

**ABOUT FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE, FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AND ADULT
EDUCATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE-STUDY OF FEMALE COSTA RICAN
NIGHT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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Este estudio lo dedicó en primera instancia a mis hijos, Gabriel y Elías quienes son mi orgullo y la motivación primordial que me impulsa a superarme cada día.

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This study applies a funds of knowledge framework (augmented by adult education and feminist pedagogies frameworks) to address this gap in the literature. The Funds of Knowledge framework helps challenge mainstream curricula when they undervalue minority cultural and historical capital and overlook (or do not draw upon) lived experiences of students. Utilizing an ethnographic case study approach, this study describes the funds of knowledge and lived experiences of a group of 20 adult female night high school students in rural Costa Rica as they participated in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) project. Drawing data from semi-structured interviews, as well as documentary and physical artifacts, analysis of the data found four main themes, including (1) family (membership and activities, (2) religion (3) other social networks (4) school resources, and (5) The Club. While these findings add to the literature on women's funds of knowledge, women's ways of learning, and adult education; they also provide insights for educators, policy-setters, and even students for better recognizing and incorporating student funds of knowledge into educational experiences. This not only makes learning more

inclusive but also likely improves educational outcomes by not excluding or limiting women (or other underrepresented minorities) from participation.

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ABSTRACT

Although scholarly work has taken a sociocultural turn in recognizing that the knowledges and practices that students bring to the classroom are important and influence their learning processes, it is not yet always the case that scholars focus their studies on identifying those knowledges and practices as resources. Moreover, what research has been done toward discovering and paying attention to students' previous experiences and informal knowledge brought to the classroom has tended to overlook or focus less attention on populations of women, minorities, and other underrepresented communities.

This study applies a funds of knowledge framework (augmented by adult education and feminist pedagogies frameworks) to address this gap in the literature. The Funds of Knowledge framework helps challenge mainstream curricula when they undervalue minority cultural and historical capital and overlook (or do not draw upon) lived experiences of students. Utilizing an ethnographic case study approach, this study describes the funds of knowledge and lived experiences of a group of 20 adult female night high school students in rural Costa Rica as they participated in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) project. Drawing data from semi-structured interviews, as well as documentary and physical artifacts, analysis of the data found four main themes, including (1) family (membership and activities), (2) religion (3) other social networks (4) school resources, and (5) The Club. While these findings add to the literature on women's funds of knowledge, women's ways of learning, and adult education; they also provide insights for educators, policy-setters, and even students for better recognizing and incorporating student funds of knowledge into educational experiences. This not only makes learning more inclusive but also likely improves educational outcomes by not excluding or limiting women (or other underrepresented minorities) from participation.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Instruir a la mujer es hacerla digna y levantarla.
Abrirle un campo más vasto de porvenir,
es arrancar a la degradación muchas de sus víctimas.
-Gabriela Mistral, “Instrucción a la Mujer” 1906

Background

Scholarly work has taken a sociocultural turn in recognizing that students bring not only their academic but their lived backgrounds and influences into the classroom. Inspired by Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, considerable research confirms that students’ learning and performance *inside* the classroom is intimately related to informal education and life experiences they have encountered *outside* the classroom (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Breen, 2014; González et al., 2005). Despite this growing body of research, scholars have yet to consistently focus their studies on identifying the knowledges and practices that students already bring as resources with them into educational settings (formal and informal). The lived funds of knowledge are not explicitly academic or liable to be captured on diagnostic tests and other types of evaluations assessing students’ previous content and knowledge (González et al., 2005). Rather, these funds of knowledge refer to life resources that students use (inside and outside of the classroom) as they participate in learning experiences and environments. The resources that arise from their lived experiences the relationships, artifacts used daily, skills they routinely practice, customs, abilities, values, and beliefs that they have acquired as a result of being part of a household, family, and community—are all part of this picture.

Summary

Accordingly, in Chapter 1 of this study, I will problematize the main issue this research intends to cover. I will state the research questions that will guide my study, and I will ground the need for an investigation of this kind. Also, possible research implications of this study will

be anticipated and described. To give readers a clear overview of the context on which this study is based, I will also describe background information on English Language learning and teaching in Costa Rica, particularly at nocturno (night) high schools.

In Chapter 2, I describe the theoretical frameworks that function as lenses for this research: namely, funds of knowledge, adult education (andragogy), and feminist pedagogy. I start by giving a historical overview of these frameworks and round up the discussion by connecting the different theories to my study. In this way, the reader can see how each of these frameworks guide the study throughout.

In Chapter 3, I offer a description of the methodology I followed to develop this ethnographic case study. I explain the data collection procedures, the steps I followed to do data analysis, coding systems used, and how I reported the results. At all times, I go back to my research questions and theoretical framework so readers can see how I visualize connecting the pieces of this study to create a coherent, sound, and consistent approach.

In Chapter 4, readers can find the qualitative data, themes, and codes that answer the study's research questions. The findings detail the emergent themes that developed through the process of data analysis and coding, drawing on verbatim quotes from the participants.

In Chapter 5, I discuss my findings as I see them connect with the theoretical frameworks of this study, the research questions, and new ideas that arise as a result of this arduous and systematic research. I also offer my accounts on the implications I see this study having in the academic realm. I add the future research considerations that this study highlights. Finally, I explain the challenges of a study of this type, the limitations I encountered or anyone attempting to replicate this research could encounter.

Problem Statement

A lack of attention or enthusiasm from an educator on behalf of discovering and paying attention to students' previous experiences and informal knowledge becomes even more evident when the population is that of women, minorities, or other underrepresented communities. Over the years, it has been debated whether students from underprivileged sectors come into the classroom with an undervalued body of knowledge, skills, relevant life experiences, and influential relationships that ultimately account for their low academic achievements (Vavrus, 2008). Rather than “pinning” the source of low academic performance on deficits or defects in students, one should instead point to deficits or defects in the educational setting and approach. As González and Moll (2002) note, “high school students can come to experience only dominant paradigms in their schooling experiences” (p. 624). These dominant paradigms can be alien or unfamiliar to some communities (if not explicitly deprecating, as in the case of stigmatizing race-based paradigms) and will therefore negatively affect student motivation, performance, and decision-making as they feel disconnected and dismissed and see their knowledge base and lived experiences undervalued, lacking, deficient, or actively made into a “problem” (González & Moll, 2002).

To validate, acknowledge, and celebrate the resources that students bring to the classroom, much research (Denton & Borrego, 2021; Fox, 2016; González et al., 2005) has made it a goal to demonstrate that students from minority and marginalized groups have, in fact, acquired valuable knowledge before entering the classroom (González & Moll, 2002). Specifically, the Funds of Knowledge framework works to challenge mainstream curricula where they undervalue minority cultural and historical capital. In this sense, a Funds of Knowledge framework opens a space for teachers to recognize and include these funds in the curriculum and

afford all students a chance to learn in a more culturally familiar and comprehensible environment. The most obvious example of this is when instruction is provided in a student's mother-tongue whenever possible (rather than a foreign language they are less completely fluent in, if at all).

In general, students can use their funds of knowledge resources to achieve academic and life successes. Inspired by the Funds of Knowledge premise "that people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (González & Moll, 2002, p. 625), this study explores the experiential knowledges and practices as resources among a group of 20 adult female night high school students from rural Costa Rica while they are informally learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). More exactly, it looks to understand how these resources reflect participants' Funds of Knowledge, ways of learning, and coping strategies.

Although Funds of Knowledge is the primary theoretical lens, this study also relies on adult education and feminist pedagogy theories. Learning in the high school context is often studied from a pedagogical perspective. However, because the students are all adult women (from age 18 to 40), an adult education (andragogic) perspective is needed. Adult education emphasizes learners' motivation as a leading factor in adults' learning process (Ozuah, 2016). That is, in typical (compulsory) student learning settings, a major motivation for students is simply passing the test, whether the material is mastered or not. In adult education settings, learners are almost always primarily interested to master the material (though in cases of certifications required for employment, simply "passing the test" can again come to the fore as a central motivation). In the present study, participants had various motivations for learning

English but all were primarily interested in mastering the language for multiple purposes and not just to pass tests.

Accordingly, making adult learners feel capable, respected, supported, valued, and encouraged is fundamental (Larrotta & Serrano, 2011). There is no doubt that in all educational settings, some measure of respect is needed transactionally (from teacher to student) to ensure learning. For school-age students, the intergenerational difference can often suffice (but cannot guarantee no conflicts). However, between adult teachers and students, parity in respect is mandatory. As such, adults require spaces that allow for conversations, open dialogue that may enable them to discuss problems and opportunities for solving everyday situations. Offering problem-solving opportunities engages adults—not simply to feel useful and active (as all students might, where they can ask and answer questions, analyze, and propose strategies for overcoming issues) but also in the signal of respect for adult agency that such offers reflect (Freire, 1970). Kolb (1984) states that the learning environment has to highlight adults’ experience, perception, cognition, and behavior for learning to be achieved. Additionally, adults become self-motivated when they find value in the material they are learning; typically, this value explicitly links the usefulness of what they are learning to their future and current life situations (Knowles, 1980).

The literature reviewed suggests that it was not until scholars began differentiating between teaching children (pedagogy) and teaching adults (andragogy) that studies focusing on women’s learning were even considered (Reischmann, 2004).¹ *Women’s Ways of Knowing* by

¹ The coinage “andragogy” uses the Greek prefix for “man” in the same way that English uses “man” to refer to all of humankind. While this verbal exclusion of “woman” aptly recapitulates the need for criticism of Perry (1999), discussed below, the coinage is very likely for the sake of an easy-to-pronounce word. The actual Greek term for “adult” is “enikilas,” which would result in enikilagogy. All of this notwithstanding, why a resort to a Greek coinage would be taken when the phrase “adult education” adequately suffices in English can be left as an open question.

Belenky et al. (1986) was the first groundbreaking ethnographic study focusing on women's ways of learning. In principle, adult education focuses on the student as a person (regardless of gender, race, or social class) and thus complements the focus on women's learning in feminism pedagogical theories.

Criticisms of William Perry's (1999) research provided impetus for the focus on ways women learn. Although ground-breaking research, Perry generalized his findings to all adults when, in reality, his participants were only men, evidencing a gap in research to understand how women learn. The study has been the foundation for many subsequent studies in the area, including Belenky et al.'s (1986) *Women's Ways of Knowing* (WWK). WWK was a visionary piece in the study of women as unique learners. It initiated a research trend that forefronted women in research studies. It gave women a voice in that it reported how women say they learn, under what conditions they learn and, finally, what their challenges and motivations are when it comes to engaging in a learning environment. There is no doubt WWK has had an impact on scholarship regarding women's education and learning since its publication. Nevertheless, this book has also been highly criticized and subsequent feminist theories have emerged that continue to shape current feminist positioning.

Scholars who identify with third and fourth-wave feminism, post-structuralist or post-feminism frameworks explain how Belenky et al. failed to explain why, for example, women stated that *silence is a condition* in the way they learn; this statement was later linked by critics to the oppression women have experienced throughout time (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). A second limitation directly connected criticisms to the second-wave feminist movement; namely, that that movement (and thus WWK) capture primarily or only middle-class white women and their fight for equality. Although the authors of WWK highlight how their participants were diverse, they

did not include women of color. Consequently, “the experience of white middle-class women became the basis for generalizations about women” (Hayes & Flannery, 2000, p. 11). Despite these shortcomings (Bucholtz, 2014; Hayes & Flannery, 2000), these authors were able to deconstruct previous theories on adult education by including more diverse female participants in studies that focused on adult learners. Moreover, whatever the granular and specific differences between adult education for women and men, the fundamental emphasis on the differences in power dynamics (between adult-adult as opposed to adult-child education) and the specifically materials-oriented motivation of adult learners are held in common.

Research Purpose

The following study contributes to the field of adult women’s and underrepresented or minorities’ education. It describes the resources that Costa Rican adult women drew upon in the process of informally learning English as a Foreign language. Along these lines, the study also focuses on filling gaps in the literature by addressing a little-studied population, i.e., women attending Night High Schools in a developing country such as Costa Rica.

To this end, Funds of Knowledge principles served to identify students’ resources when learning English as a foreign language, amplified by adult education theory (Knowles, 1990) and feminist pedagogy (Tisdell, 1995) frameworks. In particular, Funds of Knowledge seen through these amplifying lenses reflect participants’ unique ways of learning and the know-how they used and brought to the learning process. More broadly, what these insights disclose are explanations into *how* learning occurred in the given educational setting—as a framework of understanding that has more explanatory power than competing learning models, especially the “banking” model criticized by Freire (1970).

English Language Teaching and Learning in Costa Rica

The following provides an overview of English teaching and learning in Costa Rica (including a description of different projects and efforts made by the Costa Rican government to promote the learning of English to all citizens in the shortest time possible). This overview contextualizes the situation of this study's participants as they seek to learn English in the Costa Rican public education system.

Costa Rica is a Central American, middle-income, developing nation. The country's primary sources of income are tourism, agriculture, and electronic exports. Knowing English in Costa Rica means one is able to interact with the rest of the world in areas like commerce, tourism, education, and politics. Knowing English holds a promise of development and success. Pacheco (2013) states that the expansion of learning and teaching English allows a significant improvement in life quality for Costa Ricans. The acquisition of this language at the initial stages of learning until higher levels enable the population to achieve high-end competitive paying jobs. For example, Costa Rica's National Census of 2017 stated that the per hour wage of a bilingual (English/Spanish) worker was 20.7% higher than a monolingual (Spanish) worker.

In response to this reality, the Ministry of Public Education has focused efforts on creating programs that can, in some way or another, support the teaching and learning of English in Costa Rica. For the Ministry of Public Education, including English learning in public schools aims to respond to two main goals:

- “To offer students a second language that can enable them to communicate within a broader social-economic context in and outside Costa Rica.”

- “To give students a tool to directly access scientific, technological and humanistic information and, in this way, expand their knowledge of the world.” (my translation, MEP, 2003)

Towards this end, the program Costa Rica Multilingüe was created to achieve these goals. Costa Rica Multilingüe is the name of the National English Plan. This plan aims to offer all-around English language education to prepare citizens to respond more according to the job demands of the country that strives for a globalized and competitive Costa Rica (Koch, 2013). More recently, former President Alvarado presented (2018) the program “Alianza para el bilingüismo (ABi)” as part of the country’s strategy to significantly improve the quality and scope of English education. This alliance intends to consolidate the relationship between different institutions that aim to improve the quality of education. As stated by President Alvarado:

El reto es forjar una verdadera alianza intersectorial para extender el dominio del inglés y otras lenguas como política de estado, que asegure oportunidades de acceso universal para habitantes de todas las edades y de todos los territorios” (CINDE, 2018, p. 1) [*The challenge is to promote an intersectoral alliance to expand English and other languages’ proficiency as a state policy, to assure the universal access opportunities to Costa Ricans of all ages and from parts of the whole country.*]

In 2018, institutions involved and different government ministries put in place actions that directly aim to improve the learning of English language.

- Advance the first stage of universal English education in preschool, reaching about 125,000 students.

- Implementation of English language certifications for high school senior during the period of 2019-2022, reaching around 180 thousand students by 2022.
- Certify entrance and final English levels with standardized tests like BELT and TOEIC for students in English programs at the INA (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje).
- Application of diagnostic and certification tests to English teachers at the INA also offers training that will raise the quality and focus- contextualizing the teaching and learning process.

It is too soon to predict if these efforts and programs will achieve the hoped for results. Nonetheless, it remains a priority among Costa Rican authorities to promote the learning of English in the country. This is supported where the country aims to offer better, more equal opportunities for Costa Ricans and the country's economy. As it shows, the efforts being made aim to address public education students who, in their majority, may come from more poor backgrounds.

This is to say that the country is aware of the inequality that currently exists between what private schools and public schools offer. In Costa Rica, private elementary and high schools are synonyms for bilingual education and high social and economic status. If this gap is not closed, the poor will become poorer and the rich richer, and education may be one factor that encourages (and can counteract) this disparity.

Night Schools in Costa Rica

Colegios Academicos Nocturnos ("night high schools") in Costa Rica do not fall into the category of alternative education programs or informal education. Although they have fewer subjects in the curriculum (students do not receive music, arts, physical education, and other

special area subjects) and their population consists mostly of adult students, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) has stated that Colegios Academicos Nocturnos are regular public high schools with a nocturnal schedule.

These high schools were originally established in 1950. They were initially created to offer individuals who needed to work during the day an option to finish their high school education. According to CONARE (2019), nowadays, the main objective of the Colegios Nocturnos is to obtain student permanence in the system, reinsertion, and educational success. CONARE (2017) states that Nocturno high schools represent the last possibility the system offers to address an over-age population that historically has dealt with educational exclusion.

Regarding the population that attends these institutions, Vargas (2012) considers the Nocturno population as one of the most vulnerable in the country. Nocturno students make significant efforts to participate in the school; most of them come to the classrooms after long job shifts. Additionally, they have responsibilities tied to their roles as parents or caretakers of other family members. Early incorporation into the job market and parenthood become factors that immediately raise students' possibilities of dropping out. These same factors reflect their low economic levels, which fall into poverty, extreme poverty, and marginalization (Vargas, 2012).

Although a unique set of cultural, socio-economic, and age factors characterize the Nocturno student population, the MEP over the years has made few efforts to address the needs of the Nocturno population. Vargas (2012) states that current study programs do not address the needs of Nocturno students; in most cases, the plans do not relate to the students' realities, which affects their motivation and promotes attrition. Nevertheless, in the last three years, the MEP has made some small changes that seek to reform the guidelines and curriculum for Nocturno High School students. However, information specifically for Nocturno High Schools are sent to the

institutions as “Comunicados Oficiales,” [official communications]; I was unable to obtain an example of these documents. However, by speaking with Night High School teachers, I was informed that pregnant students are allowed to miss Nocturno classes, and teachers will work together with them so that they can stay updated. Additionally, students receive free transportation and free cafeteria service. Teachers are asked to be mindful of projects and assignments sent as homework; they should be short, not time-consuming, and should only aim to review or strengthen material already discussed in class.

The participants of this study are all Nocturno students 18 years and older. When I met the students in 2018, they were in 9th, 10th, and 11th grade. Out of the 20 participants, 10 are mothers, 6 of them are unmarried. All of the students have informal, temporary jobs. This said, the characteristics of my participants are the same as those described by Vargas (2012); that is, the women of this project suffer from socio-economic marginalization, poverty, and extreme poverty. Added to this, their condition as women makes them even more vulnerable to gender discrimination. Given the participants’ unique background, it is relevant to study how they learn and cope within the constraints of the night school and life settings.

Study Context

The participants of this project are 20 women living in the rural community of El Cerro (pseudonym), in the canton of Alajuela in the Central Valley of Costa Rica. At the time of this study, these women were completing high school at El Cerro Night High School. I met them when I participated in a grant-funded project called El Capullo EFL Multimodal Club (hereafter, The Club). While working with the Club, I observed the severe conditions my students faced as students and as women (including poverty, a lack of time, demotivation, gender discrimination, tiredness, stress, marital abuse, and depression). Despite these challenges, the students continued

attending school every night and successfully became active members of The Club. Additionally, all the participants maintained grade averages of A and A+ (90-100 in the Costa Rican grading system).

As stated before, all of the participants are from El Cerro, Alajuela. Alajuela is one of the seven provinces of Costa Rica, and the second-most populated after the capital, San Jose. El Cerro is located in one of the territory's most impoverished areas (IDRCR, 2016). Lack of employment has categorized this canton as one of the most critical in the western part of the country. El Cerro's economy is primarily agricultural, with a focus on coffee production. Due to this sole historical concentration on coffee, the town has failed to expand the sources of employment. However, more recently, new chances are emerging, and the Municipalidad [townhall] is concentrating on developing tourism opportunities. It is also creating agreements with nearby international companies that have promised to train and hire the local Cerreños (demonym for people from El Cerro).

The Colegio Nocturno El Cerro was established in 1971 after the Ministry of Education required a pre-registration that would indicate El Cerro population's interest in creating a Night School. 312 adults and young adults pre-registered. With this, Prof. Uladislao Gámez Solano, Education Minister at the time, categorically approved the creation of the Colegio Nocturno El Cerro to serve all of the interested students of the area.

Through SWOT analysis of the High School, the institution is characterized (see Figure 1) as having multiple strengths that involve having qualified and experienced staff. The staff is committed to the institution, its projects and activities. As well, they participate in professional development activities. The institution also has enough infrastructure that allows to serve the amount of students registered. On the other hand, these classrooms are described as being in

precarious conditions. Other weaknesses are the lack of funds for transportation, high number of students living in extreme poverty, lack of parent support, and high percentage of teen and single mothers. The opportunities reported offer some hope, as it highlights high amount of students that are committed and involved with the institutions' projects, the offering of services like the cafeteria and transportation for some neighboring towns (distritos), compromise from the teachers to work together to promote retention, and the motivation to create and implement school projects. Finally, the threats that are evidenced answer to the weakness observed, some of them are related to transportation for the students, lack of resources from the government, psychosocial and economic issues among the students population, and lack of support from parents.

SWOT analysis for The <u>Colegio Nocturno de Naranjo</u>	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enough infrastructure and classrooms for the registered population. 2. Staff experienced in adult education. 3. Qualified staff. 4. Staff commitment to the activities they are in charge of. 5. Opportunities to develop training, assessments, and quality control. 6. Support for staff to develop projects and permanent activities. 7. Interinstitutional coordination for projects and activities. 8. Staff willingness to participate in professional development. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classrooms in precarious conditions. 2. Lack of transportation scholarships for some bus routes. 3. High percentage of students living in extreme poverty. 4. Lack of support from parents to students. 5. High percentage of teen and single mothers.
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High student involvement in institutional projects. 2. Cafeteria service 3. Bus transportation for some districts. 4. Compromise from behalf of the teachers to implement plans to avoid school dropouts. 5. Implementation of projects (<u>Comité de deportes</u>, <u>orientación (counseling)</u>, <u>Avancemos</u>, <u>Cooperativas</u>, and others) that offer economic support for students as a way to reduce dropout rates and improve school performance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited schedule of public transportation. 2. Bureaucratic processes to obtain resources from the government. 3. Limited time to present reports. 4. Late budget approval on behalf of central government. 5. Psychosocial problems: alcoholism, drugs, juvenile delinquency, family disintegration, prostitution, interfamilial violence (physical, sexual and psychological abuse). 6. Lack of compromise from parents in the educational process and health of the students. 7. Low development area.

Figure 1.1: SWOT analysis of El Cerro Night High School

Research Questions

The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to identify the resources that Costa Rican adult, female, night high school students drew upon while informally learning English as a

Foreign Language. Additionally, it aims to explore how these resources reflect students' funds of knowledge and ways of learning. **Funds of knowledge** are defined as the cultural, social, and historical resources that are deeply rooted to the students' lives. **Ways of learning** refers to the description of behaviors, attitudes, conditions, and social, cultural, and historical factors that can influence students' acquisition of knowledge. **Coping strategies** relates to the behaviors, thinking processes, actions taken, control of emotions, and problem solving skills students perform in order to dignify their living situations.

This study explores the questions:

1. What are the Funds of Knowledge that El Cerro Night High School female students use?
2. How does the use of these resources reflect participants' learning and coping strategies?

Research Contribution and Significance

The study is significant because it sheds light on a unique, underrepresented, and marginalized population of women whose lives are full of experiences and learning abilities worth sharing and learning from. In this sense, this study aims to show the value of students' cultural, social, and historical capitals.

According to Zuga (1999), the differences of life experiences compared to men have been shaped and affected by their very different position in society throughout history. This situation impacts on their knowledge construction process. This study contributes to understanding how the women of El Cerro Night high school learn and feel empowered in spite of their marginalized conditions. Furthermore, this study offers tools for other scholars and teachers of women to use toward providing better opportunities for meaningful education--an education where women's

life experiences and conditions are understood and considered when sharing a learning environment with them.

This study also draws on feminist pedagogy, which deals with how to teach women and those marginalized because of the structural factors of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender, and all these intersections in a way that facilitates their critique of the social systems of oppression and privilege that inform their lives (Tisdell, 1995, p. 57)

It sheds light on how a population that is disregarded learns, despite living within (or alongside) a system that singles them out for being women, single mothers, poor, immigrants, or simply adult night high school students. Providing a thick description of students' ways of learning provides others interested in the field an understanding of the setting and potential insights for use or consideration in their own research contexts. This study also seeks to impact women's education, particularly in environments where women are educationally marginalized. All of these goals fill an existing literature gap, bringing in to focus the country of Costa Rica and women's education from the theoretical perspectives of funds of knowledge, adult education, and feminist pedagogy.

Glossary (Terminology for the Dissertation)

Colegios Nocturnos de Costa Rica: Formal education institutions that follow a nocturnal schedule.

Feminism: “a diverse and sometimes conflicting set of theoretical, methodological, and political perspectives that have in common a commitment to understanding and challenging social inequalities related to gender and sexuality” (Bucholtz, 2014, p. 23)

Funds of knowledge: Body of knowledge acquired through life experiences outside of a formal academic setting (Greenberg, 1989; Tapia, 1991; Vélez-Ibañez, 1988, cited in González et al., 2005, pp. 72-73).

Informal learning: “any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria” (Livingstone, 2001, p. 4).

Resources: visible and invisible artifacts, behaviors, values, and beliefs that students say they draw upon when learning English.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

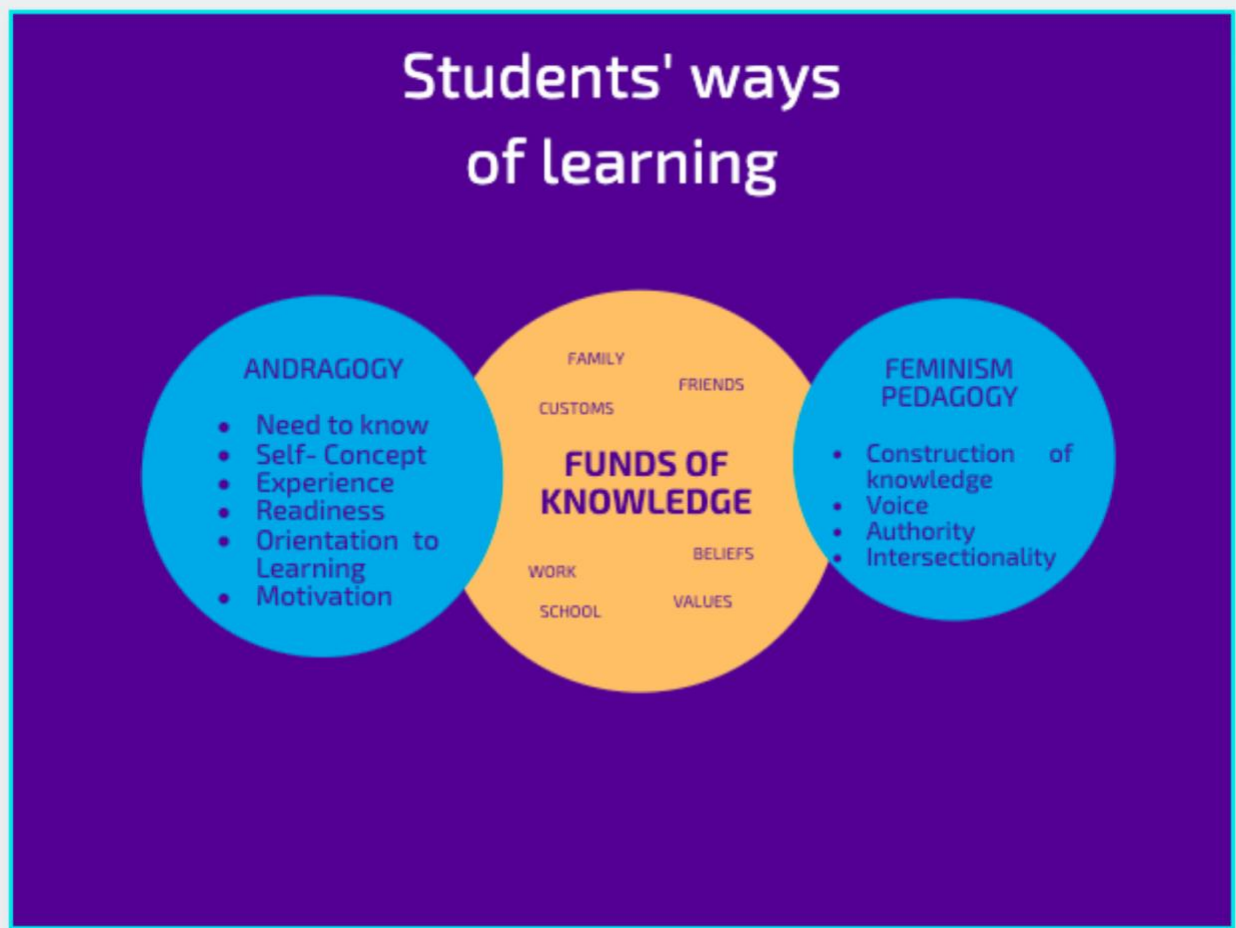


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Frame of the Study

This chapter describes the concepts of Funds of knowledge, Adult Education, and Feminist Pedagogy. It offers a conceptual review of foundational studies that gave rise to the frameworks used in this study and how these theories intersect.

