes emerged from the findings; connect and participate and engage in significant moments. In presenting these findings, I draw on writing samples as well as use of a table to contents to show the ways students used and valued literacy in both the home and school contexts.

CONNECT AND PARTICIPATE

It was overwhelmingly evident that for my co-constructors the value of literacy in their lives meant that they had an opportunity to connect and participate in events they would previously have been disconnected from (See Table 1). Though they struggled to articulate how they viewed literacy in my interviews with them, it was quite interesting how they were able to outline the benefits it afforded them.

Literacy as a means of connecting with people, spaces, and practices also emerged when my co-constructors demonstrated how they "built bridges" and began to transfer their literacy skills between home and school. They discussed how, when at school they would write about the experiences they had at home, and when at home they would make reference to the experiences that had at school. In a writing sample from one of my students, (See Figure 1), he was able to explain that for him, literacy meant being able to play in learning centers. This was particularly important because in the early weeks of kindergarten, he expressed his dislike for school because it was not fun like his home.



I like school because we get to do activities and my teachers lets us do centers.

Figure 1. Why I like school.

During my observations I also recognized that for the children, literacy provided them with the opportunity to participate in peer, family, and community events. For Natasha and Keith, this now meant they had the opportunity to participate in family devotions and church worship. For Jose, literacy was valuable as it gave him more independence to use the computer; while for Shanna, it meant she had the opportunity to read to her younger brother and participate in the unique speech pattern of home. These moments were significant and essentially empowered them.

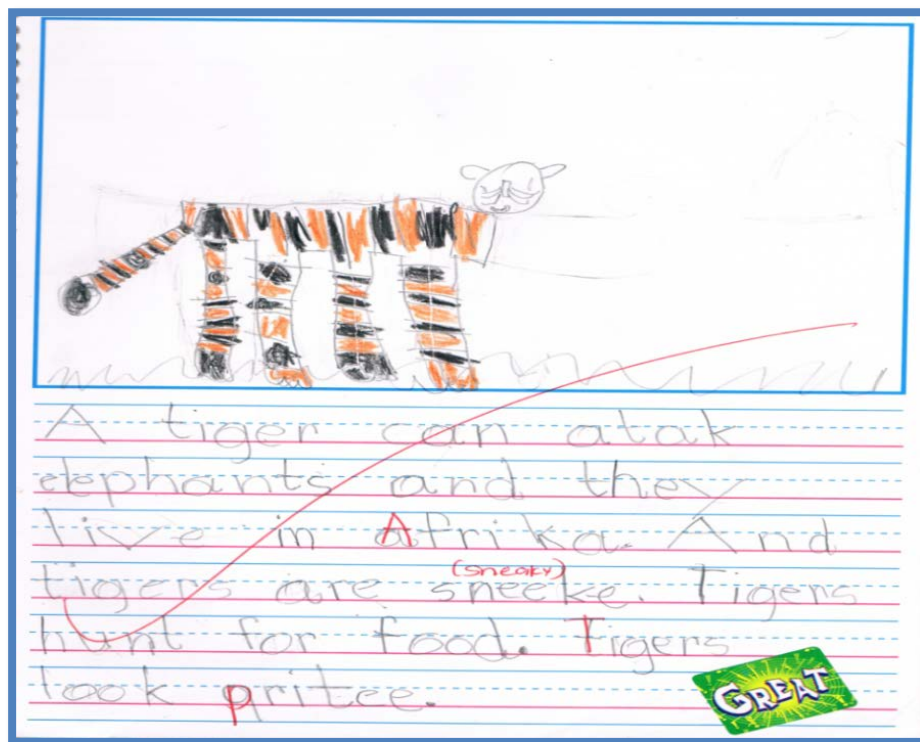
It was quite clear that the children more readily understood how valuable literacy was, because they understood how it provided them with the key to unlock doors previously closed to them. For instance, at home, Shanna's mother, Betty, would spell out words rather than say them if she did not want Shanna or her brother to know what her conversation was about. This occurred during one of my visits to the home when Betty was making the point that Shanna's father did not read much and she worried how it might impact on her son. In Betty's bid to not disclose who was being discussed, she spelled the word *daddy*. Shanna heard this and explained to her mother "I know what you spelled you know mummy, that word *daddy*. It's on the word wall at school." Though seemingly trivial, for Shanna, developing literacy skills was of value to her because it allowed her the opportunity to participate and understand the unique way adults spoke in her home.

SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS

Literacy, in its many forms, provided my co-constructors with the tools to create tangible and visual representations of their world, their lives at home, and how they interacted with others in their communities (see Table 1). Throughout the period of observation, I recognized that children's literacy reflected familiar experiences, or what I refer to as significant moments. Through their writings, drawings, songs, and art, they drew on personal experiences and outlined what these

moments meant to them. Whether they wrote about toys they had, favorite television shows, family trips, or even in one instance, my visits to their home, children enjoy sharing or expressing moments of significance. Figures 2 and 3 show Natasha's and Keith's journal entries where they did just this. In Natasha's entry, she referred to a story she had heard about animals in the jungle. She was particularly struck by what she learned about tigers and how similar their behavior was to her dog. In Keith's entry (see Figure 3), he referred to an event that took place two days prior where he had the opportunity to ride in a police car.

The experiential aspect of learning was also evident as the students drew on many personal experiences as they discussed stories and interpreted texts during story time. This was something I highly encouraged, because as a kindergarten teacher, I felt it fostered children's love for books by allowing them to see their lives reflected in texts. To do this, during Story Time, I read stories that were relevant to the children's interests. In Natasha's case, because I recognized her interest in animals, I chose to read a story about African jungle animals. Natasha was particularly interested in prey and predators because she often talked about how her dog, Pepsi, tried to catch stray cats in her neighborhood. This event spurred Natasha to write about tigers preying on elephants because she was very intrigued by the story of tigers acting in a way similar to her dog. Natasha's journal entry (Figure 2) highlights her connections between her life and text.



A tiger can attach elephants and they live in Africa and tigers are sneaky. Tigers hunt for food. Tigers look pretty.

Figure 2. Natasha's journal entry.

Keith’s experience also highlights how children use literacy to share significant moments with others. Slightly shy, Keith would often have to be encouraged to participate in class activities. In his journal entry (Figure 3), he writes about having the opportunity to sit in a police car during “Police Day”. It was obviously an extremely enjoyable experience for Keith because he chose to write in his journal about his experience sitting in the police car during free activity time.

While my co-constructors used literacy as a means to encode their thoughts, my findings also suggest that they valued the opportunities to participate in significant family and community events. Whether during devotions with the family, writing a song for a new baby niece (as Bianca did), or listening to stories, literacy provided the children with the chance to write about and encode significant moments with others. This was the case with Jose, who would often sit with his father on the veranda in the evenings and read books borrowed from the library. In my visits to Jose’s home, it was clear that he looked forward to these special moments with his father, where they shared about interesting events that took place at school, pictures Jose drew, or songs he learned during music class at school.

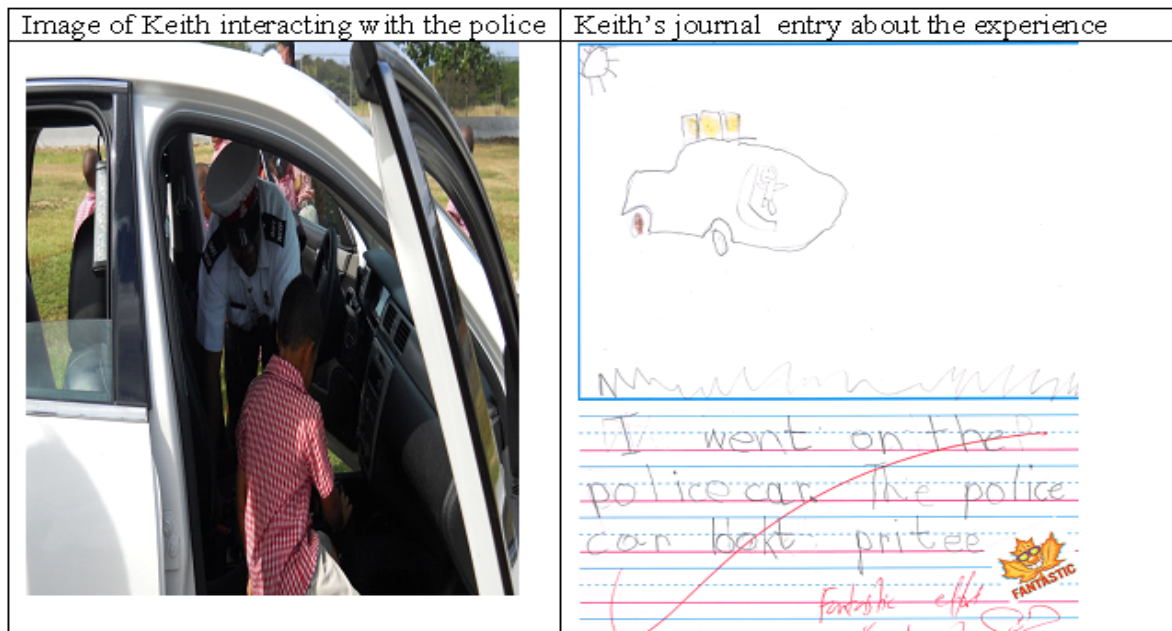


Figure 3. Keith’s journal entry.