Theoretical Framework(s)

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge theory considers that social relationships are fundamental in the construction of knowledge (González et al., 2005). In essence, the Funds of Knowledge framework assumes that the learning process is more effective when teachers learn about and

incorporate knowledges and practices from students' lives, values, culture, and everyday practices into educational contexts. This includes knowing about students' family and their communities. In this sense, learning about students is a step forward in advocating for more equitable educational experiences that celebrate all (especially the non-mainstream) students' life experiences and prepare them for the challenges of the world and the real context they live in.

While this goal seems little more than a (gratuitous) restatement of inclusive and democratic values around self-determination, it is actually a reminder of the historical places where those otherwise assumed values have not been extended to others, above all around issues of gender, but also race and other marginalized identity markers. It is a reminder that people (especially people of color and women historically) have not had their experiences, knowledges, and practices acknowledged or treated as valuable in public spaces. Again, the most still-recurrent example is in monolingual spaces where foreign-language speakers' mother-tongues are not utilized in classrooms and, worse, are framed as a "problem" that needs to be solved. As such, the Funds of Knowledge framework is not simply that people (all people) have life experiences that, when tapped into, better facilitate learning but also that there is a need to acknowledge (or stop denigrating) certain non-mainstream knowledges and practices.

Resonating with Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualization of cultural capital, funds of knowledge recognizes that underprivileged, low socio-economic people have life experiences that can be used to their benefit in school and other environments as long as they are recognized as valuable. Funds of knowledge promotes the idea that this capital that students bring into the classroom is respected and should be celebrated as such. It is an asset, not a liability.

Funds of knowledge are the knowledge and skills students have acquired outside a formal educational environment. This refers to the information and abilities students have developed as

a result of living and experiencing informal educational settings. For example, participating in activities like preparing home-cooked meals, taking care of kids and adults, taking care of farm animals, and finding non-traditional jobs like selling lottery tickets. These experiences can bring a whole matrix of information that can be valuable and useful, but also worthy, in a formal academic setting. For example, students can connect math curricula to knowledge from measuring cups and tablespoons when cooking, reading comprehension is put into practice when students can follow recipes or instructional manuals, concepts around anatomy and biology can arise from taking care of children and older adults, jobs where selling, negotiating, and bargaining can promote skills around mental calculations, critical thinking, problem solving and people skills.

Informal learning environments in particular offer students opportunities to develop skills and acquire knowledge that is often not applied as such in the classroom. However, Funds of Knowledge advocates assert that adequately integrating these assets into the formal curriculum in diverse ways can promote a more effective learning process (González & Moll, 2002; González et al., 2005; González et al., 2011). Furthermore, when teachers understand where students come from, what they believe in, and what are their daily practices, students can feel valued, motivated and essential inside the classroom, encouraging motivation and successful outcomes.

Funds of Knowledge uses ethnographic research methods (González & Moll, 2002) that include participant observation, interviews, life experience narratives, and reflection. In Funds of Knowledge, teacher-ethnographers enter their students' households and communities to understand how people see, reflect upon, and describe their everyday activities. Consequently, students can take a leading role to show off their life. In this sense, Funds of Knowledge are historical yet transformative (Moll et al., 1992). This means that Funds of Knowledge's roots are

stated in a historical moment in time and transferred across generations. However, they also may have been transformed and conveniently adapted to respond to whatever necessity they are trying to fulfill and the context they are currently attempting to adapt (Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). Funds of Knowledge studies, therefore, need to be ongoing and continuously updated. A study done in a certain time period can show different findings regarding a particular population a few years later; for this reason, Funds of knowledge are also different from individual to individual.

Norma González, Luis Moll, and Cathy Amari pioneered the Funds of Knowledge concept. According to González (González, et al., 2005) much of their work is inspired by “The Tucson Project” (Vélez-Ibañez, 1983, cited in González, 2005). That study showed how *confianza* (“mutual trust”) was “an overriding cultural intersection for Mexican-origin populations” (p. 3). In their study, Funds of knowledge came to light as the researcher was given trust and accessibility to the students’ household, daily activities, and relationships with family members and the community. Through interviews with household members, the study evidenced how “households (usually the mother’s) were central to providing information, goods, mutual help, and support to a whole circle of other families. (González, et al., 2005, p. 3).

Two more studies are precursors of the Funds of knowledge theory. Before Funds of knowledge, Luis Moll (González, et al, 2005) in collaboration with Esteban Diaz, studied classroom dynamics and home life primarily among Mexican families. They did classroom observations to understand how bilingual schools were socially organized, and they noticed that English instruction ignored the students’ Spanish- language abilities, mostly their reading skills. On this occasion, they worked with the teachers to develop reading comprehension skills by giving support in both languages. The study showed the students were capable of higher-level,

more challenging work if they were given support in Spanish. (Moll & Diaz, 1987, cited in González, et al, 2005).

Another fundamental study by Moll and Díaz was done with English speakers learning writing. Through home observations and interviews with families, their study aimed to understand “the nature and extent of family literacy” (González, et al., 2005). It documented “the funds of knowledge and literacy practices of the homes we [the authors] studied and observe the teaching of literacy in selected classrooms.” (González, et al., 2005, p. 5). The researchers performed household visits to collect information that would show how families “generated, obtained, and distributed knowledge, among other aspects of household life” (González, et al., 2005, p. 5). This study also featured the concept of study groups, where teachers involved got together to discuss what they were observing as they did home visits. The teachers agreed to experiment and include in their lesson topics that were observed to be relevant to the students and the community they belonged to (Moll & Díaz, 1987, cited in González, et al., 2005).

Including Funds of knowledge principles in this study is relevant because it addresses important elements that have for years characterized underrepresented groups (such as the women-student participants in this research). Amanti (in González et al., 2005) points out that during her teacher training to become a bilingual education teacher, she was led to believe that:

low income and minority students were more likely to experience failure in school because their home experiences had not provided them with the prerequisite skills for school success in the same way as the home experiences of middle- and upper-class students. The belief is that traditionally low-income and minority students are offered lessons reduced in complexity to compensate for these perceived

deficits –also called the deficiency model for culturally different students (Vélez-Ibañez & Greenberg in González, et al., 2005, p. 7).

Funds of knowledge is important because it deals with students who are categorized as poor not only because of their lack of material resources but also a lack of quality experiences (Moll et al., 1992 in González, et al., 2005).

It has been documented over and over again that women's roles in different fields have been characterized by invisibility, discrimination, submission, and abuse (Chant, 2009; Higgins, 2010; Lakoff, 1973; Morgan et al., 2010). It will take a lens such as Funds of knowledge to bring forward how the women in this current study cope and navigate through their difficult situations to continue to learn. My female adult students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds; many of them are first generation high school students, single mothers; they work during the day to support their families and come to school at night. They are also caretakers and housewives. They have lived short childhoods, short adolescences, and too quickly they became adults. Every day, they live multiple experiences that have formed bodies of knowledge and technical skills that, far from being ignored, should be merged into their student life and the proposed curriculum. Teachers must know where these students come from and what they bring with them, before they attempt to teach. This is where Funds of knowledge takes a stand, as it aims to understand students' communities and households.

Funds of Knowledge matters not only as a research theoretical lens but as a lens to approach teaching practice. This is because it provides an avenue to validate students' voices and the experiences they have lived—experiences that, for so long, have been seen as pitiful, dire, and embarrassing. By implementing Funds of Knowledge into classrooms, students can also learn to see themselves in a more encouraging way. Many times these students are not aware of their own

skills, abilities, and value; on the contrary, they live with low self-esteem, feeling they must simply go through the motions of life without accomplishments.

Including students' Funds of Knowledge in classrooms has proven beneficial for the learning process. In light of the Vygotskian concept of the zone of proximal development, Funds of Knowledge play an important role in offering the student a smooth transition from previous knowledge to new knowledge. As well, connecting class content to students' interests and needs can also result in a more effective learning process as it both validates the students' experiences and motivates the processes of learning.

Use of Funds of Knowledge as defined by Moll et al. (1992) in González, et al., (2005) are the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (pp. 72-73). This approach involves looking into students' households and communities to understand the bodies of knowledge they have constructed from experiences that come from belonging to these groups. Additionally, funds of knowledge theory considers the types of relationships people develop over time that contribute to the formation of these bodies of knowledge. As stated in Moll. et al. (1992) (in González, et al., 2005) "when funds of knowledge are not readily available within households, relationships with individuals outside the households are activated to meet their household or individual needs" (Tavarez, 2020, p. 94). A situation of this kind can have beneficial and harmful inflections; that is, when strategies for "functioning and well-being" are not available in one space, they will be sought out in another, for example sources of self-esteem by joining a gang, or teachers serving in place of parents to challenge racist ideologies reflected in households.

The Funds of knowledge framework has been criticized as not conceptually and that foregrounding the reality of students can prevent them from accepting the reality of society and thus failing to prepare them to confront the workforce, college, and the development of skills needed to strive in a competitive world that has been set according to a mainstream based education curriculum (Hogg, 2011; Oughton, 2010). Such an objection seems to miss that Funds of knowledge specifically highlights strategies for “functioning and well-being” in the world as a basic premise. The objection seems more targeted at (a critique of) student-centered or constructivist teaching and learning, which is accused of (and sometimes may actually) place more emphasis on student *interests* around learning curricula over actually mastering the curricula’s material. In contrast, Funds of knowledge emphasizes existing student strategies for functioning and wellbeing in (educational) settings (which includes navigating the social landscape of school settings, including bullying, peer pressure, public reputation). Indeed, the world (and educational settings) are already forcing them to confront the values of the workforce or college and the development of skills needed (but often held out of reach for marginalized people) when striving in an (artificially) competitive world.

Recognizing this, any attempt to bracket out Funds of knowledge in the classroom has the tacit effect of bracketing out the strategies for functioning and wellbeing not typically supported in either the mainstream or the educational settings that reflect the mainstream. To put this in another way, educational settings already include and support Funds of knowledge—specifically, the Funds of knowledge, as strategies for functioning and wellbeing, represented by mainstream populations. Again, the most obvious and basic example of this is that virtually every classroom setting in the United States is conducted in English. As such, whether intentionally or accidentally (willfully or ignorantly), critiques that aim to bracket out Funds of knowledge or by

policy oppose their implementation in education tacitly participate in racially and gendered discriminatory structures.

Contradicting such criticisms and tendencies, this study focuses on women students and their reality, viewed from the position of a feminist pedagogy inspired by post-structural feminism theories and intersectionality principles. Discussed in more detail below, here I highlight that feminist pedagogy advocates for women's "individual capacity for agency" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 60), which means that people can control how their life evolves in spite of the social conditions of oppression they may be part of. The participants in this dissertation have shown they can be empowered and be successful under the right conditions, conditions that support their reality rather than undermine it by attempting to bracket out or deny their Funds of knowledge.

Adult Education (Andragogy)

Being the participants of this study adult women and not children, the concept of Andragogy must be brought to the forefront, as I attempt to link its importance with the Funds of Knowledge theoretical framework that has historically been linked to children.

Andragogy studies how adults learn. Learning theorists like Piaget, Skinner, and Freud based their understanding on studies done with children and animals. It was Thorndike et al. in 1928 (cited in Merriam & Bierema, 2014) who initially wrote and conducted studies with adult learners. Before 1970, there were no meaningfully comprehensive theories about adult education. Even though teachers who taught adults agreed that they did not learn in the same way as children and teenagers, it was not until Knowles brought the meaning of "Andragogy" to the United States in 1968 that the term became known with the publication of his article "Andragogy, Not Pedagogy" (Reischmann, 2004). Knowles defined andragogy as "the art and

science of helping adults learn” (Reischmann, 2004, p. 3). Furthermore, he stated that it centered on two key attributes: (1) of adults being self- directed and autonomous, and (2) the teacher having the role of a facilitator, not the sole possessor of the truth (Pratt & Ass., 1998, cited in Reischmann, 2004).

Knowles and other authors expanded on the term of andragogy and added to the initial theory new assumptions. Hereunder are explained the guiding points to understand how adults learn (Ozuah, 2016).

- **The need to know.** Adult learners need to see the value of what they learn and the possible consequences if they do not acquire knowledge. The facilitator’s role is to help the learners become aware of the importance of what they are learning.
- **The learners’ self-concept.** Adults are self-directed and autonomous around learning and need to feel they are seen and treated as such.² Adult learners are resistant to situations in which they feel others imposing their desires and wishes upon them. Nevertheless, in educational environments where this premise is not met, adults become passive and dependent learners. At the same time, this causes emotional conflict in the learner as they are torn between “the expectation to be taught as children and the deeper psychological need to be self-directed.” (Knowles et al., 1998, cited in Ozuah, 2016, p. 84)

² The famous (white) activist Myles Horton was moved to increase adult literacy in (Black) populations and founded the Highlander Folk School in Summerfield, Tennessee in 1932. (Another of its major emphases at the time was to educate workers during intense opposition to unions during the Great Depression in the US.) However, the impulse to teach literacy was not initially well-received, in part because it was embarrassing for adults to admit that they could not read. When it was pointed out to him (by a Black colleague) that people *would* participate in classes if they taught the skills needed for voting (including a need for print-literacy to read ballots), then adult participants signed up for courses.

- **The role of experience.** Teachers of adult learners have supported the idea that the strongest resources that mature learners have are their experiences; thus, they consciously or unconsciously rely on their previous learning to develop new knowledge-practices as resources.
- **Readiness to learn.** For adults, their readiness to learn relies heavily on the importance they find in what is being taught; related to the need to know, above, adult learners often arrive in the classroom with an agenda to learn. As such, the level of importance given and readiness will be based on how they see their life being affected by what they will know or learn to do. Being able to apply what they learn to solve real-life problems is of great importance for adult learners.
- **Orientation to learning.** Adult theory establishes that adults learn best when orientated toward problem-centered, task-centered, or life-centered activities. This means adults need (and want) to be exposed to specific new knowledge, skills, and attitudes applicable to real-life scenarios. In other words, abstract “learning for learning’s sake” is less likely to occur, although this may be in part due to the costs (financial and temporal) involved in pursuing more learning. A great deal of informal learning can occur these days by free recreational (down-time) browsing of informational videos on the Internet.
- **Motivation.** The five principles above play a role in motivation (usually conceived as a major factor). For example, “While adults are responsive to extrinsic motivation, they are most driven by internal pressure, motivation, and the desire for self-esteem

and goal attainment.” (Ozuah, 2016, p.84). Implementing the previous factors, when teaching adults, helps to motivate or demotivate adults.

Care must be taken when invoking motivation. For example, Tough (1967, cited in Ozuah, 2016) notes that *by nature*, all adults, under the right circumstances, are motivated to learn, grow, and develop. But how does one understand motivation (in terms of students) when social conditions like racism, colonization, or gendered discrimination preclude the “right circumstances” ever arising? Bello-Bravo et al. (2022) specifically include *social justice* as an indispensable part of participatory action by people (including education). It is always clear that learners who show up have some measure of motivation (whether intrinsic or extrinsic because the material is required for employment certification, a job criteria, and so on). This view of motivation fails to consider those who were similarly motivated but were unable to participate (either due to sheer difficulties of logistics or because historically discriminatory patterns in culture make participation prohibitively difficult).

In the present study, it is clear that participants faced enormous challenges (and actually suffered as a result of those challenges) to participate in the Club. This triumph of resiliency does not mean we should then think of those who could *not* make it as somehow not adequately motivated. Bearing this in mind is the care needed not to make motivation into a strictly psychological capacity or skill (in some people) lacking in others, especially when the “right circumstances” for participation may not exist. Or, putting this another way, if all adults, given the right circumstances, would be willing to participate, then why do our educational institutions not provide those right circumstances, especially as they already implicitly provide the right circumstance for mainstream learners?

Accordingly, in this study adult education benefits from intersecting with Funds of knowledge principles as a way to incorporate and recognize how marginalized student experiences and histories are valuable and relevant to learning. While both frameworks take a particular angle on supporting students' interests, needs, and motivations for successful learning, they differ in the predominantly psychological emphasis of the former compared to the social emphasis of the latter. This particular aspect affords a deeper look at the data. For example, while one can read "grit" and "determination" as participatory (motivational) traits in many of the participants, how do we understand or frame some of the participants who dropped out due to income and relationship problems. Is it truly accurate to say they "lacked" motivation or did the offering of the Club no longer meet their adult learning needs?

Feminist Theories

Along with andragogy and Funds of knowledge, it is further necessary to amplify the analytical lens of this study using feminist pedagogy frameworks. Although Knowles' framework highlights best practices for adult education, it does not adequately capture (if at all) what feminist pedagogy focuses on, i.e. "the nature of structured power relations and interlocking systems of oppression and privilege based on gender, race, class, age, and so on" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 77)—elements that are fundamental for considering the characteristics of the marginalized female population in this study. Feminist pedagogy positions women students as integral beings who act, think, and learn according to their life experiences and current conditions. As stated by Kramsch and Von Hoene (2001), feminist pedagogy focuses on the being and "appeals not only to the learner's mind and behaviors, but to a subject's emotions, body, and his or her social and political habitus" (p. 297). In specific, this is not necessarily (or not yet) a rejection of the dominant (hegemonic) lens for understanding reality and how it

educates but simply a refusal of those hegemonic premises as necessary (or the only relevant ones) for understanding reality and how it educates. More simply, one can look at the world of education not through the default (male-centered) lens but through another (woman-centered, other-centered, etc.) one. How does the world of education look when we take up this different lens? That is a fundamental project within feminist pedagogy.

For example, how does the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy (which does not directly affect males at all) change or shift when we take up a woman-centered understanding of the issue. Is it still the “problem” that hegemonic culture frames it as (generating policies that prohibit pregnant teenagers from attending public schools)? If so, in what way? If not, in what way? Why should pregnancy in school be a problem at all? What are the aspects of culture that frame it as a problem in the first place? How is it a problem for adult education, if at all? What about maternal support in education for women who have given birth? Why would not a provision of on-site childcare be considered or deemed unworkable? None of these questions arise (or arise only as “problems” in need of a solution) when learners are understood in gender-invisible terms. Funds of knowledge, moreover, incorporate these questions raised by feminist pedagogy) insofar as they specifically involve women’s strategies for functioning and wellbeing in the social world.

In the following subsections, I provide an overview of feminist positions that have influenced feminist pedagogy.

Literatures that refer to Feminist foundations are rather multifaceted, although some authors do review it in terms of waves of feminism, while others talk about positions, theories, and frameworks. Bucholtz (2014) in her definition of Feminism targets this complexity of the term:

Feminism: a diverse and sometimes conflicting set of theoretical, methodological, and political perspectives that have in common a commitment to understanding and challenging social inequalities related to gender and sexuality (p. 23)

Individual-Focused Feminist Theories. This group is divided in two: liberal and psychoanalytic feminism. According to Bucholtz (2014), these theories are characterized by ideologies that focus on women as individuals, rather than looking at them as part of a group. However, liberal feminism does look at women collectively and is concerned with how women can integrate groups and systems commonly formed by (or primarily occupied by) men. The way liberal feminists have done this is by fighting for rights and privileges men already have. In this sense, liberal feminism does not look to transform the already established societal structure but seeks to help women gain access to that structure and opportunities equal to men (Bucholtz, 2014). Liberal feminism is criticized for being concerned basically with issues that affect white middle-class women. Referred to as second-wave feminism, especially because it was a very prominent social movement (starting in the 1970s), it is often this form of feminism that has been most widely used or understood in public discourse and media (and less so in academia) (Bucholtz, 2014). One of the most important texts inspired by second-wave feminism was Betty Friedan's (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*. According to Grady (2018), Friedan's book addresses "the problem that has no name: the systemic sexism that taught women that their place was in the home and that if they were unhappy as housewives, it was only because they were broken and perverse" [online]. Although liberal or second-wave feminism fails to address all women, Bulchotz (2014, p. 25) notes that "scholarly research on gender continues to be directly or indirectly informed by broadly liberal feminist goals."

A second individualistic trend is psychoanalytic feminism and also comprised a part of the second-wave theory. It also views feminism through an individual lens; also, like liberal feminism, it has been criticized for focusing on the situations, issues, and context, in general, of white-middle class women.³ This branch of feminism deals with patriarchy and how, even women, unconsciously live by it and accommodate to male social norms. The most prominent study representative of this trend is *Womens' Way of Knowing* by Belenky et al. (1986) discussed in Chapter 1.

Structural Feminist Theories. This category includes Radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and Social feminism because they focus not on individuals as the unit of analysis but social structures that affect women, including patriarchy (Marxism-Social), capitalism (Marxist), class-based, and racial oppression (Social) (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Structural feminism views change as happening at a social, not individual, level; that is, what manifests as the individual is already rooted in and informed by the prevailing social order. Once again, the most obvious example of this insight is language. No individual invents language from scratch from birth; it is, rather, an inheritance from the prevailing social order at the time (including any advantageous or disadvantageous relations that arise for bilingual and multilingual speakers). It is this very language, as the basis for thought and the basis for self-description, that individuals use to understand the world and to communicate with other members of a society. Language above all is a materially produced, collective structure that we both inhabit and construct our sense of self from. Structuralist feminism thus acknowledges these roots of individualism; “who” one can be

³ Somewhat more precisely, what is meant by “white” in this context are specifically those ethnic groups that are now acknowledged as “white” (including Italians, Greeks, people of Jewish descent, and even the Irish, who were not originally deemed “white” in England or the English colonies that became the United States). Stated more strongly, this sense of “white” will recognize *any* ethnicity (even present-day immigrants from Africa) as *potentially* white—the two permanent exceptions being Native Americans and descendants of enslaved peoples (i.e., “African Americans”).

(one's self-definition) is completely dependent on the available matrix of ideas, concepts, and even vocabulary in a culture.

These structural theories also bring out “how power relations are reproduced by societal structures in the current system” (Tisdell, 1995, p. 60). Some studies using Marxist feminism in adult education have looked into ways adults do and do not make connections and relationships between consciousness and the real world (Carpenter & Mojab, 2011) or the creation of women-centered curriculums and methodologies (Blundell, 1992). Susan Brownmiller (1975) and Andrea Dworkin (1974) (cited in Bucholtz, 2014) are said to be the prominent theorists of second-wave radical feminism, arguing that “male sexualized violence against women is the very cornerstone of patriarchy, allowing men to maintain their dominant position over women” (Bucholtz, 2014, p. 30).

Post-Structural and Post-Modern Feminist Theories. These theories are contrasted with structural theories because they advocate for women's “individual capacity for agency” (Tisdell, 1995, p. 60). The theory uses Judith Butler's (1989, 1990) notion that “gender and sexuality are brought into being through the repeated discursive enactment of cultural norms” (qtd. in Bucholtz, 2014, p. 37); as such, these theories bring to the foreground how ‘selves’ arise from the material conditions and concepts of a society and are then enacted in the public sphere. These theories do take a personal turn because they emphasize how persons can affect their lives and its trajectory despite the social conditions of oppression they may be part of. Furthermore, post-structuralist feminists believe in women's capacities to change the system by resisting it and creating their own lives. Post-structural feminism also acknowledges power dynamics (e.g., extending ideas of men having more privilege than women still further). For example, they also highlight white *women* have more privilege than black women (and other racial minorities), even

as women are less privileged than men. In this light, post structuralism would acknowledge that day-time high school students in Costa Rica are more privileged than Night High School students that *urban* high school students are more privileged than *rural* high school students.

Two of the most distinguished scholars to have made significant contributions to this line of feminism are bell hooks (2000) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). In general, poststructuralists deal with systems of oppression that have to do with gender, class, and sexual orientation. In this sense, the term intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 80's, highlights how oppressive forms can intersect (Grady, 2018); perspectives drawing on this term are used nowadays as a platform for all types of feminisms (McKibbin et al., 2015). As stated in *Politics and Gender* (2007, cited in McKibbin et al., 2015, p. 238) "viewing gender as a stand-alone factor necessarily distorts reality." McKibbin et al. (2015) agree that gender issues are most likely to be affected by other life categories like social class, education and cultural background.

It is important to highlight that some forms of social feminism have also been considered from the post structuralists' point of view, for example, black feminism, queer feminism, and multicultural feminism. "Post structural/post- modern feminism attempts to examine the intersections of many forms of oppression and privilege, particularly in regard to how women construct 'truth.' There is no truth, but each person's 'truth' is relative and contextually dependent on these cultural and social factors" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 62). Accordingly, this study examines how my participants' "truths" intersect with possible forms of oppression and privilege they are most likely victims of and how these conditions reflect their funds of knowledge and influence their process of learning.

Feminist Pedagogy

Tisdell's framework focuses on a specific area of feminism called feminist pedagogy. Authors like Hayes (1989, cited in Tisdell, 1995) support calls for feminist pedagogy by noting how traditional curricula do not meet the needs of all women generally (and the specific needs of some women specifically). Secondly, there is also indeed a need for educational models to address these needs. "Rather than organizing instruction around a fully pre-determined curriculum, [feminist pedagogies] advocate for instruction organized around daily experiences and needs of the students, acknowledging the students' complex and gendered realities and multilingual lives" (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 55).

More recently, a focus among scholars has been to study gender through feminist post-structuralist principles (Norton & Toohey, 2004). However, authors like Rind (2015) and Saidi and Al-Mahrooqi (2012), who have studied the influence of gender in EFL contexts, have confirmed that women's education has not been the center of educational scholarship. This gap in the literature raises a red flag as it is more than demonstrated that women experience marginalization and discrimination generally (and in education specifically), which had led to more disadvantageous life conditions. This lack of focus on women's education is a problem in need of redress.

Indeed, one of the main reasons for the appearance of feminism (from its earlier efforts in the eighteenth century) were the evident inequalities of the rights and privileges women had compared to men. In principle, then, if women's academic needs are met, then this will better guarantee, or at least raise the opportunities for, positive change in women's lived experiences, along with triggering social change (Tisdell, 1995). Feminist pedagogy specifically emphasizes teaching women more effectively as it offers women resources for feeling empowered to make

those life-changes (individually and collectively) (Tisdell, 1995). Luke and Gore (1992, p. 7) (cited in Norton & Toohey, 2004) insist that “single-strategy pedagogies of empowerment, emancipation, and liberation” are impossible; rather, they call out the need to challenge current assumptions, to promote everyday problem solving activities, and motivate students to examine their options, choices, decisions, behaviors, and hopefully these practices will develop into more critical agency (Kramsch & Von Hoene, 2001).

Feminist pedagogy is inspired by different feminist positions; however, according to Tisdell (1995), four themes regularly appear in feminist pedagogy literature. Below is a synthesis of these themes, according to Tisdell (1995).

1. **How knowledge is constructed** examines the political and social mechanisms that influence the knowledge construction of students. It looks to understand and bring to the table why contributions from marginalized group representatives are often silenced or ignored. It also looks to help students learn content critically, “students become familiar with a body of knowledge and reflect on their own life experience and how they are positioned in relationship to society and to other participants in the classroom.” (Tisdell, 1995, p. 74)
2. **Voice** is the ability to verbalize one’s beliefs and ability to see oneself as a constructor of knowledge. Voice implicates when and where students feel more secure voicing their thoughts and opinions. *Personal empowerment* can be developed in safe spaces of only women or where women experiences are privileged. But voice also is about *giving students the tool to speak in unsafe spaces*, where they need to be heard. Voice also helps in the construction of relationships among peers and with the teacher. Better relationships grow when students feel they are respected for their ability to think; this also stimulates

their learning. Additionally, voice is given by validating the forms of knowledge of people like them. This can be done by including authors, pictures and stories of these people in the curriculum, and by promoting active participation where students are able to tell about themselves and the experiences they have lived.

3. **Authority:** There are two sides to how authority is seen. First, teachers can share authority with the students. But, it is also accepted “that teachers be proactive in confronting unequal power relations” (hooks, 1989, p. 71 in Tisdell, 1995) This is more common in diverse communities where marked differences in gender, race, class, and education level are evident.
4. **Intersectionality** is what Tisdell refers to as “how to deal with difference (particularly based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, physical and mental ability, or sexual orientation)” (Tisdell, 1995, p. 71). In feminist pedagogy (and very differently from adult education theories generally), differences and similarities among women become apparent. Dealing with these differences requires understanding how gender intersects with race and class and how this may affect students’ learning experiences.

Situating the Present Study

Based on the foregoing literature review, it can be concluded that studies focusing on understanding students’ funds of knowledge is a both useful research lens for this study and a way to promote better learner outcomes (by integrating and celebrating marginalized communities’ resources and integrating students’ previous experiences into the curriculum as academic content). The theories viewed above challenge mainstream curricula to respond to these communities’ needs and to value underrepresented students’ cultural and historical capital. Similarly, it is the intention of this study to identify the funds of knowledge resources that

women students in a Costa Rican night high school draw upon when learning English as a foreign language.

Adult education theoretical principles have served for decades as a foundation for understanding how adults learn. Nevertheless, their beginnings also exposed that the principles were based on the non-inclusive particularities of the adults sampled. In a world where equality and justice should be at the foreground of educational environments, andragogy is in need of an amplification to intersectionally take account of adult education generally. Similarly, a feminist analysis and pedagogy help to further refine that amplification, as the present study aims to show.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODS

This chapter describes the premises and Methods used in this study. As human subjects-approved qualitative research, consent was obtained from all participants, and their privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study by masking (anonymization) and not allowing anyone else access to the masked data (except for code verification, described below). Participants were 20 purposively sampled women ranging in age from 18-40 years old who attended El Cerro (name anonymized to protect the participants' identity and maintain their privacy) night high school in Costa Rica; and who participated in the El Capullo English Language Club (The Club) directed by the researcher of this dissertation and her advisor.

Data collection primarily consisted of two four-week periods, amplified by further, less structured data collection for over a year. In-depth, 45-90 minute semi-structured interviews were conducted, as well as digital conversations and Photovoice projects to explore the two research questions: (1) what are the funds of knowledge that underrepresented women students of night high schools use, and (2) how do the uses of these resources reflect coping and learning strategies? All data collected (during the two four-week periods, and the subsequent interactions over the course of a year) were formally coded and revisited in light of the emerging codes and themes (described below).

Data analysis followed Wolcott (1994), i.e., collected data was coded, analyzed, and interpreted to bring out major themes related to underrepresented women's coping and learning experiences in the specific site of a Costa Rican night high school. The qualitative techniques of peer review, code replication, thick description, and triangulation were used to enhance the validity of the coding, analysis, and interpretation. Findings are summarized in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5.

Research Design

Originally approved as an ethnography, this study has evolved to an ethnographic case study. However, no explicit line or consensus to distinguish the qualitative approaches of ethnography and case study exists (Suryani, 2008). One “solution” to this ambiguity is to collapse the distinction; hence, Stenhouse (1985) maintained that “ethnographic” is one of the four types of case study. These would be case studies that utilize the techniques of ethnography to study individual cases.

This study meets such criteria, especially for the unusually long extent of data collection, the extended relationships of interactivity between the researcher and the participants, and the inclusion of data collection more resonant with direct observation not explicitly reducible to formal interview settings (Schaeffer, 2004). While the most distinguishing characteristic of classical ethnography is likely on-site observation (i.e., data collected outside of a classically formal “sit down” interview) (Schaeffer, 2004), a main goal of ethnography is to explicitly examine and provide an explanation for the cultural “background” out of which any observed behavior or participant explanations arise. Case studies do not necessarily aim for this thorough explanation of the cultural background and group behavior (Suryani, 2008). However, bringing this cultural “background” into the foreground is especially needed for contextualizing case study generally, especially when it is embedded within, or attempts to resist hegemonic cultural norms and the injustices they generate (Annamma et al., 2017). It is an explicit goal of this dissertation to disclose the experiences, strategies, and coping mechanisms of underrepresented, marginalized, or stigmatized women pursuing additional education at a night high school in Costa Rica.

For that reason, following the advice of the great educational anthropologist, Harry F. Wolcott, I see this study as “following the footsteps” of the early ethnographers. In this study, I tell the story of my students by writing about facts of their life while staying authentic to their words. I give space and voice to the women of this study, with whom I shared time and got to know within their local contexts. I used “thick description” to describe their values, behaviors, beliefs, and language; I rely on verbatim quotations throughout the development of this writing to demonstrate my participants’ realities (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Fetterman, 2010). These techniques are consistent with case study, ethnography, and ethnographic case study (Annamma et al., 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Stenhouse, 1985).

However, Fetterman (1989) (cited in Yin, 1994) warns against conflating ethnographies and case studies, although no consensus has yet emerged since Fetterman (1989) wrote to explicitly distinguish the two (Suryani, 2008). Disagreement often turns on a particular emphasis in a given study. For example, in the present study, I did not focus on a central phenomenon per se but sought to describe the space or site of a culture-sharing group that existed before I became interested in it. If case study requires a central phenomenon (Stake, 2005), then one could construe this dissertation as focusing on the central phenomenon of the experiences and coping and learning resources among underrepresented women in a Costa Rican night high school; in contrast, as an ethnography, the goal is to describe, understand, and foreground the cultural background (of underrepresented women’s learning and coping experiences) as it informs the daily-experienced realities of women in the specific space or site (both “on the ground” and virtually). It was for the sake of the latter that this dissertation’s original proposal was approved as ethnography. However, more importantly (and not inconsistently with some framings of case

studies), the research also developed organically as my interest in learning about this group of women increased through getting to know them over a long period of time in The Club.

According to Bhatti (2017), “Ethnographic research is created through a researcher’s immersion in the field, which is dependent on building and maintaining trusting relationships with research participants” (p. 86). Similarly, Fetterman (2010) confirms that the researcher aims to describe what is happening by being a storyteller and a scientist. The closer the researcher comes to participants’ ideas, perceptions, and points of view, “the better the story and the better the science” (p. 2). This study offers accounts from an insider perspective; that is, both as someone sharing membership in the community in which the participants exists but also as one of the teachers of the Club, the participants and I built a relationship based on trust, honesty, support, and true friendship.

Positionality

Fetterman (2010) also states that classical ethnography may require from six to twenty-four months in the field, as allowing researchers enough time to explore and make sense of cultures foreign to them. Such extended time periods are not necessary when work is conducted in a non-foreign culture to a researcher. Moreover, it is desirable that researchers have the opportunity to be onsite for some time, then step back to make sense of what was observed and recorded, and return again to look for more data with the added clarity of distance. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to be on site for two periods of four weeks each time. Going back and forth allowed me “to create a presence,” which afforded me the construction of significant relationships and insider status despite the distance when I left the field.

Furthermore, echoing Fetterman (2010), I am studying my own culture, town, and part of my students’ community. I have lived in El Cerro for over twenty years, and even before I

moved to this place permanently, as the daughter of a Cerreño (a native of El Cerro), during my childhood, it was a family tradition to spend weekends and summer vacations visiting family and friends in the town. It was easy for me to understand and relate to the places participants talked about, the activities they developed, and the cultural practices they followed. This was not necessarily because I had done the same as them or vice versa, but having a deep familiarity with what they were referring to experientially allowed me to ask questions and share my own experiences, which led to them sharing more with me.

Furthermore, my second job as an English teacher was in El Cerro night high school, the same institution my students attend. I worked there for 11 wonderful years. Again, this permitted the students to see in me a person who could relate to their realities and possibly understand what they go through. They could talk about school, teachers, routines, and schedules, and it was easy for me to understand what they were talking about. This insider knowledge helped our subsequent long-distance and online communications much easier as I was very familiar with what they said. Our everyday conversations were sometimes in person but often occurred through video chat and WhatsApp that allowed forming tight, close relationships to the point that participants referred to me as a friend, or as they call me, “profe, amiga.” (professor, friend) Although in the beginning our conversations related to topics about the Club, little by little, our chats became more informal and personal. Until this day, I talk regularly to my respondents like old friends.

Quality of Data

All this data has developed a deeper understanding of my participants’ lives as I continued to follow a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. Bhatti (2017) justifies this by saying that “what might have seemed simplistic, hazy or inexplicable at first sight,

becomes complex and multilayered during detailed observations, interviews, and data analysis.” (p. 86). In other words, the conversations with my students have moved from informal and casual daily dialogues to meaningful and relevant through my research process.

Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2012) state that ethnographers “investigate the cultural landscape, the larger picture of how a culture functions: its rituals, its rules, its traditions, and its behaviors” (p. 3) and that these activities will lead to the discovery of a “culture’s way of being, knowing and understanding” (Stone & Chiseri-Strater, 2012, p. 3). This again is that foregrounding of the cultural background (Annamma et al., 2017). In this sense, I was able to “establish a presence” based on my previous experience in the community, my daily communications, and my skills and strengths to create meaningful relationships (Wolcott, 2008, pp. 45, 65-67).

Qualitative research requires “thick descriptions,” according to Geertz (1973) , “Thick description” interprets the social elements within the context; it attempts to describe what the persons involved are thinking and what their intentions are when acting. It also considers cultural features, background, and societal settings present in the social act (Ponterotto, 2006, pp. 7-8). Writing “thick descriptions” requires the researcher to engage in consistent deep conversations and moments of reflection about what the participants are doing, saying, and what they say they are thinking. For this, I kept a log of thoughts and reflections about what was happening, what called my attention, and what made my body react – in tears, laughter, impotence, and admiration. For example, two of my journal entries are reproduced on the next page:

Wolcott (2008) established that an ethnographic question that could work in any setting

August 13, 2019

Notes on Students Lives

I have been asking students different questions in order to get them to come up with a topic for their photovoice project. The main theme is "My journey as a student." The girls have been lost and they don't really know what to do, or how to go about this theme. Because of this, I decided to do some kind of interview with each of them so we could think about things they are not aware of. They see their lives as ordinary but I have tried to make them realize they are not ordinary but rather brave, strong, courageous, etc. My questions have gone along these lines:

Why do you study?
Why do you study at the night school?
What made you decide to study again after so many years?
Go back to the moment when you made that final decision of registering in the night school?
Why are you an excellent student? Why do you worry about getting good grades? What makes you come to school every day? Why do you come to school every day? Even when it's raining so hard and you just got back from work?

Beatriz

Beatriz is Laurisa's daughter, the day Beatriz told her story, her mom was late to class because she was working. Beatriz said her picture had to be about her being alone, she was going to ask her friend to take it and that she had to look very lonely. She said she has felt alone all her life, since she was in first grade and she would go to school by bus and come home with her brother. Her brother would hang out with his friends and leave her alone all day, sometimes she wouldn't even see her parents only in the morning, they would be sleeping because they had gotten back late from work and they would still be sleeping when she got up to go to school. Beatriz remembers she was happy about her parents divorce. They fought a lot and her father hit her mother. Beatriz is now XX years old. She says she doesn't have many friends and doesn't want to have a boyfriend. Her brother reminds her of her dad, he sometimes hits her too. Her mother is better now, she spends more time with her now. "Las cosas no son como las cuenta mi mama (I don't know what she means by this), pero a mi no me gusta que mi mama sale los fines de semana y toma mucho, llega tarde y yo estoy sola.

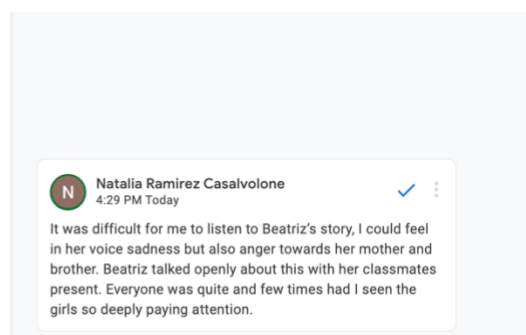


Figure 3.1: Sample Journal Entries

would be, "What do people have to know in this setting and do to make this system work?" (p. 74). Precisely, my research questions explore this type of generic ethnographic question, as I sought to find out what my students know, do, and rely on to move forward in their studies and academic achievements in their lives in general.

Research Questions

My initial research questions transformed, changed, and were refined throughout the development of this dissertation. The changes resulted from multiple conversations with my advisor, committee, participants, colleagues, and friends. They patiently listened to my thoughts, ideas, inquiries, and train thoughts; these people were fundamental for guiding my eyes towards frameworks that could support my interests and form a solid ground for my research. Ultimately, the following questions emerged to help best direct my research and answer my interests.

1. What are the funds of Knowledge that underrepresented women learners draw on at a night high school in Costa Rica?
2. How do the uses of these resources reflect their coping and learning strategies?

Participants

The students of The Club were 20 women, ranging in age from 18-40 years old, from under-represented groups attending a night high school in Costa Rica (name anonymized to protect the participants' identity and maintain their privacy). For this study in particular, from these 20 students I did purposive sampling to recruit participants. "Purposive sampling is intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon" (Robinson, 2014, p. 5243); they are representative of people who interact within a given space (Creswell, 2014). Inclusion criteria for participation were: (1) adult women, age 18+, (2) attending the night high school, (3) known for their academic excellence, and (4) involved and with regular participation in The Club.

All participants of the Club were informed about the study's purpose, goals, and privacy considerations. All students agreed to participate and written consent was obtained consistent with this study's IRB prior to starting data collection.

Summary of The Club Participants' Demographics

One-third of the participants are single mothers from low-income households. Most of the participants work during the day or have to take care of their families and can only attend school at night. Eighteen students have informal jobs as vegetable vendors, house cleaners, waitresses, cooks, coffee pickers, factory workers, operators, and dental assistants. Students' earnings are between \$2 and \$3 per hour, and they work between 8 and 12 hours per day. Some complete these hours during late night shifts or very early shifts. Per month, their earnings are

around up to approximately \$305, while the medium income for Costa Ricans is around \$750. Even though it is illegal for patrons to have uninsured workers, all students except one are not insured.

When the Club was in progress, five students dropped out of high school but continued attending the Club and finished it successfully. Thirteen students finished the academic year with straight As, and five were given awards for academic excellence. Seven students were class presidents. Furthermore, two students were in their senior year and graduated at the end of the school year. One of them is currently attending a public university and enrolled in an English teaching major. The other student was not admitted to any public university and is currently working full time in a family business making handbags, and more recently, face masks. Nevertheless, a few months before turning in this dissertation, I had a long conversation with this student. She let me know she is now studying International Relations at the top public university in Costa Rica.

Two of the students are illegal Nicaraguan immigrants, and one of the students, a single mother, was in the process of collecting money to pay registration for the citizenship test. I was later told she had obtained Costa Rican citizenship. Most of the participants are natives of El Cerro, but others have migrated from even more rural areas of the country, like San Carlos, Perez Zeledon, and Los Chiles. Because El Cerro is a town that depends mainly on coffee production, it is an attractive area for people looking for a job in agriculture and coffee picking. Also, its strategic location, only 45 km from the capital of the country, San Jose, offers additional opportunities for people who live in the underdeveloped areas of the country.

Data Sources and Collection

Data collection consisted formally of eight semi-structured interviews conducted after the culmination of the one year long Club, archived WhatsApp conversations, and Photovoice projects developed with participants spanning more than two years (from 2018 to 2021) in the Club. In 2022, a ninth interview was conducted.

Wolcott (2008) highlights two significant fieldwork components: inquiring (interviewing) and experiencing (observing) (p. 73). For this study, inquiring took the form of formally conducting eight semi-structured interviews with participants, mostly in Spanish, then transcribed verbatim, and member-checked with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Translation into English for presenting the data of this study was done by the researcher.

Under the category of experiencing, I also engaged in hundreds of informal (casual) conversations with participants as well. Wolcott (2008) includes casual conversation as an important form of data collection; he states that it is at “the head of the list to underscore its importance not only as a source of information but in recognition of the everyday nature of fieldwork itself” (p. 55). Such casual conversations were either documented in field-notes or captured (in electronic form) from media platforms where they originated. These formally included artifacts from WhatsApp conversations and participants’ Photovoice projects. All of these further expanded, supported, and triangulated information collected through the interviews and conversations.

Semi-Structured Interviews and Casual Conversations

Judgmental sampling (Fetterman, 2010) was used to select the eight of 20 participants to interview. This involves choosing the most articulate and vocal participants (Fetterman, 2010)

best able to address a study's research questions; in this study, the resources participants used to learn and cope with their life situations as underrepresented women at high school.

This judgmental sample was preceded by preliminary fieldwork to get to know the cultural group better, while aiming to identify possible themes and patterns among the group. The original intention to interview eight participants in person (in Costa Rica) was scuttled by travel restrictions due to COVID19. Consequently, the interviews were conducted remotely, using the Zoom platform during Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021; an additional interview was conducted in 2022.

Importantly, besides the global factor of COVID19's impacts on the face-to-face interviewing schedule, technological and life issues also intruded. In three instances, thunderstorms interrupted the power so that the Internet connection broke off. In two instances, students reported being offered last minute opportunities to earn some extra money (e.g., babysitting or attending a pulperia, "mini-market") and cancelled their scheduled interviews. On two occasions, participants were unable to connect at the agreed time due to poor Internet connections.

Because data plan costs can be exorbitant and limit participation generally (Bello-Bravo, Brooks, et al., 2021; Rotondi et al., 2020), I had already wired all interviewees ~5,000 colones (USD8) to cover any extra data usage, but this could not forestall bad Internet connections or guarantee high-speed data connections. Despite a growing body of research on good practices for remote interviewing in light of COVID19 (Joshi et al., 2020), the kind of technological, infrastructural, and social challenges seen in this dissertation put at test the assumed applicability of digital means for conducting transnational research with low-/middle-income countries like Costa Rica (Bello-Bravo et al., 2022). These issues made establishing channels for remote

interviewing a challenge in the first place. Consistent with the research (Bello-Bravo et al., 2021), all interviewees used their personal mobile phones.

Initially, I planned two interviews per interviewee and divided the interview protocol into two parts (Appendix A). Following Carspecken (1996), I constructed and followed semi-structured interview protocols in order to study the participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. I approached interviewing in terms of *interviewer responses* (Carspecken, 1996), *which is when* the interviewer spends "most of her time responding to things said by her subjects rather than asking questions" (Carspecken, 1996, p. 155).

Carspecken (1996) also notes that interview protocols should allow maximum flexibility; this is achieved by preparing lead-off questions. "Lead-off questions are designed to open up a topic domain that one wishes a subject to address" (Carspecken, 1996, p.156). For this study, lead-off questions intended to develop the topic domain of daily life, routines, and events. Some of these were:

1. Could you describe what a typical day looks like for you? What goes on before you head off to school? When do you study? Do homework?
2. Why do you study? What do you do to be an excellent student?

Through these questions, I sought to evoke in the participant a remembered, concrete lived event. They aimed at guiding the participant toward describing their daily experiences as students, women, mothers, and wives. They intended to prompt participants to reflect on their learning process by connecting what they value in life (maybe family and relationships) and education.

Carspecken (1996) also suggests moving from the general toward more specific topics, like life priorities, family life, routines, economics, social and cultural challenges, aspirations,

goals, objectives, jobs, and child raising. These last elements are what Carspecken (1996) calls covert categories; they are matters that the interviewer wishes the participant to talk about “but that you (the researcher) do not want to ask explicitly about because that could lead the interview too much” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 157). Continuing with elements of ethnographic research, the sole intention of these questions were to maintain an environment that would open a space for the participants to speak to their experiences, the structures of feelings in their lived experiences.

Accordingly, Part 1 of the interview protocol focused on personal and biographical information (family, relationships, jobs, hobbies, etc.), their lives as women students of El Cerro Night High School, and their engagement and knowledge of the English language. Part 2 would reflect on their experiences in the Club. However, for the majority of the interviews, doing both Parts 1 and 2 in a single session emerged as a practice. This was in part due to the rapport I had established with participants; they expressed eagerness to immediately extend Part 1 of the interview into Part 2; however, it also made sense to take advantage of the good Internet conditions at the time and complete both parts. For the ninth interview in 2022, the two-part protocol was modified in the following ways. At the beginning of 2022, Vicky reached out to me to ask for advice about charging for English tutoring lessons. As we caught up, I realized this was another opportunity for a follow-up interview, and Vicky agreed. As stated before, I conducted the interview in two sessions (like the original interview) but modified the protocol in light of the considerable time that had passed since the Club had ended. As such, Part 1 of the interview addressed personal and biographical developments since participating in the study, but was prefaced with reminiscing and sharing pictures of the times we were in the Club together, as well as all of the assignments Vicky had done. This exemplified the presence of the relationship developed over the course of a study.

Table 1: Interview Minutes and Dates

Participant	Audio	Transcript	Date
Guiselle	#1: 1hr, 14 min	13 pages, 6236 words	10-Nov-20
Guiselle	#2: 1 hr, 1 min	15 pages, 7356 words	19-Apr-21
Jacky	1 hr, 18 min	22 pages, 11 769 words	13-Sep-21
Lauriza	58 min	12 pages, 5 875 words	22-Apr-21
Nancy	1 hr, 17 min	22 pages, 10 885 words	23-Apr-21
Nidia	50:58 min	12 pages, 5340 words	20-Nov-20
Silvia	35 min	10 pages, 4324 words	23-Jun-20
Yessenia	1 hr, 10 min	22 pages, 9923 words	29-Apr-21
Vicky	#1 1 hr.	15 pages, 7069 words	21-Jan-22
Vicky	#2 28 min	9 pages, 4534 words	23-Jan-22

Besides recording the interviews, I also took notes, which became items for coding, and points for follow-up (member-checking) with participants to ensure that the data accurately captured each participants' perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The rapport I had established with interviewees made this member-checking often a casual conversation (Wolcott, 2008) itself, and thus another source of data. These moments would move beyond the basic goal of member-checking—asking interviewees, “Is this information correct as recorded”—and into territory that sometimes opened up new potential themes for coding. This particular degree of exploratory interactivity outside of formal interview settings resonates with extended case study (Burawoy, 2009).

WhatsApp Conversations

During the time that the Club took place (2018-2019), the digital WhatsApp platform was my primary means of communication with participants. *WhatsApp* is a social media communication app that allows for texting, sharing files, videos, audios, and recording of audios and videos; it is the most widely used such platform globally, in part because it is usable on the most widely used digital access device globally, mobile cell phones (Bello-Bravo et al., 2021). Using our WhatsApp group, I would give out information about weekly assignments and other activities planned for the Club, including guest visiting teachers and field trips. This group chat was used for participants to communicate with other participants as well (about assignments, and to comment on and discuss situations at their school or personal lives). Although the Club is officially disbanded, this WhatsApp group remains active among the participants and myself.

All chat interactions were logged, as well as individual chats from when students reached out to me for non-public conversations. (Consent to use these non-public chats in the study data was confirmed.) These conversations supported and expanded the information collected through interviews and observations. In total, I collected: 159 pages, 70,597 words worth of conversations downloaded from the WhatsApp app and transferred into a word document.

Photovoice Projects

Photovoice is a method used to reflect participant realities through a photo. It reflects the insight that there is a story told and untold in every picture. In the Photovoice assignments, participants decided on a general theme (family, grades, friends, pregnancy, poverty, bad habits, fear, courage, stress, impotence, success) that exemplified their paths as students. They then took a photograph (mostly using their cell phones) that metaphorically represented the theme. Inspired by their photograph, they were asked to reflect, analyze, and tell their story. The project

culminated in a public presentation made at a large regional museum near the school. In all, 14 Photovoice assignments were collected, consisting of a photograph and a descriptive or narrative paragraph ranging from 100-400 words each.

As the name suggests, the advocated use of *photography* specifically seems not to have conceptualized or realized that mobile phones could be used for photography; that is, the developers of Photovoice do not mention these devices in their early formulations of the technique (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 1998). Clearly, the advent of cameras in cell phones has changed this, but cell phones were the most widely used digital access type in less developed parts of the world *before* more developed parts (Bello-Bravo et al., 2021). This is not to dispute the validity or utility of Photovoice, or that practitioners have yet to leverage mobile phones for projects. It is simply another reminder (like the reminder that international research cannot simply assume that participants will be able to easily and conveniently log in to remote digital access points) that assumptions about the availability of certain technologies (like traditional cameras) may be out of the reach of those who could benefit from a qualitative practice. In the present study, all participants who did Photovoice assignments used mobile phones (personally owned or borrowed) to complete those projects.

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity

As required for ethical (IRB-approved) research and as recommended by Miles et al. (2014), to maintain privacy of the data collected, I kept all files, digital documents, and artifacts secured on a password-protected cloud folder; physical artifacts were kept in a locked drawer at the researcher's home.

Across all of the data, identifying information was masked (or erased when sharing data to co-code). Whenever possible, physical artifacts were also digitalized and password protected.

To ensure confidentiality, I informed my participants in written and oral form what I planned to do with the collected data and secured their signed informed consent; I re-confirmed permission to record interviews at the beginning of each interview. I used pseudonyms not only for direct participants but also indirect participants (e.g., people participants mentioned during interviews), as well as places, buildings, and any other type of location. I also obtained written permission from my students to use their Photovoice projects for the purpose of this research. In the Findings themselves, I utilize images that have no identifying information (Miles et al., 2014).

Data Analysis and Representation of the Findings

This study aimed to understand the Funds of Knowledge that underrepresented women learners draw on at a night high school in Costa Rica as resources in their daily lives, and how participants used these resources to support their learning process and to cope. For my data analysis and presentation of findings, I followed Wolcott's (1994) D-A-I Formula of description (D), analysis (A), and interpretation (I), as follows:

Description

In the first part of my Findings (in following chapters), I offer a story-like narration of what I have seen. In a straightforward manner, I describe the setting and events that surround the study. Wolcott (1994, cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 204) states that the description should be with “no footnotes, no intrusive analysis—just facts, carefully presented and interestingly related at an appropriate level of detail.” Wolcott (1994) states that description requires the researcher to be intuitive, judgmental, and keen on what to describe, but the same has to be done when deciding what not to include.

This is not the first level of data analysis ultimately, but this first description as it arises out of the data serves as a foundation for what the analysis and interpretation encompassed. This

description may focus on critical events or develop into a plot and main characters. It is listed first as a guiding goal toward the overall data analysis process generally.