Table 1
Students' Perceptions of Literacy

	Perceptions of learning literacy skills and engaging in literacy instruction	Perceptions of the value of literacy in the home and school
Bianca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to read is easy when your teacher helps you. • Some aspects of learning to read are more fun than others ("The teacher center not fun like the computer and the home centers.") • "Reading makes you smart". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful to find favorite TV shows at home. • She can read her favorite storybook. • Able to read storybooks and write songs for her parents. . • Can write notes for mummy and for teacher. • Transcribes favorite TV songs.
Shanna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Mom or Dad] is proud of you when you read". • You learn all your sight words to move on to "harder books". • Does not like going to the writing center for guided writing "because it's too hard". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets to teach little brother how to read at home. • "When you know all the words you get [a chance] to be the assistant". • "When you are finished with your word work you can get extra center time."
Natasha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not like learning sight words. • Likes to go to different centers. • Dislikes going to the writing center with friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can write songs to dance to. • Knows how to spell words and send text messages. • "When you do well you get to sing on stage in music class and at church." • "Mummy likes to listen and is proud of you when you read well. Daddy buys you stuff."
David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm getting better and better at reading everyday". • Enjoys learning sight words. • "I like when you [teacher] read story books". • Favorite center is the computer center and the listening center. • "I don't like to write sentences or to draw". • My mummy helps me at home. • "My favorite book is <i>Come In</i>. It's easy to read." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets to use the computer without anyone helping him. • Reads his favorite book without help. • "When you finish your work you get a chance to go to centers." • "When I read, my mummy is proud of me and she takes me to the beach".
Keith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I know a lot of the sight words already." • Reading is easy. • "Sometimes I like to write but sometimes I don't." • Games are fun. • Loves to listen to stories read aloud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We get to the movies and see some of the books read in class." • Has the chance to read like daddy. • Has a chance to read his children's Bible during family devotions. • "When you know how to read, it makes you smart so you can do your work by yourself". • "If you read a lot of books you get a chance to do fun things".
Jose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I don't know some words." • "Reading is hard...and I can't read." • Enjoys read alouds, particularly stories where his name is substituted for the character's name. • Enjoys literacy centers. His favorite ones are the computer center and the home center. Does not like the teacher center because "it's too hard". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets to use the computer. • Goes to the library. • When it's reading time "we sometimes go to centers". • "You [teacher] read books for us". • Chances to bond with his father.

DISCUSSION

Children's understandings of the purposes and value of literacy is directly related to their experiences with how and what they are taught (Wang, 2000). As Heath (1983) explains, children use their daily experiences with their families to conceptualize what literacy means and use these to validate its importance in their everyday lives. This is true in the obvious sense that family literacy practices influence children's literacy development as previously discussed, but also in terms of how children understand how stories, traditions and cultures are constructed and how they can use literacy skills as a part of their everyday lives.

As I aimed to focus on children's perceptions of the value of literacy, I recognized that, for each of my co-constructors, its value differed and these differences were often shaped by what took place in the home. These findings align with Chu & Wu (2010) and Sawyer (2010), who suggest that parental beliefs shape family literacy practices because parents influence what, when, and how often literacy is practiced within the home. Each child had a different perception of what literacy meant, the purposes of literacy in their lives, and the factors that had an impact on their literacy practices. I was also intrigued by the notion that my students' perceptions of literacy instruction were influenced by how successful they were at learning skills at school and by my instructional practices. This supports the findings of Chu & Wu (2010) and Sawyer (2010), who assert how the practices of home shape the skills children take with them into the classroom setting. It must be noted that families are rich repositories of literacy. In the case of my co-constructors, this was reflected in how they engaged in literacy practices, comments they made when communicating with each other, how they responded to instruction, and how they used multimodal and artifactual forms of literacy (See Table 1).