To develop this description, I chose to create a story about the events of two activities I developed with the participants: 1. A Photovoice practice class session, 2. The graduation exposition at Moncho’s Regional Museum. I chose these activities because as I analyzed the whole body of collected data, I noticed that what happened during these activities brought out the key themes in my participants’ life stories, how their lives evolved around El Cerro community

Source	Quotes in Spanish	Quotes English Translation	Story-like narration	
Nancy	porque me ha estado ganando. Pero es que, seamos sinceros, ya 5000 no rinden			86-90
Interview Nancy	Eso es por temporada y no hablan. Contrata por temporada por temporada alta. Entonces, cuando empieza 1 empieza a cumplir los dos meses, los 3 meses ya empiezan a despedir. Sí, De hecho, la plata que tenía guardada fue la liquidación y no hablan, ajá. Pero, y de ahí ya tenía rato de tener la idea, y pero ya apretaron. Y es que profesaran está fea, fea, fea. Imagínes que están pensando celebrar otra vez los fines de semana lo que son tiendas y lo que no es necesario sea solo dejar abierto, derrotista. Y ya la volvieron las restricciones. Entonces, entre menos más es cero. Extinciones menos trabajo ahí, declaró.		X	194-200
Interview Nancy	Está lo más grande. Venga, para que la profe lo vea. Venga, se acuerda de la profe con la que fue al cerro? Profe: Jose, para verlo... Natalia: Vení, no sea rogado. Profe: Le da vergüenza, saludeme. Natalia: Vea a la profe (mientras le da vuelta a la cámara), vea allá va en carrera. Profe: Tan tímido como la mamá. Natalia: ah sí... sobre todo. Tan tímido como el día que lo llevé al cerro y lo anduvo de la mano todo el rato. Hasta a la mamá dejó abandonada para irse para arriba. Se acuerda? Profe: Si claro.		X	243-248
	[Talking to her son] Venga amor. que lo tengo. Veni inicio. va ce le van			

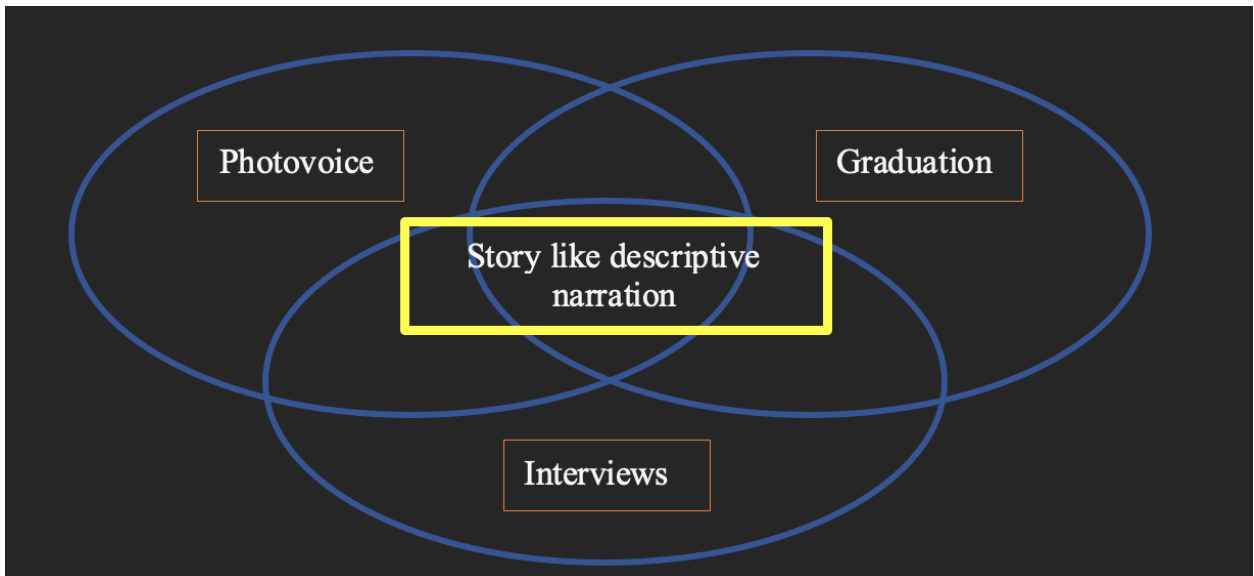


Figure 3.2: Emergence of story-like narration codes and El Cerro Night High School, and the ways that addressed the research questions. In

preparation for writing this description, when coding the data, I had a title that said “story-like narration” (see Figure 3.2) such that every time as I read through when something stood out to help me describe the culture of my group of participants, I would mark it (as depicted above). Through multiple iterations of the data, this yielded a pattern of story-like narration through triangulated events.

Analysis

Analysis involved looking for “patterns or topics that signify how the cultural group works and lives” and learns (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 94). To do this, I used a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I started by organizing and further familiarizing myself with the data I had collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2012) state that it is not enough to look at the information once. Multiple reviews will give rise to new interpretations that offer a deeper understanding of the situation. These authors explain that a deep process of reflection goes on within the researcher’s mind as they get to know the data and analyze it. The authors state that “reflecting, as we [the authors] see it, is a skill with which most people need a particular practice and strategies. To reflect is to think about your own thinking, to monitor the evidence of your mind’s work.” All in all, it is a practice that responds to what Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2012, p. 99) call metacognitive work or “thinking about thinking.”

In order to engage in this *familiarizing myself with my data* process, I supplied it an initial meaning (Saldaña, 2013), informed by Carspecken’s (1996) guide on creating “thick observation notes” (p. 45). Using a word processor, I observed (Carspecken, 1996, p. 47) in my written data the following:

- *Speech acts, body movements, body postures*, emojis, and other non-verbal ways of expression. Emojis, gifs, and stickers on social media have become an additional way people use to express themselves. Participants used these frequently in their WhatsApp conversations. When I thought they were used with a meaning significant to the study, I signaled it and commented with my interpretations. (check the example below).
- I added *Low-inference vocabulary* to suggest possible explanations for normative or subjective inferences. I used phrases such as “as if,” “it appears to be,” and “it seems like.”
- I used observer comments [OC] to insert speculations about the meaning of what is happening.

My first contact with data analysis looked like this:

131 Jacky: Siempre hay que buscar como lo que uno puede hacer por esforzarse por lograr. La
 132 verdad porque no todo es fácil y no todo va a servir. El hecho de la Universidad, que no puede
 133 entrar el primer año. Entonces yo dije, el otro año me esfuerzo, y entré, porque ese mi futuro.
 134 Esto es lo que yo quiero. Entonces yo me acostaba, creo hasta las 3:00 AM. Estudiando para
 135 poder sacar una buena nota, ingresar a la Universidad. Di, qué sé yo, si yo tenía que ir a trabajar
 136 o así porque tenía que pagarme las cosas, porque sí que con lo que pasó a mi papá y todas
 137 estas cuestiones también, quizá me costaba un poco mi mamá mantenerme así, entonces yo
 138 busque trabajo y todo y vi cómo hacía para sustentar eso, verdad?
 139
 140 También me considero que soy como muy independiente, obviamente no, totalmente
 141 independiente, como que a mí no me van las cosas así, si yo tengo que irme, qué sé yo, voy en
 142 este caso para San José a estudiar y a mí eso no ve a matar porque sé que es algo bueno para
 143 mí, para mi carrera a una disciplina y todo. Yo sé que me tendría que alejar de mi familia
 144 y todo, pero a mí eso no me retiene. Siento que también soy muy libre y así.
 145
 146 ¿Muy bien, qué? Usted dice que se siente libre.
 147
 148 ¿Que que? Porque usted se siente libre, que la hace sentirse libre.
 149
 150 Diay que yo tengo la decisión y el derecho de hacer lo que yo literalmente quiera. o sea, yo
 151 puedo hacer lo que yo quiera y sé que yo lo puedo hacer. O sea, soy consciente de mi capacidad
 152 para hacerlo y de que no hay cosas como que me detengan.
 153
 154 Siento que hay cosas que se tienen que separar. No sé, yo, siempre soy libre en ese sentido de
 155 que yo, si yo me tendría que ir a donde sea, por mi futuro, por cosas que yo quiera lograr, yo lo
 156 voy a hacer. No lo pensaría 2 veces.
 157
 158 Natalia: ¿Y quién le enseñó a ser así?¿O porque usted cree que es así?
 159
 160 Jacky: Diría que mi papá me enseñó mucho. Mi mamá también y mi hermana mayor como son

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 Perseverance. I don't see them ever giving up. They keep going. It is not always easy but they just continue because it's there future

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 It seems they know what they want, so it is not always a matter of survival like many think, they have dreams and aspirations, and they think they can do it. They have that vision that makes them think they will be able to achieve. They know this because they have had people who have believed in them and have told them they can do it.

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 Discipline

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 Life circumstances: tragedies

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 October 30, 2021
 Jacky's dad committed suicided when we were just starting the club. He was an alcoholic and had depression. She does not talk much about this, but at the same time she refers to the situation with lots of peace of mind. She also speaks well about him, he supported her and motivated her to keep studying.

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 It would be important to ask them how they see themselves as independent women. I would say most of them see themselves this way. What does this mean?

Ramirez Casalvone, Natalia Eugenia
 Why not?

Figure 3.3: First step towards data interpretation. Sample A

Reviewing the data several times allowed me to reflect and even, at times, reconsider how I was interpreting what my students' said about specific topics. Also, this was a first step in thinking about what my codes would look like and how my codebook would take form (below).

Codebook_ Female Night High School FoK

THEMES	CODES	Inclusion	Exclusion	"Quotes"
Family Life	Family values	When they refer to words of wisdom/ situations that offer a life lesson from their family members.	N/A	<p>"My mom never had the chance to study, when we were young (participant and sisters) she registered in the CONET (an adult education program), she wanted to graduate high school, but she only made it to 8th grade, because she had to go get a job, we were three and all the expenses were being covered by dad and it was not enough, my oldest sister was in high school, and my other sister and I were in elementary school. Seeing all this effort from my parents has always driven me to study."</p> <p>After she talks about how her mother wanted to study, but never had the chance because she was sent to the city to study, she says: "I feel that knowing this has always been something that motivates me to move forward, knowing that my mom was never even given the opportunity to study and that, since she is giving me that opportunity, I have to take advantage of it."</p>
	Familism (term that may need to be defined in the lit review) (it a term that talks about how latinos put their family first and that this is not a positive value, I want to see it from a dfferent angle (putting family's needs before their own)	Refer to drastic decisions they have made in order to support their family, like looking for a job or dropping out of school.	When they talk about their roles as parents use motherhood, when they talk about their roles in their households use household roles. When they talk about others in their family making different	When they talk about their roles as parents use motherhood, when they talk about their roles in their households use household roles. When they talk about others in their family making different

Figure 3.4: Codebook Extract

The next step in my analysis was what Saldaña (2013) refers to as *first cycle coding*. Coding gives meaning to chunks of data (Miles et al., 2014). I did *deductive coding* (Miles et al., 2014), creating my codes as inspired by what I took as relevant and related to the research questions and my theoretical framework. Given the 12+ months of contact and data from participants, as I aimed to use the most meaningful information that could help me answer the research questions of this study, I appealed to *data condensation* (Miles et al., 2014).

At the beginning of this process, I also went through a heuristic process of code creating (Miles et al., 2014), meaning that I created codes and would later detect patterns arising from them, which I would then cluster into new codes. Before having a final version of my codebook, I had 70+ codes, with my last version distilled down to 37 codes. (See Figs. 3.5-3.6)

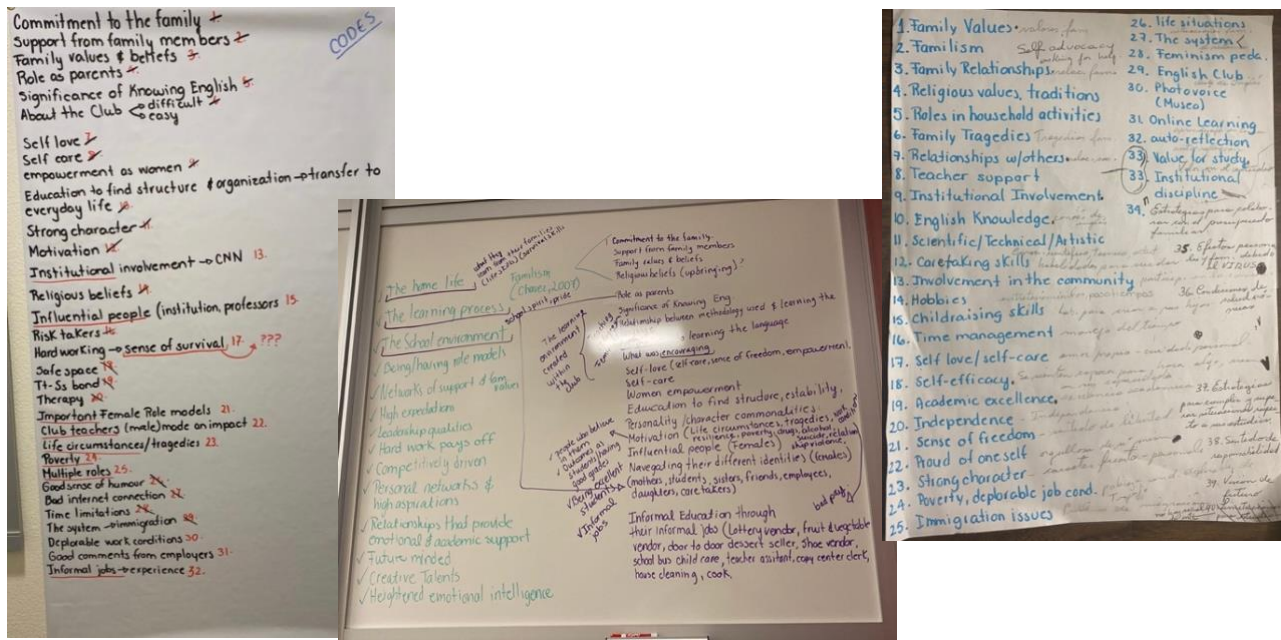


Figure 3.5: Coding Condensation Process

I used an Excel file for my coding process. I also came up with more codes and sub-codes (*inductive coding*) during my coding process. Sub-codes were added and directly inserted into the excel document during the coding process. I used subcodes to add specific meaning to a particular text extract. For example: under self-reflection, I sub-coded: personal growth, age, on better future, etc.

Following Miles et al. (2014, p. 74-76), I used *descriptive coding* "to summarize in a word or short phrase" the main topic of passage stated by my participants. I used *emotion coding* to identify participants' "perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions." Furthermore, I used *values coding* to highlight participants' "values, attitudes, and beliefs."

Figure 3.6: Coding in Excel file

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Coders Name	Data Source	Participant		Quotes in Spanish	Quotes English Translatio	Story-like narration	Line	Family Values	Familism	Family Relation ships	Religious Values, traditions,	Roles in Household activities	Family Tragedies	Relationship with others (asking for
NRC		Guiselle #2		Pero Alba tenía tiene esposo. No, no, no, ella sí estaba cuando eso con un muchacho, pero ya no. ¿Ellos se dejaron y luego ella tuvo un novio y después tu otro novio y ahora están esperando bebé, pero y esta con el muchacho, con el papá del bebé? Ajá, sí, ah bueno. Está apoyada por lo menos, sí, sí, sí, sí, sí.			234-237							
NRC		Guiselle #2		Si bien, gracias a Dios, ahí está, si Dios quiere y tenemos la fe que entre este mes a la UNED, porque Dani ganó el examen de la UCR, ajá, pero cuando concursó por camera el puntaje fue muy bajo para lo que ella quería. ¿Que quería medicina? Sí, igual para, digamos, porque nosotros decíamos, sino entre otra carrera o así, pero que malos puntajes quedaron muy altos y altos. Entonces el plan es que entre la UNED sacar generales. Para que no se quede sin hacer nada. Yo le dije, aunque sea para ser de consejer, pero tienes que ir a la Universidad.			269-274	1		1		1		
CMC		Guiselle #2		Bueno, ella la veo así como por Facebook. Porque como ya no está en el Colegio ni nada, verdad ya salió bueno, terminó. ¿Sí, claro, igual Susy, verdad? Susy salió el año pasado a ella también la veo, pero pues por Facebook.			255-257							1
NRC		Guiselle #2		y también hay otro muchacho aquí mismo en dulce nombre, que trabaja con caballos y el lo que hace es. ¿Cómo se dice entrenarlos y enseñarlos a que se dejen montar? ¿Y todo eso? Pues entonces Daniela, ahí va, se va tempranísimo a bañar caballos y entonces ya está feliz con eso. Ay juepucha chica y la esposa del muchacho está estudiando un equino terapia UUY. Entonces le dijo a Dani que si podía ir hoy. Para para ella enseñar y, de paso, ella también poder hacer sus tareas. Entonces Dani le dijo que si mañana tiene que ir otra vez. Y ahí está toda contenta, anda de Vaquera. Sí, buenísimo, buenísimo.			288-298							1
		Guiselle #2		Tenemos la fe de que empiece este mes, nosotros estamos tratando de reunir el dinero para pagarle no sólo la matrícula, sino también el pago de las materias.			302-304	1	1	1		1		
		Guiselle #3		Díay el año pasado, por lo de la pandemia y todo, no se supo nada YY no han abierto nada de eso, entonces qué quedamos sin saber			311							
		Guiselle #2		No, mi esposo no vieras que aquí la brava soy yo?			333					1		

Figure 3.6: Coding in Excel file

These approaches to coding were appropriate for this study because they are particular coding processes for qualitative research that aims to understand the resources students use to learn and cope with their particular life situations (Miles et al., 2014). Examples of codes according to the previous categorization are:

Table 2: Code Categorization

Descriptive Coding	Emotion Coding	Values Coding
Job conditions	Life situations	Value for study
Online Learning	Self-efficacy	Family beliefs and traditions
Hobbies	Sense of freedom	Relationships

The next step was to identify themes or patterns. This is what Miles et al. (2014) call *second cycle coding*. The themes emerged inductively and were data-driven. This means the themes strongly relate to the data, and the codes were grouped into themes in light of this study's theoretical frames, i.e., funds of knowledge, adult education, and feminism pedagogy. (Patton, 1999, cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Interpretation

The third step in Wolcott's analysis procedure refers to the interpretation of the culture-sharing group. The previous process of thinking, writing, questioning, rewriting, and re-analyzing prepared me for this step of writing "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). As stated by Fetterman (2010, p. 125, cited in Creswell & Poth, 2016), thick description is "a written record of cultural interpretation." (p. 94). To achieve this kind of description, I utilized verbatim quotes that highlight social structures, friendships, romantic relationships, social relationships, and other issues from my participants' points of view (emic). Additionally, I integrated my point of view as the researcher (etic) as I aimed to answer my research questions. (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 23) emphasize that the write-up in thematic analysis strives to tell the complicated story of [your] data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of [your] analysis. It is important that the analysis (the write up of it, including data extracts) provides concise, coherent, logical, nonrepetitive and interesting accounts of the story the data tells within and across the themes.

In this sense, I made inferences and interpretations from my participants' points of view from the data. However, I also offer my takings from experience lived through the observational and inquiring research process. In other words, I described what my participants have lived and

what they say about it, but I also described how this study has affected me and how I see what is happening (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Validation and Transparency

Validation and transparency were enhanced in the following ways using respondent verification, peer review, code replication, thick description, and triangulation.

Respondent Verification (Member Checking)

Bryman and Burgess (1994) emphasized the need to allow respondents to verify the researchers' findings to establish the validity of the qualitative study (respondent verification). For this step, after analyzing each interview, I contacted the informants to go over what they had addressed during the interview. I set up a Zoom meeting during which I discussed with each interviewee (except Silvia) what resources I had initially identified they used for learning and coping strategies. Participants could affirm, amend, or disagree with the analysis. None disagreed. When asked if they wanted to add or amplify the list of resources identified, they all had something to add (see Findings for examples).

This additional information from respondent verification was vital because it allowed me both to confirm my findings while continuing to respond to the students' realities and the resources they used to support their learning and life situations.

Peer Reviewing

Interview protocols were shared and discussed with colleagues during writing groups to enhance their focus. Additionally, participants were knowledgeable of my research and the study's context throughout, and could comment or intervene (as one instance of a casual conversation). Additionally, I was able to work closely with a Costa Rican teacher and El Cerro native (Catalina, name anonymized). Catalina, knew the student- participants well, she shared

with them during the development of The Club and knew about their lives and experiences. In order to get Catalina acquainted with my study and research methods, I trained Catalina so that she could follow along with my coding and data analysis scheme (after erasing all identifying information from the data). I shared my codebook with her, and we practiced coding for three hours. Together, we coded an extract of the interview protocol, commented on the codes we were looking at, and shared our thinking processes for choosing the codes.

After these preliminaries, we started coding individually. Because of time limitations, Catalina only coded the interviews (not the photovoice or WhatsApp conversations) and then we came together to conference and resolve any discrepancies in our coding. Discussion continued until Catalina and I achieved a 90-95% inter-rater agreement for each coded interview, resolving discrepancies when possible. When agreement was not possible, I would add the new (discrepant) code. For example, Catalina identified at least five more codes, deciding that three of them could be subcodes of primary codes; e.g., household budgeting was sub-coded under *roles in the family*, chronic illnesses under *life situations*, and strategies to reach goals related to study under *interest in studying*.

Replication of Codes and Themes

The search for code replication of and themes across all data to disclose patterns of behavior helps ensure that a participants' thinking process is not an isolated moment. Nevertheless, single moments were contemplated. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 10) "the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures but in terms of whether it captures something important concerning the overall research question." In this sense, I justified one-time codes as worthy thoughts reflecting participant funds of knowledge resources and learning and coping strategies. In the Findings, I explore how these were not one time

expressions. For example, only Jacky mentioned having to wash her family's clothes and clean the kitchen every day; nevertheless, because of other *casual conversations* I had with my students, I know this is not a role only Jacky performs within her family. Nor is this the only form of household duty that can impact attendance by underrepresented women at night high school.

Thick Description

“Thick descriptions” are used in the study to present the Findings. One intention of this is that others interested in the topic can have a clear vision and determine whether the study is transferable to other settings or not (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Thick descriptions also offer a form of internal triangulation, providing a clear(er) context for the statement. Providing this context helps any key aspects of the quotation to be clear and convincing in terms of the argument or point being presented. It works against the danger of out-of-context data having misleading or ambiguous meanings.

Triangulation

Triangulation enhances data by providing additional (independent) evidence (Denzin, cited in 2001, cited in Miles et al., 2014); for example, casual conversation data like “I went to the store and bought fruit” is triangulated by a receipt for fruit dated on the same day from the market in question. All data (from interviews, WhatsApp conversations, casual conversations, and the Photovoice projects) were aggregated and coded, thus linking together (and triangulating) the vast network of evidence. This cross-referencing allowed for consistency and variance checks in the individual or group participants' ideas across all sources of data (Carspecken, 1996). This procedure enhanced the trustworthiness of the study by adding corroboration from multiple sources (Miles et al., 2014).

Chapter Summary

Multiple data sources (including formal interviews, informal electronic and analogue conversations, and artifacts produced during the period of the study) of purposively sampled underrepresented women studying at a night high school (in Costa Rica) afford an appropriate and rich lens for examining that cultural site and those who inhabit it.

One less common aspect of this dissertation is the very long period of interaction and data collection, consisting of well more than the two four-week periods of formal data collection, in all spanning from 2018 to 2021, and a follow-up interview in 2022. The data collected over this time, and especially the time spent with my participants, allowed a building of relationships and coming close to my participants, even as the data analysis and emergent themes of the data were sharpening and shaping the form and direction of this study. Equally, the process of coding, using colleagues for multiple coding, and triangulation, to resolve code discrepancies, is characteristic of qualitative research generally but is marked by an extremely large corpus of data (including 70,597 words, or 159 pages, from WhatsApp communications alone). Analysis of these much data guided me towards themes and patterns that allowed me to understand and illuminate the research questions about the culture of underrepresented women students of El Cerro Night High School. Ethical considerations ensured that the participants were in the know of this study, but our interactions were often as much collaborations and simply “data extraction.” More broadly, teamwork with colleagues and fellow graduate students also helped me to visualize my data from multiple perspectives. Re-presenting and discussing the Findings in rich detail, and providing insights and future recommendations for research, is the remainder of this study’s work.

CHAPTER 4 – DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT AND FINDINGS

This research aimed to explore and understand the sociocultural context of the female students of the night high school El Cerro. Using the Funds of knowledge theoretical framework the goal was to recognize the preexisting knowledge, skills, and other resources students drew onto support their learning and coping strategies. In this chapter, I first present a narrative describing the culture sharing group (i.e. the group of student- participant protagonists of this study) that provides contextualization to the study. The description draws on accounts from two specific learning events in The Club: (1) a Photovoice practice class session, and (2) the participant's graduation celebration at a public regional museum. By offering narratives of these events, it is my intention that the reader forms an idea about the life, life events, stories, and experiences of the students.

Second, I describe the funds of knowledge that adult women night high school student-participants drew on. It was evidenced throughout this research that students made use of this funds in interlocking ways. This means, that students most likely did not identify a unique moment or situation in which they would use one fund at a time. On the contrary, situations evidenced the use of multiple funds that merged and meshed to become useful resources to achieve academic and personal success. In these findings, I will describe how the students used these resources to support their learning process and as coping strategies, in response to research questions 1. What are the Funds of Knowledge resources that the women used?, and 2. How does the use of these resources reflect their coping and learning strategies? In this chapter, discussion is most limited to providing additional context for illuminating the detailed quotations given by students. Moreover, these testimonies and reports did not occur in a vacuum; I was witness to them as well and my own experiences at times are reported as additional context for

understanding. In the following chapter, a more formalized Discussion linking the Findings to extant literature (if available) is offered.

Part I: Contextualization

Event I: Photovoice Practice Class Session

On the idea that a picture is worth a thousand words, Photovoice projects can be implemented in classrooms as a way for students to expose situations in which they feel disadvantaged, discriminated against, or unheard. It is used to give students voice as they evidence through photography their underrepresented life conditions. In the case of my classroom, I chose to use Photovoice with two main goals. First, as a way for students to engage with technology, as they took pictures with their camera phones, (to produce videos and to record themselves) and to practice the English language. Second, inspired by feminist pedagogical approaches, I directed attention towards women who have been historically silenced or unheard --hence, “to the social and historical construction of gender roles, and dominant notions of sexuality and sexual bias” (Greene, 2015, p. 2). Photovoice also served to empower the women as they told their stories and made themselves seen.

To achieve both goals, students were trained on how to take pictures that could help them represent meaningful moments in their life. They took photos at home and around their community and later returned to class and reported on their pictures. They answered where, why, when, and how questions. As participation in the Club neared its end, the students worked on a graduation project, a Photovoice named “My Educational Journey.”

Although the students had practice taking photos in their homes and communities and talking about them, when assigned “My Educational Journey” assignment, students had trouble identifying a photo that could help them represent the where, why, when, and how of their

academic life and experiences. It was necessary to prompt them with some previous brainstorming, so one of our class sessions was dedicated to this. I planned to first have them think about transcendental moments in their educational journey. I knew most of my students were in the Night High School after having been years out of the educational system. So, I asked them, why are you here, at the Night School today? What made you come back? What has made you stay? AND what picture could represent this. I had immediate reactions, for example: Guiselle said, “*That’s easy, I need a picture of my daughters.*” [Eso es fácil para mí, yo solo ocupo una foto de mis hijas], Veronica said; “*Mine would be one of the benches from the high school.*” [La mia es una de las bancas del colegio], Beatriz said: “*I want one where I am alone with my books,*” [La mia tiene que ser una donde estoy sola, con los libros en la mano]. Although Photovoice requires pictures to be authentic and not constructed, I allowed them to recreate their photo according to what they needed it to represent. It was important at this point to allow the students to tell their stories, using a picture as their inspiration. Asking for “authenticity” from populations who have been denigrated in their attempts to display their authentic selves becomes a tricky “ask.”; it may well be that an “authentic” self can only find expression in a safe space (at least at first) through the mediation of a “construction.” We came back as a group, after students brainstormed and discussed as a group what their photo would be and how they would recreate it.

I said , “Now tell me, what kind of photo will you use, describe it, why are you choosing this photo, what are you thinking when you decide this is the photo you need, how does it represent your academic journey?” My intention with these questions was to understand through their stories what were their motivations to study, to be good students, and to keep pushing forward towards academic success (in spite of barriers). Additionally, previous interactions with

them had let me know that they all had some kind of trauma, underprivileged life conditions, and life experiences that had prevented them from continuing studying at the corresponding age.