As Wang (2000) explains, children's perceptions of the value of literacy in their lives is crucial, as, in addition to the implications it has for their success in learning to read and write, it also has an impact on their confidence. With all six students, I recognized that the more "successful" they were with learning literacy skills and the more positive perceptions they had of literacy instruction, the more they sought to use it in both conventional and multimodal forms and the more they seemed to value it in their lives. Interestingly, the converse also holds true. I identified that those who had difficulty with learning literacy skills placed little value on it and struggled to talk about how they used it in their daily lives. I also recognized that the aspects of literacy that proved difficult or challenging for them to learn were often viewed negatively "and not much fun". For instance, Shanna, who read quite well, spoke "positively" about how she benefitted from learning to read and how she used reading both at home and at school. Her perception of writing was different, as learning to write (both in forming letters and constructing sentences) was challenging for her. Through my observations and in speaking with her, I noticed that she had a dislike for writing, and as such, during writing instruction, she was apprehensive and unsure of what was expected of her.

For the other children, when asked about what learning to read meant for them, most of them spoke of the opportunity to gain tangible rewards that came with learning to read and the opportunities they had to "do things with family". This essentially supports the role of literacy as a socio-cultural activity that provides children with opportunities to participate in social and family

experiences. This relates to the findings of Ladson-Billings (2005), Moll, Amanti, Neff et al. (2006), Pahl and Rowsell (2012) and Souto-Manning (2010), who outline that literacy as a practice is socio-culturally grounded.

The children who served as my co-constructors appreciated the opportunity that their burgeoning conventional literacy skills provided with experiences. For Shanna, the chance to finally understand and be a part of adult conversations showed her the value of literacy. For Bianca, Natasha, and Keith, I recognized that the value of learning to read and write allowed them to take part in unique family literacy practices. In Bianca's case, she was able to write the lyrics to her favorite television theme songs as she had seen her teenaged sister doing at home. Natasha also took inspiration from her father, who was a budding musician, by writing songs that she could dance to. Additionally, Keith, by his improved ability to read, was given opportunities to have a more active role in the family devotions. For Keith, this was particularly pleasing as he had an equal opportunity, like his sister, to show his parents just how "good" he could read. This highlights that young children value literacy in both its conventional and multimodal forms and are able to use the two with ease. This supports the findings of Cope and Kalantzis (2000), Flewitt (2008), Kress, (2009), Pahl and Rowsell (2005), and Walsh (2009), who explain that children use literacy in diverse ways, and that as literacy skills are acquired, they are able to move between both forms of literacy. For Jose, this was particularly true because it was his preference for multimodal forms of literacy that was the impetus behind his efforts to acquire conventional forms of literacy. For instance, Jose enjoyed playing on the computer but was often frustrated by the fact that he had to ask for help to log on. With encouragement, he figured out how to blend sounds to spell the password, which then allowed him to access the computer independently. As suggested by Au (1998), literacy serves a means of interaction, participation, and cultural communication. Long before children understand the value of literacy, they understand its purposes in helping them take part in experiences they consider to be valuable.

CONCLUSION

My research highlights that literacy played a powerful role in the lives of my co-constructors by allowing them to make meaning of their world and connecting with those around them. Interestingly, they initially conceptualized literacy as learning how to read and write. I recognized that, in the authentic moments of play and talking with their classmates or at home, literacy also involved making meaning of visual, audio, and kinesthetic representations. It essentially is a way of life and served as a way to participate in cultural experiences, participate with family members, and interact with others (Moll et al., 2006; Pahl 2002).

For children, the value of literacy in their lives is pure. It serves as a means to take part in family religious practices (as in the case of Keith and Natasha), as a way to pass on indigenous cultural practices (as with Jose and his father), and it provides opportunities for parents to have meaningful family moments (David and Biannca).

Though these findings cannot be generalized, they do provide much guidance on how classroom teachers can more readily support young children in their literacy development and help in the

planning of children’s literacy instruction. Recognizing that literacy moves beyond the borders of the classroom and into family and community practices is important. This understanding has an impact on how and why teachers of young children should consider children’s perceptions of literacy. Giving credence to children’s feelings empowers them. As suggested by Ladson-Billings (2005), Pahl and Rowsell (2012) and Souto-Manning (2010), understanding the cultural influences surrounding the literacy of the home and community from which children come provides us with insight into the lives of our students and how we should approach our pedagogy. Certainly, as teachers and advocates, this is certainly something we would want to support.

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