Students one by one, told me their stories about what sparked their decision to go back to school.

Silvia

Silvia named her project “From Darkness to Light.” Her picture (see Figure 4.1) shows an old table, three empty plates, and a half way burnt candle. She explains how the old, ruined table represented what she thought of herself before she decided to change her life.

This is for me pain, more than anything of my past. I remember when I was crying in an old table like this, because I felt trapped by my own mind, my thoughts always said inside of me you’re useless, you cannot do it [Silvia, Photovoice assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.1: Silvia’s photo

Aurora

Aurora notes:

First of all, I’m going to describe the photo [Figure 4.2] This photo shows El

Cerro Night School Shield that contains two mountains that represent the plains

and valleys' of our country. A sun that means a new day. Also, two coffee branches that represent the agriculture and in the center of them there is an open book which means our learning process [Aurora, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]

This photo (Figure 10) represents an important part of my education, because in my first year of high school, I was chosen as one of the best grades [GPA] of the school. I remember that was on September 15, 2017 (Independence day in Costa Rica), when thanks to my effort, I carried the school banner in the School Assembly. This filled me with pride and motivation, so I realized that I wanted to in school to move forward in life.” [Aurora, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.2. Aurora's photo

Nancy

Nancy stated:

This photo [see Figure 4.3] takes place on my room's wall. In this photo there is a wall with a small and big foot print [Nancy explained that she wanted them to be

foot and not hand prints, but she was not able to do it like that, but she decided to look at them as feet moving forward]. I believe that in this photo you can see reflected the footprints of a past that marked the present of a person. With this photo I remember that it was my point of start to take a decision of continuing with my studies and I understood that I have a son that depends on me and my decisions. The footprints are the past we have left behind and the process I have been through since I retake my studies. [Nancy, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.3. Nancy's photo

Lauriza

Lauriza noted,

I chose the following photo [see Figure 4.4] because many of its elements and colors are related to my life and important moments have made me change. There is a young couple fighting. The boy is arguing with the girl, she looks scared,

frightened, and she is hugging tightly a notebook. The couple is my ex-husband and I. I am the frightened girl. My husband was dominant and possessive until the day I said no more. I didn't want more violence, insults, and humiliations. In the picture there is also a torn chain, but it is shiny, this shows the I have broken with and the light this has given to my life. The Barbie doll symbolizes my difficult childhood, but also my daughter's adolescence, time when I decided to separate from my husband. It was a difficult moment for my children. The teddy bear represents caring and love from my children. The blue and yellow cars are relevant because of the colors, blue shows the happiness we felt when we had a car and could take family trips, but yellow is the sadness we all felt when many times the trips would end in fights and tears. The orange cushion reminds me of peace and rest, times I now enjoy more often. The white t-shirt is light in the middle of darkness, represented in the black pants. The striped, green sweatshirt shows protection from the cold and insecurities in my life. The notebook and the turquoise portfolio indicate my biggest decision, the new opportunity to have a brighter future. This is when I decided to go back to school and fight for my dream to become a French teacher. The orange couch represents the marks of all the NOs I've gotten. The white sneakers show my firm steps in life to achieve my dreams, the beige sneakers represent all the soil and negativeness. I want to get out of my life. The gray hat shows the clouds that have gotten in my way and the jeans represent comfort for me to run in after my dreams. The motorcycle helmet shows liberty, the one I got after my divorce, when I bet for a new life with my children. [Lauriza, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.4. Lauriza's photo.

Beatriz

Beatriz named her project “My Lonely Body is Used to the Scars.”

Today I will talk to you about my life, it will be summarized in this picture [see Figure 4.5]. The picture was taken in a lonely place, there is a view, an old stained tire, the sky is clear, the trees are dark, the ground is covered with rocks, in the horizon city lights can be seen. There is a lonely girl holding a notebook, she has long hair and she is wearing blue pants and black tennis shoes. She is sitting on the tire looking at the landscape. She is feeling the fresh breeze of the mountains and thinking about her life. I chose this picture because it represents my story.

The loneliness presented in this girl is the same that has followed my life. Since I was a little girl, my parents always worked a lot, I would only see them in the

morning before going to school, but they would still be sleeping. After school I would be alone, I had to repeat first grade, I was lonely and I had no one to help me with school work. As I grew up nothing changed, except my parents fought all the time, when I was 15 years old, they divorced, it was hard but it was for the best. The grown girl in the picture, like me, has learned on her own, has assumed many responsibilities and on her own has formed herself. The people she has loved and trusted have let her down. But she has decided to be stronger and continue with her life. The stained tire represents the marks life has left in me. But these are also what give me support and strength. The rocky ground represents all the obstacles I have gone through and will keep going through. The girl is holding the notebook tightly, like me she knows going to school is the way to obtain a better life, she knows that it is the way to go, studying and focusing on school. The clear sky symbolizes God and it gives me hope because I know he takes care of and guides me. [Beatriz, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.5. Beatriz's photo.

Guiselle

Guiselle titled her Photovoice Assignment “My Decision”

These are my classmates, each one with their school materials and their uniform.

The teacher is giving the class. One of the students is not understanding, another one is paying attention, and another classmate is understanding very well. This is similar to my education process. I decided to come back to school after 20 years because I was not able to help my daughters anymore. I did not understand what they studied at school. However, when I started to study my daughters were ahead of me and they did not need my help anymore. So my priorities changed, I decided to study for myself, I continued so I can become a professional. I cannot stop, I want to learn and become a professional like my daughters. [Guiselle, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.6. Guiselle’s photo

During the interviews, marking the Photovoice activity as one of their favorite activities highlighted participants’ feeling challenged by the fact of externalizing their deepest feelings of loneliness, heartbreak, and poverty. Students not only talked about their stories. During the interviews, they also reflected on how the Photovoice experience had been one that proved to them that they were not alone. For example, when asked about what they remember the most about The Club, Guiselle said: Well, of course, “El Fotovoz” that assignment we did to present at the Graduation. [Guiselle, personal communication,] Jacky said, “I remember how we did different videos but doing the assignment with the picture for the museum presentation, I really liked that one. [Jacky, personal communication, September, 2021]

Jones (2018) has specifically highlighted how producing archives of personal experience, that are then shared with others, can have a genuinely transformative power to address even systemic social injustices; the first step, however, is realizing that one’s *personal* trauma is, in fact, shared with others.

Some of the participants had never had the chance to sit back and reflect on that moment when they took a gamble for a better life by going back to school. Specifically, Jacky and Nancy go about this. For example, Jacky, agreed it was very significant for her to tell that story that motivated her to push forward “It is true that it was a really important part, telling the story that prompted me to continue” [Jacky, personal communication, September, 2021]. Nancy was even more emphatic about the process she went through to pinpoint that specific moment:

The day we started to plan the Photovoice, I recreated an episode in my life that I had never told anyone. Actually, it is a scene that I had never thought about as the one that made me stop and think about my life and how I needed to move forward, to keep going. That day when we were told to think about a specific moment where we had these feelings of needing to make a change, I remembered that day when I said to myself: “That’s it, no more, I have to get up, I have a child to care for, to fight for, so no more, no more depression, no more tears, I have to get ahead in life” It is something that I shared with my classmates that day and I presented at the museum, but it is not something that you go around telling people. [Nancy, personal communication, April, 2021]

During our Photovoice practice, Nancy said to me: “Profe, that was the day my son’s father broke up with me. That day I promised myself it was the last time, he had done it so many times before. I said to myself, no more, and I punched the wall” (Nancy, personal communication, May, 2019). Nancy’s Photovoice picture (refer to Figure 11) is of her and her son’s hands (feet as explained previously) on the wall moving forward. In this way, Nancy shared how she became conscious of her reality and felt free to share it.

My intimate interaction with Yessenia (see below), brought forward the idea that the Photovoice activity was an exercise about retrospection, reflection, and getting to know oneself and each other. Through this practice, the students strengthened the fact that funds of knowledge come from relationships, life experiences, words of encouragement, feelings of self-efficacy, their intersectional identity as women who are also students, mothers, members of a family, examples of perseverance, and resilience.

Yessenia

Yessenia is a big, strong, 24 year-old Nicaraguan-Costa Rican woman. She lives with her mother, her 7 year-old daughter, and her three brothers. Shortly after The Club ended, I remember one of the teachers at the High School reaching out to me, asking for a donation to help Yessenia pay for her citizen's test. I later found out she is now nationalized Costa Rican. During our Photovoice practice, Yessenia approached me and said she wanted to talk about her old house, but she was not sure how to explain what that house meant to her. She said it was a mix of happiness and profound sorrow. I told her that we could just talk about it, and I would try to help her get her ideas or feelings across. This moment with Yessenia was impactful for me. She told me about how her old house, one for "coffee pickers"—everyone in Costa Rica will likely know these as very deteriorated houses, called "piso e tierra" (dirt-floor), precisely because they do not have a floor rather it is just dirt—was for many years her happy place even though there was so much she did not have. She talked about how she associated it with family time and coziness. But for years, she said, these feelings were only "halfway." She always felt sadness and despair and also, for years, did not know why. It was as if there were something blocking a certain memory that she did not like, that made her feel sad. She mentioned it was the #metoo movement that helped her understand what had happened, when so many girls came out

with their stories about sexual abuse, rape, and harassment. Her memories started to clear up, and she remembered how many times coffee pickers she did not even know would try to abuse her; she said: “But teacher, they never raped me, I didn’t let them, all of them got a good hit from this fist, and you can imagine that having this body I don’t hit lightly”[Yessenia, personal communication, March, 2019] Yessenia, finished her story, and then I advised her to express in writing as much or as little as she wanted. I also talked to her about being suggestive and not telling details; on the contrary she could just focus on feelings (see the Photovoice narrative below.) Yessenia, wrote an amazing piece where she expresses very well the mixed feelings her old house, now torn down, made her feel. After having this intimate moment with Yessenia, our relationship grew even closer. She also started to participate more in the group and share with the other students. Yessenia, graduated high school and is currently taking different technical courses around the area of forensics and wellness and care of the elderly. She regularly keeps me updated about her life and her daughter.

Yessenia: No title: In this picture [see Figure 4.7], you can see a palm tree. The tree has fruit. Some is good and other have gone bad. Bad fruit happens usually because of the weather and the environment conditions, it makes them weak. But also, at the top of the tree there is bigger and stronger fruit that might give fresh, sweet, coconut water. These fruits are like humans. We can learn to be strong like the trees and their healthy fruit that adapts to the different ecosystems, natural disasters and resuscitate after being destroyed. In the same way humans survive criticism, humiliation, physical, psychological, and verbal abuse. We can decide whether to die because of this or rise regardless of all this mistreatment. There is always hope and a better life after all the abuse and evil. The picture was taken

where my old house and old life used to be. [Yessenia, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]



Figure 4.7. Yessenia's photo.

To gain insight and to learn about students' funds of knowledge requires offering students a safe space where they can tell and share. As happened with Yessenia. Nancy reflects on this when she states,

We all had something that had lifted us, but it wasn't necessarily something that you were aware of or even wanted to tell about, but then, someone started sharing and at the end we all did the same, because we knew we would not be criticized, they would not judge us, on the contrary we would be celebrated for deciding to move forward. [Nancy, personal communication, April, 2021]

Event II: Graduation at Moncho's Museum

During the interviews, all students mentioned in one way or another the day of the Graduation. Even for me, this day was memorable. The plans went smoothly; students got

organized, then rented a small bus that transported them to a nearby city. Part of our grant budget allowed for us to pay for the bus, and the students were more than excited about having the short road trip. Days before, they were lending and borrowing each other clothes, make up, and any other needed accessory. They got to the museum early, each of them with their Photovoice poster. The activity not only celebrated their graduation from El Capullo English Club but was also their debut as beginning English speakers. And to show this, they would be sharing their Photovoice stories.

Guests to the graduation and presentation included members from the community who were visiting the museum, professors from the Universidad de Costa Rica, teachers from the Night High School El Cerro, and family and friends of the students.

When asked about this day and what made it special for them, students had different answers:

When I see my picture there at the Museum I feel great excitement. It is a deep excitement. Lots of happiness, I see a woman achieving dreams, doing what she likes, and I see a very, very privileged woman.” (Guiselle, personal communication, April 19, 2021)

That day was the best because we got to speak in English, to show what we had learned. It was also exciting because it was graduation, and my sister, my aunt, my little nephew, and my cousin were there. (Jacky, personal communication, April 22, 2021)

Lauriza was very emotional about this celebration. This is what she said with tears in her eyes.

I really liked that my daughter became part of the Club, too. It filled me up with pride that we were together. I really liked our last activity, the graduation. I was very proud to be there next to my picture stand and talking in English, that I could “defend” myself [in another language], and that I was speaking in front of all those people, at least 80% of them were English teachers, I was so nervous. All the time I was thinking, I am going to say a word wrong, how embarrassing... but I remembered all I had gone through to be there, running from work to school, to the Club, then when we chose the picture, how I had to think about it, think about the meaning, my life, what each piece meant. It was truly impressive, beautiful, it was graduation day and I was one of the students graduating. At that moment I felt happy, I even wanted to cry. It was the first time I was celebrated for something I had earned, and I was graduating with my daughter, this made everything so much better, the satisfaction was double.” (Lauriza, personal communication, April, 2021)

The previous comments from the students offer insight on the idea that the students valued this day because they were able to show what they had learned. It is relevant to add these comments not only to offer contextualization of the place, time, and happenings of the participants’ graduation, but also these quotes evidence how the students felt at the time. They felt seen by their family members, and it seemed that they felt satisfaction by proving they had indeed achieved something they would set out to do and were being celebrated for it. Also, it was important to them that members of the community had come to hear them, that their stories were interesting and deserved attention. Students’ self-esteem was fulfilled as they saw how they attracted attention because they were speaking another language and that their life experiences

were being valued; they were given words of encouragement and approval no matter what their stories told.

Part II: Findings in response to Questions 1 and 2: Types of Funds of Knowledge and their Uses for Learning and Coping Strategies

In response to the Research Questions, this study formally explored the types of funds of

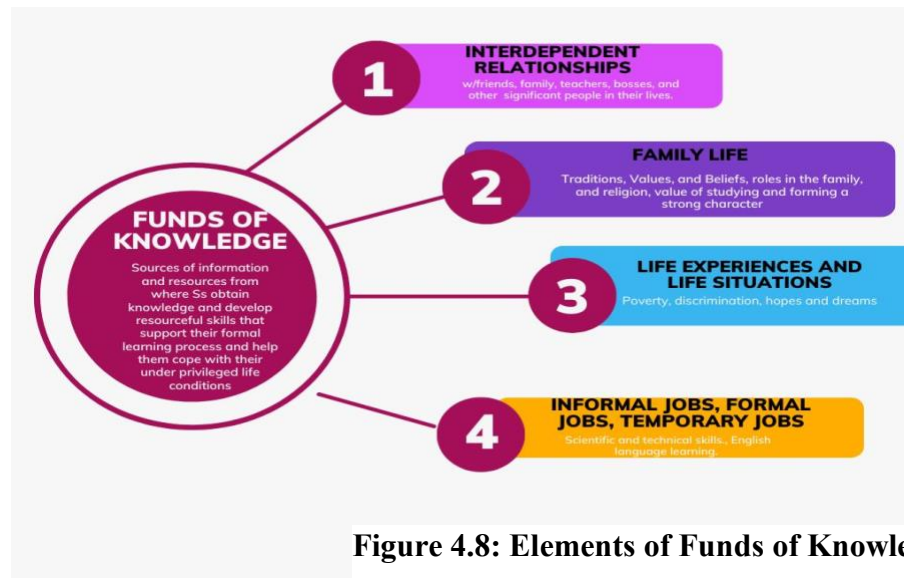


Figure 4.8: Elements of Funds of Knowledge

knowledge and the way they were used as the learning and coping strategies of an underrepresented women's population at a night high school in Costa Rica as viewed through four aspects of funds of knowledge (see Figure 4.8). After coding all of the data, the following themes and subthemes emerged as answers to the two research questions: 1. What are the Funds of Knowledge of the El Cerro Night High School use?, and 2. How does the use of these resources reflect their learning and coping strategies? To disclose the findings and how they answer each of the research questions, I proceed in the following way. 1. Presentation of the Funds of knowledge identified and quotes (data) from the students that evidence the funds of knowledge, and 2. Overview of how the students use the resources and how they reflect the students' learning and/or coping strategies.

Funds of Knowledge: Interdependent Relationships

Interdependent relationships are those in which all people involved in the relationship benefit from each other. These are different from codependent and independent relationships in which the benefits received from the associations are unbalanced and only one part receives advantages.

During data collection (e.g., informal conversations, interviews, and Photovoice narratives), the participants described how their relationships with others have influenced their lives in terms of (receiving) support, guidance, love, and care.

Relationship with family members

Guiselle was one of the students who made more emphasis on her relationships with family members, and how these supported her academic journey. Guiselle's case was unique in that her husband and two daughters came to the Nocturno with her (they were also students at this institution), and this gave her a sense of security (she made arrangements for her youngest daughter to be admitted in the night school so she wouldn't stay home alone) as they were all together. For Guiselle, making sure that her whole family was studying was encouraging. Furthermore, Guiselle's husband was her classmate all through high school. At the beginning of every school year, she made sure to talk with the school administrators so they would place them in the same group. Her husband (as a patient of depression) needed her by his side as much as possible. As she stated it:

I can help keep him motivated because when I graduate I want him to be there by my side as we both fulfill our dreams, if it's not like this, my dream will only be halfway [Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020].

Her oldest daughter was also a member of The Club (although not a direct participant of this study because she was underage) and her youngest daughter would many times come along and meet with the other students. In her interview, Guiselle recounts how her daughter and herself would have a lot of fun and laughs producing the videos in English as part of the assignments for the Club. Guiselle describes how she and her husband are not only a couple; they are a team and best friends. She also recognizes that she has learned computer skills thanks to what he has taught her. At the same time, he learned from his sister (an Informatics teacher).

Throughout my interview with Guiselle, I could see how much family relationships had shaped her life (starting with her single mother who raised her and her siblings on her own). Additionally, when young, Guiselle dropped out of 7th grade to work and help out her mom. She says she told her mom: “I am dropping out of high school and I will get a job, and her mom said Ok, so she thought it was the best.” [Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020]. She told me how she worked in a clothing store even though it was illegal for her to be working (she was underage). The store manager had said to her, “If child services come, you have to act as if you were buying something, like if you were a customer.” [Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020]. In this way, she helped support her mother and family during childhood.

Guiselle specifically says her family is her life (“Son mi vida, profe”). Guiselle’s Photovoice is named “My Decision.” She narrates how she decided to go back to school because there came a moment when her oldest daughter needed help in math and she couldn’t help her; she didn’t know how. At this point, under the circumstances she taught her daughter study skills,

I told her, ok sweetheart, things are going to be a little different from now on, ok?

I need you to pay lots of attention in class, ask questions, every question, and try to get some free time at the end of the day so you can at least start your homework

at school and ask for help if you need it. Mommy can't help much anymore.

[Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020].

Guiselle became desperate by seeing she could not help her daughter anymore, and this was when she decided she should go back to school. By this time, both her daughters were ahead of her and didn't need her help, but she was determined to obtain her diploma. Her family was supportive and encouraging of this, but they missed her dearly when she left for the Night School. So they decided that in the following year they (the two daughters and her husband) would all enroll at the night school together with Guiselle. This was definitely a changing point for Guiselle, she said "imagine profe, they were all at school with me, no worries about what was going on at home, I could keep my eye on them [laughs] [Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020]

In Jacky's case, coming from a working class family, and her parents living daily with financial struggles, she saw how her older sisters made it their goal to study and become financially independent. She was clear she did not want to have the same kind of financial needs and she aimed to be independent like her sister. Jacky used these examples as sources of inspiration to continue with her education and. When I asked her who had had more influence in her love for learning, she immediately answered:

My sisters, mostly the oldest one. I want to be like her. I remember seeing her work and study, she studied very hard. She put herself through college and now she has a degree. She works at the bank and she is independent, she is financially independent. She talks to me a lot about how to study, how to focus, and I follow, because I also want to be financially independent [Jacky, personal communication, September, 2021]

In the case of Nancy, she lived with her mother, two brothers, and her son. Her mom agreed to take care of her son so she could attend school at night. They also worked out a daily schedule where they could both have a job and take care of him. The brothers also participated partially in the arrangement because they attended high school during the day. This illustrates interdependence because all parties were able to benefit in some way by the arrangement.

For Yessenia, after graduating from high school, she wanted to take a course on hospital waste treatment, but she had no money; her mom at the time had a job and was able to pay for the class. Because the course took place all day on Sundays, her mom cared for her daughter. This evidences how Yessenia's mom was a source of support so she could continue her education, not only did the mom offer financial help, but also child care.. Yessenia states:

My mom works very hard and I do too, we help each other a lot.” When I asked Yessenia about her role in the house she said: “Oh my goodness, I don't know... my mom and I take care of everything according to what each can do depending on our work schedule. I can wash, cook, clean, take care of my brothers, of my daughter, and I like to spoil my mom when I can. She's had it hard. I even know how to use a machete, I take care of our yard [Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021]

From the dynamics and family relationships described it becomes evident that the students counted on a strong support circle that strengthened their interest in and ability for studying; from that direct help, they received money, child care, and emotional support that encouraged their plans to study. At the same time, having this support made their hardships more bearable.

From all of this (through the experiences lived with their families, the examples of educational progress, the valuation of studying and learning, the demonstration of love and support), the participants were more able to cope with hardships that otherwise could interfere with or prohibit their learning process. A common characteristic among the students was the type of family relationship they had, one where they received words of encouragement, good examples, and direct help with chores, school, and managing of the house. In cases like Yessenia and Guiselle, the family becomes like a team of colleagues working together to make their enterprise successful—one where all opinions are valued, decisions are taken together, and no one is left behind. While far from being perfect, it embodied an agreement that worked well for them and honored the idea that progress and advancement are a possibility for all members of the team.

Relationship with friends, teachers, bosses and others community members

All students acknowledge having influential people in their lives that have either caused meaningful changes in them as a person, in their life situations, or their family situations. In the majority of cases, these people were friends, bosses, teachers or other members of the educational community, like counselors, secretaries, or principals. These people were committed to offering the students better studying conditions, like giving them time during the day to studying, changing schedules that would benefit their life circumstances, and offering words to or encouragement to lift them up when they did not believe in themselves or when they might be ready to give up.

For example, when Jacky was preparing for the Bachillerato exams (comparable to the SAT in the United States), her bosses provided resources and opportunities to keep up with her study. They allowed her to bring her books to work so she could study. Also, they helped her out

at her job. Her job consisted of riding the bus in the back with elementary school students (Costa Rican law require to have an assistant ride in the back with the children). During those days, her bosses talked to the children and requested them to ride in complete silence and not “bother” Jacky because she had to focus on her studies. Jacky says: “My bosses are amazing, I loved them so much, they cared for me, too. I could tell” [Jacky, personal communication, September 2021].

Guiselle tells how she went up to talk to the school’s secretary before the beginning of each school year to make sure she and her husband would be in the same class. As explained before, this was relevant for both of their academic and family success. Having the same schedule helped with daily planning and also having her husband as a classmate meant that they could do assignments and study for exams together. As well, they kept each other updated if either had to miss class for any reason. When in The Club, for example, Guiselle’s husband was in charge of taking notes for her and helping her keep on track with assignments, projects, and homework. When the husband had a severe depression episode, Guiselle talked with teachers and helped her husband keep up with class material. In fact, during this episode, Guiselle’s husband was not being treated for depression, and when she told the school counselor what was happening, she was able to refer them to psychological services and then to the health center where he ultimately got treatment [Guiselle, personal communication, April 2020].

Vicky explains how her trusted group of friends helped her get through a childhood trauma so she could stay in school. She told the story of her drug addicted, schizophrenic uncle, who was the laughingstock of the town. Everyone knew Vicky was his niece, and they made fun of her and looked at her weirdly. She described becoming very shy and insecure because of this. “But I’m not like that anymore,” she concluded. When I asked what had changed, she said,

I found good friends, I guess when you meet someone you feel connected to you are able to express your true self, and that's what happened to me with my group of friends. They saw who I was and they accepted me regardless of my family situation [Vicky, personal communication, January, 2022]

It must be re-emphasized here that funds of knowledge are socially embedded knowledges and practices that assist functioning and wellbeing. In times of social trauma, having a group of understanding friends is certainly one way to ameliorate and overcome trauma. The funds of knowledge framework, however, presents a particular emphasis on what "having a group of understanding friends" means for functioning and wellbeing. In this case, it heightens the sociability of interdependent relationships as the material fact or core around why having friends operates as a fund of knowledge.

Relatedly, Lauriza expresses how ever since she entered the night high school she has been involved in different activities with people, and this has allowed her to form relationships with teachers who have trusted her over the years with different roles. This situation has given Lauriza the opportunity to get involved in additional activities and expand her academic preparation. For example, she says she always had information the rest of the students did not have and that people would always be asking her about dates of activities or how to do administrative transactions (like have a grade changed or how to find a certain teacher or who was in charge of certain activity). This, she says, allowed her to be on top of things and included in many activities like the Club.

I had never taken English, because I chose French for foreign language, but Marlen, the English teacher knew me and my abilities, so she asked me if I would be interested in participating and of course I said yes immediately, I saw it as a

great opportunity to learn and be involved [Lauriza, personal communication, April 2021]

As the students tell their stories, I was able to identify aspects of their personhood—partly related to character traits as persistent, proactive, and socially smart, but in part because of social support from networks of family and other people. Students constructed these important relationships because they were not afraid to seek help. They were resilient and persistent when one situation did not go through as they planned. In other cases, relationships grew because they demonstrated being responsible, reliable, trustworthy, and overall good students and good people. Thus, other people around them were comfortable about giving them the support and help requested. From the interactions with these influential people, students received advice, extra academic support, reference to other sources of help like financial aid offices, letter of recommendations for jobs, knowledge about scholarships or welfare governmental programs, and even self-esteem boosters.

Another source of support was El Cerro night high school and its staff. This institution had a big impact on students' lives. Here participants encountered a sense of belonging. The Night School afforded a structure, which is otherwise a unique feature and not present in their lives. Having financial, family, and social instability many times takes a toll on their emotional balance, but coming to the Nocturno meant they would always have structure, they would always have people who supported them, a good hot meal, and their friends. For them, it was a truly safe space. The students say the Night School “is for real”; they come there to get work done; there is no time to fool around, and if you try to, you will get stopped immediately by Principal David.

Last year I did the university admissions test with help from the high school and the counselors, they even paid for my test. This year will be different, I sure miss the Nocturno [Nancy, personal communication, April, 2021]

My dreams started to come true the day I stepped into the Nocturno High School [Guiselle, personal communication, April 2021]

I hated my job, I wanted to go back to school and my sister was going into senior year to the Night School, so I followed her, it was a game changer. At the night school, there are no free periods, no fooling around, you go do what you have to do. And that was good for me because I was ready to be serious. At the day school I was a mess, I had too many free periods that made me be lazy, Sometimes I would have one free period in the middle of the morning and then I would just take the rest of the day off. With Principal David, you know the Nocturno is no joke. He doesn't allow people in the hallways, everyone has to be doing something productive. And the teachers are more understanding about situations we [the students] have. [Jacky, personal communication, September 2021]

Funds of Knowledge: Family Life

Roles in the family

As adults who are single mothers and part of a family, all the students of this study lived with their immediate family (mom, siblings, and their kids), except Silvia (at least at the beginning of the project) and Guiselle, who lived where their respective husbands and children, and Lauriza who lived with her children. None of the students mentioned living with their father. All students' moms were also single mothers. The only exception was Jacky, whose father

committed suicide during the time of the Club, and so her mother became a widow. Thus, these life situations--being breadwinners, mothers, daughters, sisters, babysitters, tutors, and caretakers—were part of their family roles. The following quotes from the students describe their roles in their family, and although not explicit, it can be inferred that their multiple responsibilities allowed them to develop skills like time management, organization of activities, delegation of responsibilities, teaching abilities, among others. These at the same time are transferable skills that support their academic success. For example: Yessenia describes some of her roles in the following quote:

My brother is in tenth grade, I try to help with his homework as much as I can. With my daughter, look teacher, I don't know if she does it on purpose, but she is very distracted, sometimes she is reading, then she sees a butterfly, and that butterfly distracts her completely. I can tell you she has no learning problem, she is just distracted. You know what it's like, if something interests me I can focus, and if not, even the wind will distract me, so that's how she is. But her teacher says she is doing good in school, she works fast and does things right. And I can see that because I check her notebook. At home she says, "that's boring, I don't want to do that (homework)," but I say, no no no, you have to do it. (Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021)

Yessenia not only makes the time to support her daughter and brother's academics, but also, she has had interactions with her daughter's teacher. It is possible to say, Yessenia has developed time management skills, has the ability to process, interpret and explain information that is outside of own academic responsibilities, and she has developed the needed maturity to talk to her daughters teacher about the child's behavior and academic achievements, all these

being traits and skills she can use in her own academic development. Furthermore, the maturity she has developed as a result of being a mother has helped her take action, ask for help and advice, and, thus, resolve daily life issues.

Nancy explained about how she has stepped up and changed her personal plans to support her family with rent:

So I was saving to pay for the admission test for college, but you know being a single mom is hard, and we were having trouble one month, so I had to use my savings to pay for the rent. But I am waiting to get some money (did not specify from where). So, yeah, that's that. And well, let's be honest 5000 (\$7 approx.) colones are a joke, you can't do much with that (Nancy, personal communication, April, 2021)

Nancy's example shows how she is most likely used to do daily mental calculations to balance her budget and resolve economic challenges; furthermore, she is in charge of making the best decisions for her, her son and her family based on these calculations. Nancy, can use these skills in her academics in specific content areas like math or civics, but also these acquired skills help her cope and prevent further issues. For instance, having chosen to use her college money to support her family, most likely prevented her son and other family members to go through tougher times.

Guiselle explains how she takes care of her family, balances housework, her job, and motherhood:

I wake up every morning and I go into each room to check on everyone, checking that no one has sneaked out (laughing). Then, I fix breakfast, and start organizing the house and to get myself together. But, my organization of that day started

since the day before when I program what will happen the next day, I plan so things happen how I want them to happen, and I can even have some time for myself. Oh, and my daughters are always helping me with these things, like cooking, cleaning and so. When everything in this sense is taken care of, I go to the computer to work on the jobs I have been assigned, make copies (this is her job), I then wait for people to come pick up their stuff, whatever I have worked on for them. Then make lunch, which I confess, most of the times my daughters take care of. They cook very well, by the way [Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020]

As in the other two examples, Guiselle exemplifies how students manage daily their time in order to be able to juggle their multiple roles and responsibilities. Additionally, the students are consistently challenged with decision making situations that can have different consequences for them and their family, The roles of the students within their family niche was part of their daily conversations. The examples provided are just a small taste of what these women do in their everyday life. In fact, the students' role in their family is evidenced across the other funds of knowledge identified. In moments when they related with family members, as they showed who they are as mothers, when they spoke about their connections with the school, I observed how they do an action because they have very ingrained habits around what they have to do to push forward. Most of the time, they do not emphasize how what they do benefits themselves as individuals but rather what they do is so their family can live with better conditions.

Guiselle illustrates this in the way she handles her household, how she plans her days and assigns duties, what I saw in her as a student in the Club, and how she describes herself when I asked her what was her role as part of the women group in the Club:

I was like their mom, their cheerleader, sometimes their advocate. They were shy and sometimes were afraid to speak or participate, so they would say: say something, and I would, because I really didn't care to make a fool out of myself, I am too old to think about that stuff. I also, reminded them of assignments, and I helped the teachers find the classroom or get materials they may need [Guiselle, personal communication, April 19, 2021].

Most likely, students have been able to develop skills that transfer to their learning styles, and support their learning. Important factors that benefit any students are seen in the examples above like time management, planning, dividing responsibilities, explaining to others, fostering accountability, doing mental calculations, being consistent, and having expectations is well known to support high achieving adult learners. (Merriam et al., 2006).

Values, traditions, and beliefs

When spending time with the students, engaging in informal conversations, and during the interviews, I could see how my students were strong, will-powered women. They were high energy, persistent, motivated, and above all loved, cared, and would move heaven and earth for the ones they loved. Nevertheless, I was also able to evidence how they had been loved, cared for, and positively influenced in order to be who they are. Later, as I developed this study, data analysis once more proved that the students come from a rich background of traditions with deep roots in two main sources: (1) religion (faith) and (2) the value of study

Religion, Faith, God

God was constantly mentioned and referred to as the one responsible for making things better, for giving them the strength they needed when they had no more, for putting pieces together so problems were solved.

Lauriza says

I have faith in God and I have put everything in his hands, I know I will get better” (when talking about a health issue she was having). When talking about her new boyfriend she states: God sent him, because he is helping me get closer to God, and God will take care of cleaning other things that are in the way. I trust him. In another part of the conversation, she tells me she likes to lift people up when they are having hard times. [so I asked: Who lifts you up?] God of course [Lauriza, personal communication, April, 2022]

Nidia explains how God has taken control of her life from the moment she was born: I am literally a miracle, I wanted to come out of my mom since I was 3 months old, but my mom was set on having me although doctors recommended she didn't because it was a complicated pregnancy, but she said, no, “God sent me this baby, I trust him more than I trust the doctors.” So she continued and went through a lot of medical problems, but here I am by God's grace and honor [Nidia, personal communication, November, 2020]

During one of our one-on-one conversations, Nidia told me how God's gift of her own baby had been a miracle in her life and how he had saved her and her husband from the worst.

The baby helped them to get back on track academically. She noted:

We were on the wrong path, we had started smoking pot, and my husband was ready to try more, probably I would have followed. But then it happened, I got pregnant and this news was life changing for both of us. We talked and promised we would give our kid the best life possible, and from then on, we became good students and stopped hanging out with the wrong people, I continued in school

and my husband got a job. Nowadays, we both have our high school diploma, and we have a beautiful, healthy baby, that's how God Works. [Nidia, personal communication, 2019]

Guiselle told me about how desperate she was when her husband had depression and she was losing strength to keep supporting him. She emphasizes that she knew only God could help her get through the challenging times she was going through. She notes:

I went into the other room and I told God I couldn't take it anymore, I told him I was letting it all go, that the load was too heavy for me, that I couldn't take it anymore. I said this to God: "Lord Jesus, I don't deny this cross, I am just asking you to teach me how to carry it, how you carried it. I leave this in your hands, and whatever needs to happen it shall happen" [Guiselle, personal communication, November, 2020]

The moments described by the participants demonstrate the measure of trust and how much students rely on their faith. Having this source of support, motivation, and assuredness in their life can help the students feel like they are not alone, and that they have someone holding their hand in the worst of moments. This allows them to feel they can take risks, and have more trust in their capabilities and skills to move forward. The students continuously used phrases like "I pray to God that he help me," "I know God will provide," "I do my part and He does his," "I trust in God everything will get better." Their religion, their belief in a higher source of power, is a fund of knowledge that supports their learning in that they find motivation, energy, and focus there. Their faith continuously reminds me of *Philippians 4:13* "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." As Guiselle said, she can carry the cross but she just needs to learn how to do it. And they said, God teaches them.

The Value of Studying and Learning English and the Formation of a Strong Character

From their families and teachers, participants had been bombarded with a strong sense of value for studying and learning. These continuous conversations developed in them a sense of commitment towards their dream for a better and more promising future. Furthermore, they were able to see first-hand what it was like to not study and the kind of life they could expect if they studied compared to if they didn't. For example, all participants mentioned having been told at different stages of their life about the importance of studying or the negative consequences of not studying. This value of studying and learning was accompanied with familial and mentor words of support; encouragement that also gave way to the formation of personality and character traits evidenced throughout the interviews. (From the emphasis within funds of knowledge that draw attention to the social part of a person's "functioning and wellbeing," it is essential to underscore again that these personality traits and characteristics do not simply emerge out of nothing and are continually informed by social supports that make those characteristics possible. Such support includes the god of their faith, as noted above.)

My parents have always been on top of me saying, "You have to push forward."

My mom didn't get to go to school, she was very poor and her parents sent her to work to the city when she was 12 or 13 years old. After she got married with my dad she says she wanted to finish high school and she started taking classes, but then she got pregnant with my sister, then my other sister, then me, and the burden was heavy for my dad, so she had to delay her plans [forever] because she also had to get a job." I learned a lot from my dad, also my mom. I remember they always told us you got to study, get a good job, things are not for free and you

have to earn your stuff, that's the way life works [Jacky, personal communication, September, 2021].

When I asked Silvia, what was difficult for her to do in school (a certain subject, or managing the workload, the schedule) her answer showed her strong will power and how highly she valued her future and success, she answered

Honestly, nothing, I think my strong desire to succeed doesn't allow me to see things like difficult or that I cannot do something or understand what the teacher is explaining. I just don't allow it. [Personal communication, Silvia, June 2020]

Similarly, in the following answer from Yessenia, it is possible to see how she put first and among other situations her and her family studies. It is here seen how she not only valued her own success, but how she worries about her and her families academic denotes her value for studying. Most likely, like her mother she was also determined that her daughter and siblings strive for a better future.

My time is limited. During COVID, I helped my daughter with the educational guides, I helped my brother who is in eighth grade with his, and also my other brother, who is in ninth grade, and the I had to do mine, as well. It was very hard during COVID, but getting that homework done was important. Sometimes I wouldn't sleep, I would get home from work, look for something to eat and start helping my daughter. Sometime it was 3 or 4 in the morning and my brothers and I were still working. Then I had to go to work between 7:30 and 8 am. That was basically everyday [Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021]

Although Vicky states she would study no matter what, it is clearly evidenced that her sister and her mother have made an impact in her value system, having education as a priority as

well as it could be that she sees studying and being an excellent student is a way to return to her mother and show gratitude for all the efforts she makes for her. Indeed, having this value system has supported Vicky's educational journey. Currently, Vicky is a sophomore in college in the English teaching major in one Costa Rica's Top public universities. Vicky noted:

My mom and my sister have always told me that I have to study, but it's not like I wouldn't have done it if they hadn't said it, I have never imagined dropping out of school or not being a good student, studying is just what I like to do, since always.

Also, I have always felt it is just what I have to do, it's not a matter of choice

Vicky's Photovoice (a picture of her mom and sister) talk about the admiration she feels for both—for her mom because she has worked hard to be able to pay for the sisters' studies, and her sister for being a nurse. Vicky is guided by their example. [Vicky, personal communication, January, 2022]

When talking about the Club, it was evidenced how Guiselle also has her education and learning as a top priority; furthermore, she truly believes knowing a second language will open up opportunities that otherwise she would not have. Guiselle observed:

I entered the Club because, even though, I am not good at English, I knew that whatever I could learn would be good for me, even if it was hard, I had to try it, and I knew I was going to like it, because I like to learn new things. English is not easy for me para I need to keep adding to my life so I can communicate with more people, I love talking to people, can you imagine how sad if I want to talk to someone and I can't because they don't know Spanish and I don't know English.

English is a master key that opens many doors, we have to learn it, the same way

we have had to learn about technology [Guiselle, personal communication, April, 2021].

Participants clearly stated that having an education would allow them to have better life opportunities. Furthermore, they acknowledge English and technological fluency as fundamental skills needed to complement further their education (re Guiselle's statement); as Jacky says: "I love languages, now I am studying political sciences, if I add languages, imagine how much more valued as I professional I would be. A bilingual political scientist." [Jacky, personal communication, September, 2021].

Students also explained how they used different resources to obtain knowledge of the English language and fluency. For example, the majority of them referred to elements of pop culture (including English-language movies, videos on YouTube, music, and popular TV series). They have used different strategies to practice the language and capture meaning. For example, Jacky says she watches movies only in English. Also, her best friend was born in the US and then moved to Costa Rica to live; whenever possible, she tells him to speak to her in English. Another good friend of hers studies English (with an emphasis in Management); Jacky says she helps her do her homework so she can also learn. Nancy says when she likes a song a lot, she listens to it many times and looks up the lyrics, using Google for translation and pronunciation when needed [Nancy, personal communication, 2019]. Silvia, says she learned English when she was much younger, when a Peace Corps volunteer came to her hometown in the South part of the country. She added that her mom enrolled her in classes and that she was the best student and was able to sustain a fluent conversation with the Peace Corps volunteer by the end of the program. Silvia also noted loving the language. Now she talks to her children as much as

possible in English. She says she wants to teach them as much as she knows [Silvia, personal communication, 2020].

Going to school, studying and learning make me feel intelligent and capable. I feel empowered and fulfilled. Because, even though, I still don't have a profession every day that goes by I acquire knowledge. So that means I am not wasting time, every day I am learning, so each day is taking me to make my dream come true. I have given up on many things in my life, there are lots of prejudice and taboos that don't make me happy and I don't want them to ruin my life anymore. [Guiselle, personal communication, November 2020]

Their parents and other family members have shown them, through their examples, how difficult life can be when not having job opportunities because of a lack of professional preparation. The students have also witnessed how hard work gives results, how persistence comes with wins, and how responsibility and tenacity are pillars worthy of having in one's life. Participants noted how parents and other family members had encouraged changes in their patterns of not studying in light of their less fortunate conditions. Accordingly, and by working as a team, they have striven or made possible offering their children similar opportunities for a better life by studying, by making it clear that this can be obtained through learning and preparing better.

Funds of Knowledge: Life Experiences and Life Situations

Funds of knowledge draw on previous life experiences as a whole, indeed, students' experiences outside the classroom are meaningful and valuable. In this study, this is visible when students told me stories about situations they had gone through and experiences that had made them who they are today. On many of these occasions, these experiences reflected students

hardships, tragedies, and challenges they had as a result of their poverty, family troubles, and conditions as single mothers. Furthermore, their stories also reflected valorized personality traits, including self-efficacy, self-perception, sense of responsibility, a strong desire to succeed, a strong character, and a sense of freedom and independence. Throughout this study, particularly in this section that shares students' comments, thoughts, and ideas, it could be evidenced that students surely put in practice these traits as they navigate their daily life situations. [Here, "life experiences" refer to events that the students have gone through, while "life situations" are the conditions that inform, constrain, and support their ways of living and affect how they developed as persons in society.]As will be shown below, students' different experiences evidence these traits as part of their personality and way of being. Furthermore, students continue to demonstrate how they are able to overcome the challenges life gives them; it would seem they live by the life motto of: " if life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

For instance, Guiselle noted, "Some time ago we had an accident with my husband. He cut his hand with a machine he was using at work, but thank God he is ok and he is recovering" [Guiselle, personal communication, April, 2021]. Significantly, Guiselle uses the word *we* to describe having the accident. It has been characteristic of Guiselle to be a leader in her family. Any problem a person in her family might have, she finds a way to solve it. She also told me about a long-lost brother on her father's side, how he eventually came up to her and told her that he was her brother and that he wanted to be part of the family. She immediately accepted him and made it her business to introduce him and make him feel part of the family even though, as she says, she does not want to ever have any relationship with her dad, who abandoned her mother years ago. Guiselle is the leader of her home, and she makes sure everyone in her house is ok. We could say her problem solving skills have helped her maintain her student status and

have a balanced family life that supports her students life. Had she not look for this balance or for help as we saw her do in previous examples [when her husband had depression or when she asked the secretary to make them classmates] she might have not been able to continue with her studies. Guiselle evidences traits of a leader, decision maker, and problem solver.

Impactful or traumatic experiences from relationships were also reported. In Yessenia's story below it can be seen how her dad's abandonment pushed her mom and her towards a survival mode. It seems, although heartbreaking, when her dad left she and her mom took matters into their own hands and committed to raise their family. Yessenis noted:

Yes, my dad left us, but I don't like to talk much about it, because he left us in a very ugly way, he was heartless, to say it in some way. So my mom has always worked very hard, and me too, I have also wade through to help my mom with my brothers, then when my daughter came and so we move forward little by little
(Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021)

Jacky told me about what she went through when her dad committed suicide (which happened roughly in the first two weeks after the Club was inaugurated). Jacky's accounts show how her dad's encouragement and his passing served as a reason for continuing her education, she saw it as a way to honor his memory.

With what happened to my dad, it was hard for me, I just wanted to give up, I wanted to do nothing, I didn't want to keep going to the Club. But then I thought about how my dad had supported me when I told him about it. He said:

"Sweetheart, that's great, I am very proud of you for being asked to join that Club." So I said to myself, I have to keep going for him, and I felt an impulse and

I went back with even more strength and I told myself, this will be good for me

[Jacky, personal communication, September 2021]

Silvia described tremendous struggles related to life and schooling. However, she highlights how living through these hard times made her look for solutions and that ultimately she saw the only thing that could help her was going back to school. The memory of the experiences lived, the suffering, and mishaps seem to act as a an unwanted situation that she alluded to “I lived a very terrible situation” but did not further explain. Instead, she continued by noting:

I think going back to school and studying have helped me come out of that hole I was in. Studying made me be different so my daughter could see someone different in me, so they can have a brighter perspective about what it is to live and not like the dark ideas I had [Silvia, personal communication, June 2020]

Job-seeking and employment presented challenges for my students in different ways. Nevertheless, as our informal conversations showed, they would always have some kind of sudden, irregular work opportunity. Their persistence and again, problem solving attitude would keep them in this job search in spite of the circumstances. Yessenia noted:

I have sent a lot of CVs, but they never call back, because they always ask for a minimum of one year experience, sometimes even three years, and recommendation letters about the three years, so it gets a bit complicated.

(Yessenia, personal communication, April 2021)

It’s not that my age makes me uncomfortable, but you know, I am 25 years old, I don’t have a stable job, I don’t have a stable income, so that makes me feel very bad. I know people that are 18 years old and just got out of high school and have a

job, they might even have it before they got out of high school. So, sometimes, I have these ideas about how it's getting late for me or it's taking me a long time.

[Yessenia, personal communication, April 2021] Yessenia, continued this

conversation by giving me a list of the different jobs she was doing at the time,

“profe, sometimes I babysit, or clean houses whatever appears” [¡lo que salga!]

Similarly, in a long answer about the difficulties of employment--which Silvia struggled with, she evidences how these although the misfortunate struggles and treatment she has received, she has also used these experiences to push forward with her studies and continue her education, similar to other participants' experiences, the students see studying and having words of encouragement from important people a way to avoid more struggles in life. For example, Silvia, states:

Teacher look, whenever I go looking for a job, ok well... you know I clean houses, that's my job, anyways, I have always been told that I don't get hired like to be cashier because I need to have at least ninth grade. So when I had ninth grade, I wanted a better job and went to find one. And I don't complain because thank God cleaning houses has not been bad and it has helped me in the worst of times, I still wanted something better, so you know what I was told, that they couldn't give me the job because I was too ugly. I remember that time so well. I collapsed, my world fell apart once again. And I stopped looking for a new job. Thankfully, I told a teacher about this and she just said, keep studying Silvia, keep preparing yourself. You'll see that one day you will compete with a very pretty girl, nice face, great body, but they won't choose her, they will choose the smart one, the one who knows more and is better prepared. And I now believe this, I see

studying as an opportunity. Because teacher, I can do a lot of things, but nobody sees them because I don't have certificate to prove it. And I dream of the day I can tell someone at a big company that they don't have to hire me based on my exterior looks, that what they need is what I have here (signaling her head), and that I have a lot of intelligence inside of me. So, as you see, studying has made me feel better. I have always been low energy, I've always had low self-esteem, but when I study, I feel smart and people around me make me feel smart and they can make me feel there is value in me. Of course, I still get down sometimes but I guess it is normal. It's hard to see the value in oneself, but you know what happened one day, my daughter came up to me and said, "Mami, I am so ugly, so, so ugly, with these teeth." And I thought to myself: what I am doing? What am I doing to her? I am doing her harm. That also helped me reflect on my attitude, I couldn't keep thinking so little of me because my children were absorbing that [Silvia, personal communication, June 2020]

Students from this study have particular life situations and life conditions that (as happens to all people) have affected their personality, their attitude towards life, and their perceptions about how this world works. I was able to see in these women attitudes that I had never seen before. For example, I often asked myself, "Where do they get the strength, the courage, the force to come to school every day?" On top of this, "How is it that they manage to keep up with academic demands with so much they already have on their shoulders?" My questions were answered daily through our conversations, through their laughs, their ideas, their thoughts that showed me once more an inner strength they possess and the great desire to

become better and offer their children a life different from what they have—similarly to *their* parents hopes for them.

Along with these factors, the students showed a great sense of self-efficacy, understood as the belief that one *can*. They went through periods of self-doubt but also had people (i.e. families, friends, colleagues) encouraging them in those moments and reminding them of what they were capable of doing and what they had already conquered. Often, these women seemed invincible super-heroes. Many times as they told me their stories, I feared for them. When new crises arose, I wondered, “Now how will they overcome this situation?” Soon after, I would find out that things were looking better. Their family, their faith, their friends, their attitudes, their personality, all came together to rise again.

Funds of Knowledge: Informal Jobs, Formal Jobs, Temporary Jobs

As has been noted throughout the Findings, the participants of this study were usually involved in some kind of work. They had temporary jobs (that could last from a couple of hours to a couple of months), formal jobs that were more involved (and occupied months or years of their time). During the time of the Club, the students’ jobs included: vegetable vendor, restaurant cooks, cleaning lady, lottery ticket seller, factory worker, dental assistant, and babysitter. Two students maintained home businesses (Nidia and her mother sold homemade bread and other bakery items, while Guiselle made copies and created worksheets and other assignments for Elementary school teachers from two schools near her home).

As participants described their jobs, I intended to understand how the abilities they put in practice to do their jobs could be transferable to the academic scene.

For example, in the description of her job, Guiselle evidences how she has self-learned computer skills, how she has good reading comprehension skills and how she applies new knowledge in a practical way, being all these invaluable assets for any student.

Guiselle. My job is making copies and I help the teacher with assignment sheets.

Just a while ago two teachers came to ask if I could study the Ministry of Education's new guidelines for the grading book and registration, where the grades and all information of the students go. So they want to see if I understand what they are asking so I can help them out because they do not understand.

Teacher, start praying that I do [laughs].

Researcher: How did you learn to use the computer? Did you take courses?

Guiselle. No, No I learned on my own, well... also my husband helped, but he has never taken any course either, but his sister is an informatics teacher and when she was in college, he would take her books and read them. So now he can easily disassemble and assemble a computer like nothing, so I have been learning by his side. At the beginning I was very scared of them even to just turn them on, I thought it might just blow up in my face, and he told me don't be scared, nothing is going to happen, and if something happens that's what I am here for, I will fix it. So that gave me lots of confidence and I started to use it every day and I learned and the computer also teaches me and I have discovered what works and what doesn't. Maybe I don't know how to use a certain program, but I start trying and at some point I can at least use it for the basics." [Guiselle, personal communication, November 2020].

Yessenia's description of her job took around three minutes of our conversation, during which she described her responsibilities in the plant nursery using high technical language, she described processes about the production of plants for exportation with impressive detail. Clearly, Yessenia evidenced great ability to internalize, explain, and describe mechanisms, most likely she could easily put in practice in her everyday life as a student. This is what Yessenia said:

At my last job at the plant nursery I learned how to produce. So quality and production go hand by hand, but I wasn't in the quality section, I was in production and I was a temporary employee for the high season. I learned a lot there. I learned what is the slip or cutting of a harvest, what is the slip that is not good because it has dried and has to be thrown out. We also had to clean the water pipes when they got clogged, they got filled up with the plants' roots so we had to open them up and clean them, scrape them and take out all the rubbish. [Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021]

Vicky has had a few jobs that have taught her various skills, she specifically points out that she has become more of a people person, that she is a good listener and that people like to talk to her. Additionally, she thinks she has developed patience and tolerance by working around others and most of all serving others. Finally, she states she is able to prepare basically any food she wants.

I worked at the "Barra Imperial" [a bar that is present at different outdoor events like festivals and carnivals throughout the country] at the Palmas Carnival. My longest job has been at a Soda [like a diner] cooking, but recently I just worked there for a week, it was last year that I worked there from January to September.

The first months it worked there every day, and I would go to school at night, so it was not that hard, I managed. But then there was a problem with the business so they started closing in the afternoons. When COVID started they hired me on the weekends, but I had started College so I got very tired, so I quit because on Sundays I finished working at 1 am and I had a class at 7 am with mandatory attendance. And the class was on oral communication so I always had to be prepared with a speech or we had a debate or so. And it was just exhausting, because in my job I had to be standing up 9 hours, cooking, sweating, etc. and I just decided to leave. Thanks to my time at the diner I think I can work at any place cooking, I know how to prepare almost anything. At the clothing store and at the Bar I learned how to talk to people, how to treat people when they need something. I learned how to be patient, I think I am charismatic and people like to talk to me. [Vicky, personal communication, January, 2022]

The students' low socioeconomic levels and their family responsibilities required them to have a job at all times; having a job meant being able (or unable) to sustain their family's food, housing and other basic necessities.

Vicky also clearly mentioned how she had people skills from learning how to talk to customers, treat them well, and even convince them to buy a certain product--skills relevant to customer service representatives. Knowledge related to content was also identified; e.g., those working as cooks often had to follow recipes, multiply numerical amounts to make over-sized batches, and fulfill the customers' requests. They had to prep food to make it ready for different orders, used scales to measure amounts (including converting from pounds to grams or kilograms at times).

In this section it was evidenced how students' belonging to different job environments and work forces have developed soft skills that can support their academic careers, not only by adding to their body of knowledge content like Yessenia's knowledge about plants or Guiselle's computer software proficiency, but also, they have developed soft skills that will most likely support them throughout their daily life and successes.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

While the Findings highlighted the centrality of funds of knowledge for participants, this chapter discusses the three key themes in the participants' lives that emerged from analysis of the data: participants (1) drew on *multiple* interlocking sources of funds of knowledge, (2) used the classroom as a place to be heard, and (3) emphasized experiences as sources for motivation in the classroom (both for success in academics and desired life goals). Each of these themes are discussed in terms of how the participants employed them toward success: (in academics and life). The implications of the findings are discussed in two ways, namely (a) how they impact practice, and (b) and how the findings introduce new considerations in Funds of Knowledge as a concept as it is connected to Feminism Pedagogy, Adult Education, and Gynagogy.

Data in this section show how participants drew from multiple funds of knowledge (as sources of knowledge and skills acquired outside of formal academic settings), and that this knowledge is valuable and worthy of bringing into the classroom (both to scaffold learning and to acknowledge the learners as persons toward making education relevant), as they impact the students to continue (or maybe not) in the academic journey. In particular, family, religion, and other social networks (often overlapping with family but also as an independent source) comprised a matrix of funds of knowledge participants drew on.

In general, funds of knowledge expose the idea that students acquire skills and learning from what they have experienced in their daily lives at home, school, and community (Moll & Gonzales, 2004; Velez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1992). Although the concept of “funds” of knowledge suggests a plurality of such resources, this plurality also extends to different types of funds and their “hybrid” combination (González, 2006; González et al., 2011). For the participants in this study, this hybridity meant especially family, religion, and other (more

extended) social networks as combined funds. Accordingly, although we break these factors out individually in the following, this is only an organizational strategy to allow focusing on these severally entangled funds.

Interlocking Sources of Funds of Knowledge

Family

Family Membership. Students in the study stated how their family offered them motivation, support, and purpose to keep pushing forward with their studies. For example, Yessenia tells about her mother helping her pay for a course she wanted to take; knowing she would soon graduate high school and with this she could aim for new and better job opportunities, she wanted to expand her knowledge on how to care for the elderly (which had been an interest of hers for some time). Guiselle's daughters needed her to help them with their studies, so this necessity or motivation to see her daughters succeed academically impulse her to also better herself academically. Jacky looked up to her oldest sister's academic achievements and strived to follow her steps. Nidia's husband, mother, father, and son came to see her at the museum presentation and celebrated her accomplishments together, developing in her a sense of success and recognition.

Throughout their studies on children's funds of knowledge, Moll et al. (1992) found that children specifically *learned* (i.e., gained new knowledge and specific skills, like knowing who to ask for help and how to accurately talk to people to obtain help and exchange of resources) from their families (as their most immediate social networks). Although this dissertation study found no direct evidence that participants specifically learned to ask for *new* knowledge or skills from the example of others, they manifestly reported being able to move forward with their education and attend to their studies because they had family and broader social networks and

knew how to negotiate those hybrid funds of knowledge to ask for help and from people who could offer such help. Furthermore, Oughton (2010) highlights studies (Seiler, 2001, Andrews et al, 2005) that have identified how adult funds of knowledge can also arise from the individual themselves. The author, proposes this could be a more fitting concept for studying adult funds of knowledge; (i.e. looking at how adults construct their individual funds of knowledge, independently from the resources that the family offers). Nevertheless, the participants of this study, although adults, relied heavily on the family household (parents, siblings and their own children), a household from which they still had not become independent. In the following examples, it is shown how this invaluable support was manifested in the students' lives. Nancy expresses how her mother would provide child-care in the evening so that Nancy could go to school; she also could call on a friend (as part of a more extended social network) to perform this function when her mother could not. Lauriza—in conjunction with home-life support; she constantly mentioned her children (teenagers) as her source of inspiration and motivation—also depended greatly on her broader social network of teachers and counselors to motivate her with words of encouragement to keep going and not give up. In contrast, Guiselle reached out to school staff to support her family (e.g., her husband's mental health issues) and negotiated flexibility and understanding from teachers when going through family problems.

Yessenia extended her funds of resources to employment by forming a team of mutual support with her mother, organizing their work schedules so they could both support the rest of the family by being at home taking care of the little ones and cooking for them. More generally, conversations in the WhatsApp group showed that students had built a community of support among themselves and were committed to helping each other successfully complete The Club's assignments. Agreeing with my initial discussion themes, the Whatsapp group added an

additional safe space to that of the classroom. Common texts would be: “ Can someone post the homework again?, my phone stopped working and I lost it.” Or, “Can someone tell me in Spanish what I need to do? I didn’t understand.” Or “I am not feeling well, can someone come with me to the counselor’s office?” Congruently with the literature, WhatsApp has been seen as a communication means that allows for these types of communities of support to arise (Cronje & Van Zyl, 2022; Klein et al., 2018; Madge et al., 2019).

Unsurprisingly, this hybridity of funds centers predominantly on family, (extended) family itself from my own personal experience, I would say this is a fundamental support in Costa Rica specifically. This overwhelming emphasis and importance may mask more “extended” hybridity (for example, family + friends, or family + teachers). Contrary to researchers’ belief that low-income student populations’ lack parent support in academic matters (see the discussion of Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 2000; O’Connor, 2001 inSmith, 2006), the student population in this study continuously showed evidenced of having strong family involvement in their studies and promoting value for education itself. For example, Silvia described how her mother registered her to take a course with a Peace Corps representative when she was younger and how this had motivated her to keep up her English-language proficiency learning. While this support (as an anecdote told to Silvia) originates with her mother (someone in her immediate family), its scope is already global (involving Peace Corp activities elsewhere on the globe). Similarly, while Jacky says her father was very happy and proud that she was in the Club, he also emphasized how much knowing another language would benefit her future outside of the family (and in a Costa Rican context where English proficiency is a significant economic skill, both for people individually and as part of the Costa Rican tourist industry) (Rojas-Alfaro & Chen, 2019). These examples echo many other studies (Hedges et al.,

2019; Sebolt, 2018) where family support structures—whether as immediate family (spouses, children, parents), extended families (e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins), and even families of choice (e.g., affective or emotional networks of acquaintances and friends) who have been deemed by the learner as part of their "family" in a non-genetic or indirect sense- play an invaluable role in academic success.

A key emphasis in “family” in general is a tendency for an obligatory reciprocity among (especially immediate) family members (signaled in the adage, “blood is thicker than water”). Support in this sense can be embedded in a dynamic of expected and reciprocated support (both in the home or from afar, e.g., remittances) (Kim, 2022; Mwangi, 2017); this was the case for Yessenia, Nidia, or Nancy who reciprocated childcare provided by other family members (while they were at school) with chores and housework in the home. Nevertheless, this fund of knowledge is not always expected to be reciprocal (Sebolt, 2018); in school settings, teachers are or may feel obligated to support students, while not demanding the same from their students.

The example of Guiselle exhibits a rather unique variation of this: obligated and having promised to care for the mental health of her husband (who could not be left safely at home), she brought him to school with her (where he also supported her by taking care of "bureaucratic" details of her schooling, so she could concentrate on her academics). For example, when missing some classes to attend The Club, Guiselle’s husband would take notes for her and help her keep up with whatever was missed, as Guiselle states: “My great advantage was that my husband was my classmate and he knew I would be asking him about the class I missed and I wanted details so, he had to pay attention and take notes on everything.” [Guiselle, personal communication, April 2021] This is arguably an example of extending “family” into the otherwise non-familial setting of the school itself and thus ambiguously blurs the line between the otherwise tidy and

discrete categories of “family” and “broader social network.” Similarly, while Silvia, Guiselle, and Lauriza received and elicited constant motivation from the teachers, can we truly maintain that this (as a fund of knowledge from “broader social networks”) is sharply distinguished from similar encouragement through “family” support?

It was evidenced in this study the daily struggles my participants went through, and how families, teachers, and friends supported them through high school, and how those support structures played an essential role in their educational advancement. It seems to be that while the more privileged are supported by social structures that favor them, the least privileged have learned to navigate society making use of what life experiences and people around them have taught them, and although I make reference to my participants’ character—and Tough (1967, cited in Ozuah, 2016) emphasizes *character* as the key to success—this should not be strictly understood in individualistic terms only (if at all). While it is true that the participants exhibited success in part through their determination, it cannot be said that those students who failed or dropped out of night school (to say nothing of the “invisible” ones who never tried to attend night school at all) were unmotivated, lacked character, or could have definitely succeeded if only they’d been more determined about their educational destination. It is always necessary to take into account the circumstances of people’s lives and, in some cases, to acknowledge that those made it basically impossible to continue (or start) an education.

The clear example of this is Silvia dropping out of College. Is she just not determined enough and lacking the requisite character, perseverance, or grit to keep moving forward, or was there a dramatic collapse of the supports she had in her life that precluded her participation (and even simply the scheduled interviews)? Factually, over the life and development of the Club, Silvia lacked support. Despite having around her the high school staff and teachers and her

classmates encouraging her and offering emotional (and even economic) support—Silvia’s world, as I later found out, fell into a hole at the same period in which she felt able to enter and start attending college. By the time of the pandemic, however, her network of support was gone. Her husband had left her for another woman, and her classes (as well as her children’s) were online, both isolating her and leaving her without guidance about whom to reach out to in school. Subsequently, her grades dropped, she lost her scholarship to attend, and that was that.

It is easy to “blame” Silvia for this outcome and to concoct counterfactuals that might have mitigated or overcome the heaviness of actual events in her life. But the question hinges crucially here on whether this is a failure of character, a social insufficiency of adequate funds of knowledge, or a shortfall of effort (by her, by others) to seek or create new ones. For one, the very real possibility of the effects of depression in Silvia’s life (due to COVID isolation, a failed marriage, and poverty) could in-principle afford an extension of empathy or sympathy and an explanation for this outcome other than blame.

In this dissertation, I point expressly to a probable shortfall of funds of knowledge for her to have drawn on. A central principle of funds of knowledge is that students have them; the failure of a school system to identify and put them to use is, at the very least, as much the fault of the social setting as any person’s failing. A paralyzed person who “fails” to walk up a staircase is hardly the only “culprit” in the situation.

Alternatively, we can recognize that the “successful” participated in (or had the advantage of) support structures that afforded adequate funds of knowledge to succeed, and that those who “failed” were not afforded those adequate funds by the social world, i.e., all of the rest of us. Making it Silvia’s “fault” not only allows a dubious and usually inaccurate self-congratulation but also a refusal of an inter-social obligation we (as human beings) all have for

one another. Whether or not “we” could actually have done enough or more to become an adequate fund of knowledge for Silvia’s successful navigation through the world of academic striving, and that we would *never* have to ask such a question is itself morally suspect.

Indeed, research (Herrman et al., 2011) has shown that students’ relationships with others help them develop higher levels of resilience in a “process of positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity.” (p. 259). Herrman et al. (2011) show how the concept of *resilience* has evolved to include the contributions of often interlocking systems (e.g., families, services, groups, communities, and broader networks of interaction) for assisting people coping with and overcoming adversity.

Participants in this study often exhibited high levels of resilience in part thanks to relationships in their lives and the dynamics that arise within those connections. Supporting this definition of resilience (Herrman et al., 2011), the Findings point to the night high school administration’s provision of services (including counseling, a dining room, governmentally supported childcare) cited by participants as supportive of their successes. According to Klar and Brewer (2013) “decades of research have determined that principal leadership can have a significant, if indirect, effect on student learning” (p. 771). This study supports this idea as the students gave testimony of how they found support from the different members of El Cerro night high school. It is this hybridity of a diversity of funds of knowledge (and their interconnection) that afforded most participants’ successes while not serving Silvia’s. “Success” or “failure” thus falls on a multi-dimensional spectrum: without access to additional monies or childcare that other participants’ had access to, or the support of a loving partner offering support and care (but instead the bitter grind of an ex-partner), even a network of friends and colleagues lending a helpful ear may prove insufficient.

Clearly seeing such a case of inadequate “funds of knowledge” pushes the notion in a new direction, by centering the shortfall more on the social world’s failure (or inability) to elicit and connect to Silvia’s funds of knowledge. It raises the question (already raised) whether the genuine efforts by the world (and its specific social dynamics in the school) could have been augmented, rather than interrogating the defects of Silvia’s character. This is not to say Silvia had no hand in the outcome; she might well have (rationally) decided that going to college was actually a waste of her time ultimately. Nor is this simply a broadside against an underfunded school system not adequately provisioned by national budgetary priorities, global austerity, and other limitations to elicit and draw upon every single fund of knowledge that every single student exhibits. Rather, to the extent that funds of knowledge theory could “invite” a recognition of the social world of students into the classroom, that social situation can also be a part of any analysis of it, adding an additional layer to the understanding of students’ funds of knowledge, how they are acquired and sustained throughout time, and through the toughest of experiences. And, furthermore, how can educators skillfully access this information and work with it to offer a solid educational experience for their students.

Family Activities. Another point of discussion that reflects the literature is how funds of knowledge emphasize student acquisition of skills and knowledge through their participation and roles in daily family activities (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). Being part of a family nucleus required students to assume different roles. Although the majority were single mothers, they had not moved out of their homes. This living situation impacted their lives in different ways. For example, they were able to have support for the caretaking of their own children, but they also took care of siblings, nieces, and nephews. They were breadwinners and contributed to

covering expenses for everyone in the family. They took care of the cleaning, cooking, and finances of the house.

In the case of marginalized and low socioeconomic communities, these roles are most likely assumed in a survival mode. That is, families come together to help each other subsist. Some of the skills that came up from the Findings involved participants having effective time-management skills; for example, when Guiselle described her daily routine. A day for her started the night before, when she sat down to make sure she had all things necessary for her next day to work out as she wanted. She set her alarm, knew what she would cook for lunch, did her homework, checked up on her daughters' studies, and made sure she had completed her job tasks. Additionally, all participants had jobs (or were between jobs and looking for jobs, or had cobbled together several part-time jobs), they all had to manage work schedule, school schedule for them and their children, plus the management of their family life, including in many cases, multiple pets.

Participants also exhibited financial and budget management skills. For example, having a job meant they had an income. Such income had to be carefully budgeted to make ends meet and, when not, to make decisions around the lack of money. For instance, Nancy described not being able to enter college just yet due to unexpected expenses within her family situation—what she called “her life as a single mother.” The majority were homemakers, making sure their families were well taken care of and had their basic needs satisfied. For example, although Nidia lived with her parents, husband, and baby, she prepared her husband's lunch for work and cooked all of the family meals. She also managed the finances of the household, including her for parents.

An important consequence that arises through these activities and the hybridity of multiple funds of knowledge is how participants could transfer abilities, skills, and knowledge acquired long ago or recently to their role as students. Although not specifically stated, one could assume that time management skills were used as they juggled life as students, moms, daughters, wives, and sisters. Another possibility would be that students' roles as housewives and decision makers, have developed in them the leadership skills that could account for involvement in different school roles. For example, two thirds of the student participants of the Club were president or vice-president of their respective classes. Finally, budgeting and assuming financial responsibility for the household expenses could develop skills that would be useful in specific subjects like math and accounting. Some of these skills, not ideally, had been acquired at very young ages, often as premature adulthood (or a denial of childhood). A majority of the single mothers had had their child/children around the age of 15-16, with a consequence of immediately having to assume adult characteristics (often supported by their own parents). However, various factors, including typically poverty, led to similarly premature acquisition of skills (e.g., foregoing school to stay at home to provide childcare or family income).

This echoes previous literature; for example, Rios-Aguilar (2010) compared the academic achievement of Latina/o and white students and concluded that there is a significant association between some components of funds of knowledge (for example, social reciprocity, household frequent activities, parental educational philosophy, parental language acquisition, English literacy-oriented activities, Spanish-oriented activities) and students' academic success. Critical to note here is that participants' roles in their families contributed positively to academic and non-academic outcomes. Certainly, this hybridity (that draws from as many resources as are available) is informed by the necessity of survival mode. Nonetheless, it points to an emphasis

not necessarily frequent nor adequate for the operationalization of funds of knowledge. Future research might examine more exactly how transfer of skills from one domain to another inform funds of knowledge. Relatedly, the notion of *translanguaging* (especially by bi- and multi-lingual speakers) comes to forefront as it understands coordination of a plurality of languages not “simply” switching from one language to another but, rather the development of a single, unified linguistic repertoire that blends linguistic resources in two or more languages. This blending of multiple domains into a unified practice may mirror, or at least provide an analogous framework for understanding, hybrid funds of knowledge as unified repertoires of practice drawing on more than one domain. Again, future research could investigate this.

Religion

Another important finding in this study is that students believe that a higher power can determine a person’s life situation and this research shows how this is a fundamental coping strategy for many of the students of this study. As often noted by participants, they described putting their destiny in God’s hand. For Nidia (and her husband), they are active participants in their church’s choir and other groups like bible study; none of the other participants mentioned church practices or groups specifically. Rather, they all cited their faith and trust in God to make things better (or as justifying things that happened to them). For example, in their daily conversations, participants often used phrases that invoked God, such as “ si Dios quiere, yo le pedí a Dios, Dios sabrá por que hace las cosas.” [if God allows, I begged God, God knows why things happen], evidencing their trust in a higher power, finding relief in the idea (for how this could allow them to worry less about what had happened or was happening), or as a way to give “someone” else the responsibility.

From my own experience as a Costa Rican (and having grown up in the same town as the participants), the Catholic faith and activities related to it are part of the daily life of growing up that have been handed down for generations. Other authors (Arredondo, 2013; Canul, 2003) who have studied Latino cultures, agree that “our [Latinas/os] spiritual beliefs do influence our comportment in many aspects of our lives, including our jobs. The influence of religions for Latinas/os is so significant that it is difficult to separate Catholicism from Latina/o culture itself” (Canul, 2003, p. 173).

Costa Ricans have ingrained in their speech phrases like “Si Dios quiere (if God allows).” On many occasions, if someone misses saying, “Si Dios quiere,” someone else will finish the phrase or interrupt so the person can add it. Most of the times, this will be a parent or grandparent. For example, a common dialogue would take this form:

Daughter: Mami, mañana voy (mother interrupts: “Si Dios quiere”)

Daughter continues: si, si... mañana si Dios quiere, voy a ir a al supermercado, necesita algo?

Latino families rely highly on religion and faith for support; for example, Skinner et al. (2001) studied the religious beliefs of Latino parents with children with disabilities and concluded that religion was a source of support and understanding around why events happen as they do. As shown in the findings of this dissertation, participants responded to troubling situations in their lives through the light of their belief and trust in God. For example, Guiselle put in God’s hands the healing of her husband’s mental health issues; Nidia justified her unplanned pregnancy as a message from God to avoid her and her husband from getting into drugs and other bad habits. This understanding conforms not only to funds of knowledge that have been passed down by faith traditions and beliefs proper to the family and community but

also as a coping strategy onto which participants grasp in moments of crisis or despair to feel support and courage (from the divine) to move forward.

It is important to note here that research literature specifically focusing on “funds of knowledge” and religious themes (based on study titles) return very few results. While an exhaustive and exact search of available research was not conducted, simply the numbers of search returns themselves suggest the lack of focus on religious themes as specific funds of knowledge. For example, a search in Google scholar for “funds of knowledge” in general returned 34,700 results; when delimited to studies with “funds of knowledge” in the title, the number of results dropped to 788. The following table summarizes searches without no in-title delimiter, with an in-title delimiter only on “funds of knowledge,” and on both “funds of knowledge” and the additional search term:

**Table 3:
Literature Searches for "Funds of Knowledge" and Select Religious Themes**

"funds of knowledge" +	Not Title- Delimited	"funds of knowledge" Title-Delimited	Both Delimited
n/a	34,700	788	n/a
“belief”	16,000	187	0
“indigenous”	9,700	129	0
“religion”	7,430	131	0
“faith”	5,650	68	0
“Catholic”	3,490	53	0
“Muslim”	2,350	35	2
“Jewish”	1,870	10	0
“Protestant”	875	5	0
“Hindu”	495	6	0
“atheist”	114	0	0

While it is clear from the above data that a robust literature on funds of knowledge exists, two orders of magnitude fewer studies explicitly link “funds of knowledge” (in the title of the

study) to at least allusions to varieties of faith-themes; moreover, only two studies (both on funds of knowledge among people of Muslim faith) appear in these searches. Identifying the importance of religion as a fund of knowledge for participants in this is therefore a very significant addition to a large gap in the literature.

School

Several examples have already illustrated how participants drew on (or even co-opted, in Guiselle's case for her husband) resources at the school site. Available resources themselves are not funds of knowledge in their defining sense; rather, the habit of searching out any such available resource, and a willingness to access them comprise Funds of Knowledge. As has been carefully laid out in this dissertation, it is critical not to overlook how what can seem like individual character or grit or perseverance is able to manifest because there is external (perhaps not visible) support for various achievements. Academic success is often very rooted more in home-life affordances and privileges than intellectual student capacities per se. That said, the initiative to lean into teachers, administrators, and materials at the school as resources can arguably be laid at the feet of the learner. Certainly home-life can foster confidence, positive pride, and initiative-taking as much as it can extinguish it, but actually practicing these on-site as much involves the school's extension of an invitation eliciting such initiative and the learner taking such initiative. All of the participants, to greater and lesser degrees, exhibited this forthrightness about accessing school resources as aids to their education, even Silvia.

The Classroom as a Place to be Heard. The Club (teacher and students).

Additionally, however, the Club itself became a fund of knowledge, as the participants (including myself) became a site of skill-sharing, mutual physical, emotional, spiritual, and scholastic support, and even a kind of "tool" that students could use, alone or collaboratively, for

moving toward attainment of English-language proficiency. It is critical to point out that funds of knowledge are not static; they enter into the classroom (on the first day) in some state but evolve over the lifetime of the classroom. For a setting like the Club, the Funds of Knowledge became no longer only personal but communal, as the Club itself as a Funds of Knowledge (as noted) itself evolved over time. Funds of Knowledge research generally argues that students' Funds of Knowledge should fall under a teachers' gaze and interests so that they can include them in the classroom—as much to make lessons more culturally relevant and relatable (scaffolding) but also to acknowledge students' lived realities and perspectives (respect). Part of this awareness involves tracking how available Funds of Knowledge change, how students begin to newly navigate through the lived-in space of the classroom itself, especially as learned skills from others.

Similarly, Smith and Lucena (2016) studied underrepresented engineer students who expressed feeling a lack of belonging in engineering because of their families background and underprivileged upbringing. The authors study aimed to “explore the value and relevance of their (the students’) backgrounds for engineering and found that their family and the work experiences did shape the innovative ways in which they approached engineering” (p. 3). Furthermore, when the authors made students aware of the concept of Funds of Knowledge and, through activities and interviews, brought to the forefront students' value of their backgrounds, their upbringing in poor households, and the skills that they had developed throughout their life experiences, the students themselves started to recognize how these experiences actually shaped their unique way of belonging in engineering.

This dissertation does not only advocate for educators to become familiar with and respectfully scaffold adult women's Funds of Knowledge but to lean into the teacher's role to

actually disclose and make visible how to facilitate learners' learning even in the face of difficult situations. More simply (and complexly), this involves recognizing how the teacher is simultaneously a part of and apart from the peer-group of a classroom, especially one like the Club. As I worked with these adults, I was able to directly ask them about their funds of knowledge (although I never used this terminology) and how they used them. From previous examples above, when I interviewed participants, I asked what skills they had developed by performing different jobs over their lifetimes. It was not an easy or straightforward question for them (as they had not generally considered those jobs as skill-building), but the situation fostered discussions about self-awareness, a valuation of one's knowledge, and an affirmation of self-worth about what one knows and has experienced in life. In that capacity, the interview performed the advocated function within a Funds of Knowledge frame of learning about and respecting student experiences as Funds of Knowledge. However, I was also embodying the Funds of Knowledge advocacy to become aware of student Funds of Knowledge to scaffold learning; that is, I was reflecting back and offering students relevant awareness they could learn from.

Literature review in this regards has focused on teachers' reflection and change in perspectives as they do household visits and get involved with parents and communities (Reyes et al., 2016; Whyte & Karabon, 2016). Less has been done in contexts as the one represented in this study, The Club, an academic setting that intends to develop learning by creating an informal learning environment. As such, I was simultaneously a hybrid teacher and peer-learner, learning about my "students'" self-understanding, and reflectively teaching back to them a different framing (as an awareness) of what they were teaching me. Similar to my simultaneous insider/outsider status as a researcher in the United States who had nonetheless grown up where

the participants had, I was also simultaneously a teacher (in the Club) and a learner (as a researcher). Funds of knowledge research often focuses explicitly (as an advocacy) on teachers becoming aware that their students come into the classroom perhaps lacking specific knowledge about the curriculum of the day but also with useful resources (funds of knowledge) that can be drawn on to more effectively deliver the daily curriculum. This dissertation starts more from the standpoints of the students (and how they use their Funds of Knowledge to learn and cope, whether a teacher is aware of it or not). While this is a contribution to the literature, it also discloses how the teacher can become (or *is*) more than a resource for students to draw upon (when they have the will and means to dare asking). There is a privileged and necessary distancing that a teacher must maintain but also an opportunity to collapse the teacher/learner divide strategically for the sake of both parties learning. Given that this is a research study, it is as necessary for me to learn how to learn from my participants uses of their funds of knowledge as to learn how to teach them about both any curricular knowledge and their awareness of their Funds of Knowledge. This too seems a unique contribution to the literature, but in its most basic manifestation, it discloses how the Club (and the classroom setting itself) can include the instructor as a peer-member of the collective pool of funds of knowledge.

Other Social Networks

Another fund of knowledge in the Findings connects to the value of life experiences and situations participants accumulated through involvement with different jobs and work. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) stated that “ funds of knowledge has been used by educational researchers to document the competence and knowledge embedded in the life experiences of under-represented students and their families (p. 164),” with the intention of not only knowing about their students background and interests but also to incorporate these into the curriculum and take

advantage of the knowledge already known by the students, as they transitioned to the understanding of new knowledge (Rios-Aguilar, et al., 2011). In this study, all of the participants had one or more jobs (or were transitioning between jobs) during the day while studying at night. A sense of workplace belonging, navigating workplace ethics, and the development of skills (both “hard” and “soft”) all were funds of knowledge and coping mechanisms that I observed utilized in the classroom but also drew on for teaching, as will be described below.

It was evidenced throughout the interviews that participants were largely unaware of how they drew on skills in the classroom that they had gained because of their integration in the workforce. For example, despite having had jobs for most of their lives, participants expressed having limited to no knowledge about how to compose a cover letter or CV (or even what a cover letter was). Once explained to them and given guidance throughout the assignment and brainstorming what skills they could include in the cover letter, the students were very surprised at how many skills they possessed, and things they had learned in previous jobs that seemed so useless to them (professionally speaking), especially on jobs they did not consider professional. (For example, the ability to accurately handle money and make change, which all of the participants had done at different jobs, is a fundamental skill for being a bank teller, a job they considered professional). By this simple assignment, several participants became aware of work skills (as funds of knowledge) they could draw on in the classroom (at minimum, to complete an assignment to write a CV and cover letter) and other work domains.

Therefore, I argue that if this lack of skill-awareness could be a result from a lack of importance given to the jobs (or job context) where these skills were acquired, as they were not seen as professional jobs by the participants, Funds of Knowledge theory could be missing a piece, which is the importance of having students’ become self-aware of their funds and how can

educators move towards this pedagogy. Particularly, the CV activity allowed participants to realize how important it is not only for teachers to know about students' funds of knowledge but also for the students themselves to be able to identify their skills and transfer them to other activities as they move forward in life.

From the bulk of my informal conversations with participants, I could help them pinpoint skills as I asked questions and directed them to recall what kinds of abilities they used while performing a job. Students mentioned developing soft skills like time management (e.g., as when preparing food for customers who were waiting). Lauriza, who worked at a “ventanilla de comidas” [a food- truck- like establishment], regularly had to multitask as she took orders, cooked, and prepared orders for take-out. By identifying this as a multi-tasking skill, this alerted Lauriza that she was qualified when jobs asked for “multi-tasking” as a needed job skill. Once again, through this example, it becomes evident that this study advocated for the participants an awareness of their funds of knowledge and how they could use them to improve their lives.

As it happened with religion, an in-title delimited search for literature related funds of knowledge and work yielded a total of seven results: one about funds of knowledge generally, two for teacher capacities drawing on student funds of knowledge, one duplicate, and three examining work-related funds of knowledge explicitly (but only one outside of higher-education contexts). As such, this study would appear to contribute original data on a work-related funds of knowledge among poorer women and their support for classroom success. An overlapping theme with the limited existing research would be a valuation of working hard in the first place. Future research could study learner self-awareness of such funds of knowledge and the effects and uses for their learning processes and teacher awareness.

Implications

Feminist pedagogy in Funds of Knowledge as seen in Photovoice

As a culturally local fund of knowledge itself, the Club and its classroom became a space for better navigating daily life, because participants drew on it as a place for them to be heard, commiserate, and sympathize with others in similar conditions. Reflecting on feminist pedagogy theory, through the Club's Photovoice assignment, students had the opportunity to feel empowered as they shared their stories, and proudly understood their sense of self and valued the authenticity of their experiences (Shrewsbury, 1987).

While the Photovoice method had become established by the mid-1990s as a form of visualization, especially in healthcare (Adekeye et al., 2014; Daniels et al., 2017; Wang et al., 1996), its use has since expanded to other areas of wellbeing (Murray et al., 2015; Turk et al., 2015). As a method for this study's participants to "show and tell" their lives, it invited considerable motivation and satisfaction, consistent with other research (Seitz & Orsini, 2022); many participants described it as their favorite activity in the Club.

Research on Photovoice suggests that people "want to tell their story" (Nind, 2008, p. 15), while also struggling with real and perceived obstacles to doing so; this echoes participant actions in this study. For example, Nancy expressed how she finally felt safe to tell her story and she did so because (since others had gone through similar experiences), she felt she would not be judged. As for any use of Photovoice generally (Turk et al., 2015; Wang et al., 1998), participants seemed to be waiting (or had been waiting) for someone to ask them, "What happened (at that time, or in your life," while knowing that if they responded, it would be received in a safe space by others (not only by me as their teacher); others who would listen, encourage, admire, and understand them.

Augmenting this aspect, a feminist pedagogical perspective highlights how classrooms where students (especially female students) can talk about their life experiences can promote feelings of acceptance and being understood rather than judged (Shrewsbury, 1987). Such empowerment in (educational) spaces of nonjudgmental presence increases both participation and justice (Bello-Bravo et al., 2022). Accordingly, each of the students' Photovoice paragraphs and images reflect unique, transcendental moments in their lives. Nidia's photo of an empty classroom is how she saw her empty life before she allowed God into her heart. Nancy and her son's footprints (handprints) on the wall symbolize a new beginning for her after so many disappointments. Lauriza's collage of objects (see Figure 12) represented her multiple failures, bad choices, and abusive relationships. Through these documents, students shared with others their hardships, showed their character, and celebrated their courage. This too reflects feminist pedagogy's support for all students (and especially female students) to feel the power needed both as a way to "maintain a sense of self and ... accomplish ends" (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 8). Affording students opportunities to voice their experiences and "discover the power of authenticity (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 9) accomplishes this.

According to Yoshihara (2017), post-structural feminist pedagogues "focus on bringing out 'silenced' and 'marginalized' voices in the classroom, constructing knowledge with connections between gender, race, class, and sexual orientation" (p. 25). The students of this study were marginalized in different ways beyond the fact that they were women. They were also single mothers, in poverty conditions, and predominantly monolingual (Spanish) speakers in a cultural context that valorizes English fluency. For them, it was transcendental simply to be given attention, to be asked, "Tell me your story." Nancy speaks to this in her interview when she says she was not able to tell people her problems because she feared they think she was

looking for pity rather than understanding, “for support, not feeling sorry for her.” [Nancy, personal communication, April, 2021]. But bringing forth the participants’ otherwise silenced and marginalized stories was enhanced further by their end-of-class, public presentations of their Photovoice projects.

Per the emphases of feminist pedagogy, adult education can meet a social justice mandate that all students (especially female students) feel valued and recognized in the classroom; again, photovoice is one way to afford this. In this way, learners gain from seeing and hearing their life experiences treated as worthy and useful in the educational setting. The point of this has less to do with any daily curriculum and more to do with getting rid of the “secret curriculum” that covertly teaches that women’s (and girl’s) life experiences are unworthy, not useful, or at least not as worthy or useful as men’s (and boy’s). Another layer of this aspect that connects to worthiness, and was often seen in the Club was that of being asked to help (and being able to help with) assignments or administrative “logistics” of the Club afforded feeling needed and useful in an educational setting. For example, Guiselle highlighted, “I also reminded [other participants] of assignments, and I helped the teachers find the classroom or get materials they may need.” As well, Lauriza states that teachers would always reach out to her for help, asking her to do favors like organizing extracurricular activities or just by asking her to participate in different events, she states: “In school, everyone knew me because I was always involved in everything.” This kind of initiative-taking is a form of leadership, and one that empowers students to be not only students but teachers (or at least teacher’s assistants). Feminist pedagogy can emphasize this kind of *empowerment* as a key goal or effect in cultures where women are or feel disempowered.

These general remarks may apply in all educational settings (both for adult and youth learners). But the advocacy for this in feminist pedagogy is in reply to educational settings that consistently or systemically fail to extend these signals of value and welcome presence to females and, more generally, those that are underrepresented; that is, it is in recognition of the visible patterns noted (especially by women and girls) around how value is placed on classroom learners' experiences and funds of knowledge.

This study expands the concept of funds of knowledge to include feminist theories. As it was presented in the paragraphs above, feminist pedagogy and its application in the classroom can promote the discovery of students' funds of knowledge as it allows for a safe environment to create, discuss, share, and learn. Additionally, as funds of knowledge, feminist pedagogy principles advocate for the underrepresented, therefore the merge of these theories brings to the forefront initiatives to support social justice in education.

Even more, this study provides insight on how an all-female classroom might seem a remedy for classrooms where reliably non-equal distribution of experiences of worthiness and welcome presence occur. Understanding school settings as sites where social inequalities are an (invisible) part of the curriculum taught, the Club offered spaces where direct patterns of systemic sexism were largely absent and where mutual (sororal) support was common. When asked in the interview how they felt about the Club being women only. One hundred percent of the participants agreed it was a good idea and that they would not change it. For example, Nancy, Nidia, Jacky, and Yessenia all stated they felt they were all the same, with similar problems, and going through similar stuff. They felt understood.

Andragogy in Funds of Knowledge as seen through the use of lived experiences for motivation

Knowles' (1990) principle of andragogic motivation states that adults are typically motivated to learn and are self-directed because of this motivation. But it is necessary also to highlight how motivation can differ for each person (and especially across gender). For example, while motivation and demotivation are significant factors in adult learning generally, dropping out (as a de-motivation) for males is often more likely related to involvement with drugs, gangs, and joining the workforce; for females, it more often involves child-bearing, caring for others, single motherhood, and poverty (Luo, 2022).

Relatedly, Funds of Knowledge describe the various “resources” that participants could draw on toward effectively navigating through daily life. The data here show how adult learners used their funds of knowledge to motivate and give purpose to their activity and participation in the classroom (toward academic and ultimately life success).

In general, parents encouraged the majority of participants in this study to continue or finish their education by going back to school. Jacky relates how her parents specifically did not want her to become like them: struggling economically because of not having a high school diploma limited their job opportunities.⁴ Most of the participants found sufficient motivation to go back to school simply out of situations where they wanted to better themselves for the good of others.

Returning to school was also seen as a way to avoid less desirable situations. Nidia states that the moment she and her husband found out she was pregnant, they both became more determined than ever to complete high school. The same happened with Nancy; the moment she

⁴ Requirements for a high school diploma or its equivalent materially serve less to ensure some level of educated knowledge in employees and more to bar access to employment (and college) to demographics likely to have not completed high school.

realized that her son's father was not coming back to her, she decided it was time to take matters into her own hands to give her son a better and promising life by furthering her education. Silvia stated that learning and going back to school were a last resort for her, not only to move out of her depression but also to give her children a better life. This reflects that general claim for education, that more of it adds value to one's life prospects (especially economically). That this could often not pay out is not generally seen as a criticism of education itself.

While the participants had a clear vision on how education and their own strength of self-efficacy could help improve their life situations, they also generally had around them sufficient support systems at the time to make that decision—whether in the form of support from their family, educators, and/or governmental programs offering services like child care. (Silvia is the clearest example where a sufficient support system likely did not exist.) A value participants assigned to education (and keeping up with their studies) connected strongly to the idea that returning to school was a life-saving decision.

For my participants, motivation also came from the specific fact of learning English. Costa Rica a country where knowing English is highly valued and can open doors to obtaining better jobs and opportunities (particularly within the vibrant tourism industry). The participants expressed interests in learning English that included the possibility of obtaining a better paying job, fulfilling a desired wish, feeling empowered by having knowledge of a second language, being able to use it with people from other countries, and affording better support for their (extended) families. This echoes literature on adult education's that emphasizes on a learner's readiness to learn when they find importance in what is being taught. Again, adults can be self-directed learners (when they detect usefulness in what they study for their future and wellbeing).

This emphasis could also be global. That is, participants expressed wanting to learn (especially English) so they could communicate with more people and create relevant connections. They compared a need for learning English to learning technology, as a basic skill in the global world of the present, making the learning of these skills valuable and applicable to their life and giving it immediate use, per adult education principles (Knowles, 1990). The participants envisioned themselves as bilingual professionals, whereby adding English to their future professions would be not only a great asset (which encouraged them to learn the language) but a contribution to the “world” in general ways. Jacky was clear in this when she stated “Teacher, can you imagine I become a polyglot politician, and connect with people all over the world” [Jacky, personal communication, April, 2021] and Guiselle said: “I will be a bilingual psychologist so I can help people from other countries.” [Guiselle, personal communication, April, 2021]

Assigning this relevance to knowing English was a great impulse for them to find ways of learning it. As the participants evidenced through their conversations on WhatsApp [where they asked for help to understand assignments] or when they talked about pop culture and how they loved US made TV series and English versed music. They drew on funds of knowledge to learn the English language through media, friends, and teachers who offered opportunities to practice and encounter English. This was a process and journey that had to be especially purposeful in Costa Rica, given its predominant Spanish national language. Consistent with adult learners generally, participants scaffold their previous life experiences and situations to learn, internalized new knowledge utilizing the currently already-known knowledges, practices, and experiences, and collaborated with others in this process.

This reprises that basic funds of knowledge emphasis, that instructors can (if not must) strategize how to recognize these experiences as already in the classroom and draw upon them both for teaching and learning how to teach more effectively. Offering opportunities for students to share their life situations and conditions is one way to open up and bring visibly (i.e., audibly) into the classroom what constitutes our students as whole, integral human beings. However, this does not necessarily mean that teachers must exhaustively “research” each and every one of their students; rather, they can set aside time in the classroom to strategically elicit adult learners’ funds of knowledge to then speak to or teach toward those funds. The powerful response of the participants to the Photovoice opportunity also suggests that adult learners may especially appreciate this opportunity; very often, the several struggles, decisions, sacrifices, and turning-points in adult lives that have brought them into the classroom are unheard or unwitnessed (outside of the family). Public witnessing and acknowledgement of such experiences is powerfully motivating and involves simply a new approach, not necessarily an additional burden of time for the teacher. That one might “lose” 30 minutes of “knowledge” from teaching fractions to instead afford adult students a chance to speak about their lives (especially in the form of a facilitated discussion) may be a more educating use of class time overall.

Gynagogy (Klein, 1987) in Funds of Knowledge as seen through adult education and feminist pedagogy

Throughout this research, it became apparent there is a need to identify how adult men and women learn. This study echoes research on gynagogy, as (adult) women’s specific ways of teaching and learning (Klein, 1987). Although the term *andragogy* was used to refer to the ways adults learned (with the prefix “andra” being used for humans generally, in the same way English can refer to all of humanity using “man”), feminist pedagogical approaches have proposed to

take a closer look to identify not just how male and female adult learners are similar but also how they differ. As I got to know my students, the difference became more apparent simply by virtue of their physiological gender which at the same time made them have different life experiences; that is, the funds of knowledge that (adult) men and women draw from require different strategies for incorporating them into the class. In this study, I did not work with any male students, but my female students were explicit about situations in which they were affected in a certain way educationally given their roles as a mother, sister, and wife, that would not have obtained for a father, brother, or a husband.

Learning about the different ways men and women learn is necessary because even though andragogy does not genuinely intend to mean only men's learning, the cultural default to "man" as the "general" sense of "human" has made it so; and not only English, of course, as many languages use the word 'man' (i.e., *el hombre* in Spanish, *l'homme* in French, *dell' uomo* in Italian) to refer to all human beings generically. Thus, Perry's (1999) study on adult learners generally included only men as participants and generalized the results to all adults regardless of gender.

While feminist pedagogy already points to a need (or at least the opportunity) to make this differentiation, the term gynagogy can be used as a direct and exact parallel to andragogy. At a minimum, this accurately reflects how female participants could refer to themselves in gendered ways as mothers or sisters; Yessenia states: "I really liked that I had so many things in common with others who were also moms. There were some that were not moms, but they were aunts, or cousins or sisters and at some point have had to take care of nieces, nephews, siblings, so the conversation was always flowing." [Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021]. Few men would have made this exact comment, and we can imagine that statements like "I really

liked that I had so many things in common with others who were also fathers” or “I really liked that I had so many things in common with others who were also parents” could be motivationally different than the statements made by mothers, sisters, aunts, and so forth. Without intending to make stereotypical assumptions, it has been the case that women have been historically profiled as the caretaker types and have had this role put upon them by society as an expectation.

A key point throughout all of this research is that affording students an opportunity to share what they do and what they have learned in their workplaces and lives, through moments of free talk, show and tell, formal speeches and presentations, or specific assignments, not only support their learning as *they* teach their classmates about their experiences, but also support the proposals of feminist pedagogy and adult education that emphasize valuing students’ experiences and knowledge in the classroom. This public space of the classroom in an adult night school, in which students have presence as their fuller selves, affords a witnessing by others that is already powerful. Learners can feel their experiences and insights as valuable and relevant (to life). But even more powerfully, they can discover in someone else an experience or a trauma they felt was theirs (or their family’s) alone as a more general phenomenon in life. Others had similar experiences. In that moment of recognition, what was personal only is seen as social, and once it is understood in this more broadly social and cultural way, it becomes possible (no guarantees!) to examine the systemic barriers and patterns that exist in the environment. This has potentially transformative effects not just on the lives of participants but social life itself.

The data information and analysis of this study offer a view and understanding on how women learn and cope, and how better opportunities can be offered to people segregated, discriminated against, marginalized, left behind, and silenced. It has underscored the need for more attention to understand that not everyone has the same circumstances for learning. Not

everyone has the same starting point, the same rhythm, and the same resources to achieve success—moreover, success most likely comes more from the outside supports than strictly from within the person.

Additionally, this study can work as a reminder that students are never merely individual beings nor only members of a community, with people in that community surrounding them being either positive forces working for them, or a hindrance. Identity itself arises socially out of the world around people, above all in language (here Spanish) as the very medium of thought. Funds of knowledge theory encourages teachers to learn *from* their students, where they come from, who are their family and friends, what makes them happy, what makes them sad, worried, and what motivates them or brings them down (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992). Feminist pedagogy further advocates for this by encouraging teachers to offer spaces for students to (safely) talk about their experiences, emotions, fears, heartbreaks, secrets, dreams, and wishes (Tisdell, 1995). Adult education (Larrotta & Serrano, 2011) advocates for students to be able to find purpose and usefulness in what is taught, and teachers can only direct what they are teaching towards this goal if they have come to know their students; otherwise the curriculum only addresses a vacuum.

Drawing on these insights, teachers can offer students an environment that goes beyond the adult education requirement to be responsive to their needs and interests within a space that fosters their growth as persons, potentially blunts any previous dismissal or negation from previous educational experiences, and potentially offers a pathway to confronting and undoing systemic injustices. This incorporates feminist pedagogy's (Tisdell, 1995) proposal to value paying attention to women's life experiences and situations in the adult classroom, offering opportunities to share these in the classroom, not only to be heard and celebrated for what they

have accomplished and overcome, but also for the witnessing and possible solidarity to confront systemic injustices. This also supports adult education's (Knowles, 1980) emphasis on the role of experience for adult learning and how students' lives are what ground their most valuable resources as funds of knowledge for learning.

For the students of the Club, recognizing their funds of knowledge already in the room was particularly important both as counterevidence to cultural deficit model paradigms and because the majority of the participants' experiences (as less privileged people) had gone overlooked, ignored, or disregarded in the past. When participants were afforded spaces for out-of-school activities to share and bond, I could especially begin to see and to understand how their most cruel, traumatic, and sad experiences had played (and were playing a role) in their navigation through daily life (including funds of knowledge and coping strategies while learning).

At its most basic, schools and educational environments for adults cannot merely attempt to “push” education but must *learn* the funds of knowledge already present in students—both to better understand how those students will succeed but also to learn what resources they will need for academic success. Had this benchmark already been the case—if schools, communities, and education systems were already answering to student needs—then most likely Silvia would be about to graduate from college.

Next steps in research

Funds of Knowledge, Religion, and Faith

The specific finding around matters of religion and faith are a significant contribution to the literature and an area ripe for future research. Most countries are typically describable in general terms by their principal faiths, whether the Protestantism of the United States, the

Catholicism of Costa Rica, or the Muslim faith of Egypt or Morocco. These descriptions typically mask a much broader plurality of avowed faiths, including rejections of such (atheism, agnosticism), but where the general labels hold is that they set the "tone" or the default in a nation. Thus, the United States may call itself "Christian," but there is much more Protestant Christianity than Catholic Christianity. In Costa Rica, despite people following other religions in different ways, the dominant Catholicism fundamentally sets the default for understanding faith in the country. As such, the role of faith in the experiences of marginalized women seeking to complete English proficiency learning will certainly have key differences and most likely certain similarities with different professions of faith. It would doubtless be interesting future research to explore in greater detail the ways that religion plays a role, as a fund of knowledge, for populations like the one in this study.

Gynagogy and feminist pedagogy

One of the most critical "moments" in what gynagogy potentially offers (as a reflection of feminist pedagogy more generally) involves *how* one teaches. Gynagogy can implement the proposal in feminist pedagogy to open spaces for voices not normally heard to be heard; this applies to people of any gender but above all to those voices more regularly marginalized, silenced, or overlooked by prevailing and mainstream culture. A major emphasis in feminism generally involves an analysis and deconstruction of (gendered) hierarchies and how they unequally distribute participation and visibility. Not everyone pushed into the margin wishes to be visible, but for those who desire but are denied participation and visibility. The feminist analysis and deconstruction of hierarchy helps open spaces for that visibility and participation. While this requires "safe" spaces, it must be remembered how "safety" can serve its own marginalizing and silencing ends. For example, the emotion of anger is often framed as

threatening (and therefore unsafe), even when the anger is wholly justified (i.e., anger at racism, sexism, homophobia, and so forth). Gynagogy (distinct from andragogy) offers an attention and sensitivity to the specific dynamics of hierarchies in the classroom (as part of motivation to participate and learn)—not only in terms of who is or is not participating or visible, but also those who are not even in the room at all. This is an important contribution to adult learning that pushes andragogy per se in new directions. To this end, gynagogy offers a number of points of entry for more research: (1) how to foster sensitivity to hierarchies affecting visibility and participation in the classroom (including people who are not present), (2) exploring a documented preference by adult women for female instructors (Medendorp et al., 2022). Yessenia lightly points towards this when asked what she thought about the group being only women, she mentions that it was important for her that I was also a woman and a mother and could understand her.

Students participation in this research study

In a study, all collectible data is determined precisely by *who* can participate (not simply those qualified to participate by meeting the study criterion but also having the time and resources to participate). Acknowledging this as a limitation on research is a start, but when that limitation is shaped by the cultural background of participants' lived-reality, especially as underrepresented women, it may be necessary to build in more research or effort to reach populations otherwise typically out of reach (Bello-Bravo et al., 2010). Even among the marginalized, there are others who are even more intersectionally marginalized, and it is important that researchers are aware of this factor and they can potentially even consider it in their research design. The factors involved in these differences of participation may not be adequately documented in the literature, and although they could be seen as simply “logistical”

research problems (rather than important themes in research itself), when they come from participants like the ones in this study, this could form an area to focus on in future research. For example, during data collection, communication with my students was often interrupted by electrical power outages (due to weather), poor Internet connections (due to a lack of infrastructure) (Aker & Mbiti, 2010; Bohonos et al., 2022), and social factors as well (Bello-Bravo, Medendorp, et al., 2021). For instance, in the case of one participant (Silvia), a power outage interrupted the connection (after 35 minutes), and she then cancelled her scheduled subsequent interview appointments multiple times. I was later informed that she was going through marital and financial complications and had had to change her phone number multiple times. I was not able to get ahold of her most recent phone number. Equally, the seemingly insignificant amount of money given to participants to afford Internet access time for the interviews is not a negligible sum in Costa Rica; or, more accurately, the additional expense of data plan access is enough to seem like an unnecessary luxury to participants, such that assisting their participation by subsidizing that cost also assisted data collection for this research. In contrast to Silvia, one participant had a great deal to say and specifically requested a second interview so she could tell me more about her story and her insights about the Club. Socially, she could (for whatever life-reasons) find the time and means to participate extensively in the research process. If we could break down these situations and understand what resources students are missing that prevent them from participation in this study or in other relevant extra-curricular activities and projects, we could then add to the body of research that aims to improve learning and life conditions for underrepresented populations.

Student awareness and work-related funds of knowledge

Future research could look into ways teachers can help, through classroom activities, bring forward students' self-awareness of acquired skills through their involvement in the work force. Having students pinpoint these skills and reflecting on ways to transfer these and use them as resources that can support their learning processes. As well, teacher awareness can also come to the forefront as they learn about their students' skills and incorporate them in the learning curriculum.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are (1) like all qualitative research, there is an only limited generalizability that can be inferred from the data in the study; future research will have to explore what ways the findings of this study are applicable to other settings; (2) the study is necessarily limited by the narrow focus on its population; as marginalized women seeking to complete their English proficiency education in Costa Rica, the data do not necessarily reflect the marginalized women's populations in Costa Rica (or Central America generally), but also likely in key ways with women in Africa or Asia (especially southeast Asia), or any other part of the world. (3) the study is also limited, albeit productively, by the framework of analysis; that is, the use of funds of knowledge places a particular lens on the data (which generates interpretations) but also may obscure patterns or key themes not visible through that lens. (4) as already alluded to in the Methods, conducting digital research transnationally with Costa Rica introduced technological, infrastructural, and social constraints.

My voice, my journey, my research,

Me sublevé . . . Me fui al monte. . . bajé de la Sierra . . . Ahora soy.

-Nancy Morejón- Mujer Negra (1994)

When I think about how I have evolved as a researcher throughout the journey of my dissertation, one of the key things I come back to is that I have come to see a problematic situation from multiple perspectives, both practical and theoretical, while also becoming increasingly aware of my own positions as a researcher, a teacher, a woman, and as a Costa Rican living in the US. The journey within me has happened alongside the journey of the research project and its completion. In a strong sense, I have become very aware of how my own journey with my own Funds of Knowledge is a kind of mirror image to the experience of my students/participants.

I arrived in the United States in Fall 2016, to begin the coursework of my doctoral program. To a considerable extent, I was not a typical graduate student in the School of Education. I came with two children, a husband (at the time) and, unlike many students who were in their 20s and just starting out, I already had over 15 years of varied teaching experience, including elementary, high school, and night high school, as well as at my permanent position as a faculty member at the University of Costa Rica. Upon arrival, I remember very well not having any trouble with the English language in my classes. I could understand the professors and the readings. Yet, there were often things that would come up that I was unfamiliar with, with regard to certain shared texts or kinds of experiences that my classmates had often read, including types of experiences that seemed unreachable for me—for instance, references about their experiences abroad in Europe, or certain aspects of “high culture” art in the European tradition. While going through this, I was not fully aware of what was going on, but the irony eventually dawned on me:

I was one of the members of the cohort with the greatest amount of teaching experience, and life experience, on top of having a whole academic formation from another country; I was now in a doctoral program in a school of education; and yet, I was usually not asked to share my own experiences as a teacher in Costa Rica or to shed light on these! It was as if what I brought to the table was somehow inherently less important than the experiences of other groups of students who hailed from the US or countries that had been predetermined to be more significant.

Beyond the classroom experience, this lack of representation of my knowledge and my cultural references were repeated in the literature. That is, while we read many texts about education in the US or in other regions and countries, including China, we certainly didn't read about educational contexts in Costa Rica or pretty much anywhere in Central America or Latin America for that matter. Furthermore, although bilingual education and English learning is an important aspect of the Costa Rican system, the way bilingual education in the US is practiced has little to do with the way it is done in Costa Rica. It seemed, in many ways, that Costa Rica's experiences weren't important and that my culture and experience were not valued. However, as a student myself, and—drawing on my trajectory of experiences in many classrooms—I increasingly realized that my experience was indeed valuable and was worthy of validation. I wanted to talk about my experiences. So, in my graduate school journey, when I read Bourdieu on “cultural capital” for the first time, it was not just a theory to me; it resonated, and I started to have the beginnings of a conceptual framework for understanding not only my own experience, but also, in a mirrored way, the students who in Costa Rica attended the *Nocturnos*. It was for these reasons that Funds of Knowledge theory, in conjunction with Adult Education theory and Feminist theory, spoke so clearly and profoundly to me, and why it seemed imperative that I understand the problematic of Costa Rican *Nocturnos* through these lenses.

As I have grown, and theories have permeated my educator philosophy, I have come to realize how important it is for learners to share their experiences, whatever these may be. It doesn't matter if their experiences answer to the exigencies of what is considered high culture. Such notions are imposed by arbiters (and I mean this in the sense of "arbitrary") of what is deemed important. While it is obvious that all students choosing a course of study in Education at the doctoral level in the US should learn quite a lot about the US educational system, it is not at all clear from any "objective" lens why the other regions we studied were selected (the selections were contingent on which cultures or systems seemed more important to those building the curriculum).

Enriched by my theoretical understanding and personal growth, I thought about my students back home in Costa Rica. I was learning about Funds of Knowledge theory, about Adult Education and about Feminist Theory, and here I was an adult woman whose culture and experience were underrepresented. For a period of time, I had what I have come to call a "mirror experience."

It might seem that my students at the *Nocturnos* and I couldn't be more different: They were struggling to feed their families in Costa Rica while attending an underfunded night high school for non-traditional students who are typically not scholastic high-achievers, while I was myself already a professional choosing to pursue a doctoral program at a major research university in the US. Indeed, while these are very, very different experiences on the surface, there were some striking parallels of which I became increasingly aware.

Just as my classroom experiences were not validated, at least in part because I am from a Central American country, my students had grown up in a system and in a culture in which they were not listened to, whether it was because, within the Costa Rican context itself, these students

were attending *Nocturnos*, or because they were poor, or simply because their experiences didn't match the aspirational cultural capital of a developing country that is trying to become more modern and expand its share of high-end eco-tourism which relies on more worldly sensibilities. My students were not merely poor and underserved. It's that what they brought to the table was generally put aside. At this point, it is important to mention, my students were still just my students. They were in Costa Rica, and they were participants in the Club I have mentioned throughout this dissertation, but they were not yet research subjects, which is another critical juncture of my journey.

In Costa Rica, I studied how to be an English teacher, and my formation was based on methods, teaching methods, language teaching methods, foreign language teaching methods. However, I can't remember reading or learning about critical theories that highlighted inequalities, sexism, *machismo*, or introduced us to feminism.

Early on, I had to identify theories that could illuminate what was going on in my research participants. It had always been my teaching philosophy to use my own experience to do the best I could in the classroom, but this was in a more everyday sense. Reading and research into theoretical approaches helped me tremendously toward identifying and potentially ameliorating the kinds of problems that *Nocturno* students were having. I had not thought about understanding people, and what they were trying to convey through a theoretical lens, from a philosophical standpoint before. Feminist theory was particularly important to me because I feel that as a woman, me, I have often been silenced and discriminated against in Costa Rica and the US. Now, I could no longer just understand from a pre-theoretical standpoint with an unacknowledged subject position; through the journey, I learned that I first had to identify a theoretical lens and to understand my subjects through a theoretical lens. But not just any lens

was relevant or important for me; this is where I, Natalia, come into play. I decided to choose the lens that resonated for me and also for my students, as Latina Costa Rican Women. In my case, a woman getting her PhD, in the US while working with women in her hometown.

This project had its origins in my learning about a grant competition offered by the US Consulate in Costa Rica—one that Dr. Pawan and I eventually were awarded. One of the requirements for the grant was that the research would focus on underrepresented populations. It's because I had had experience with night high school students, and I was already certain that they were from underrepresented social enclaves and identities, that I knew this group of people would work well for the study. These were people who were often discriminated against, were usually women who had different privileges than men, and were already adults. Perry (1999) had studied adult education, but his studies (which were supposed to be representative of all adults) were all conducted with white men. So combining an adult education theoretical focus—for which, again, I myself was feeling something of a “mirror experience” in the US—was a great fit.

My own previous experiences, 15 years of teaching and, more specifically, 11 years teaching at the *Nocturnos* prior to the beginning of the research study, were extremely important to my study, for two reasons. First of all, I was familiar in a practical sense with how to have some success in the classroom with this population of students; secondly, because of the way I could approach the group, I would be conducting something that was much more akin to an ethnography than a typical research study. I have elaborated and explained the ethnographic aspects in Chapter 4, so here I will take a moment to reflect on my experience as a teacher at the *Nocturnos*.

First, let me add that, long before teaching at the *Nocturnos*, growing up as a child, I would hear comments from other kids and from adults in my circles that were clearly judgmental of teenage girls who had children and how they were directly and singularly responsible for their low station in life—comments like, “Why didn’t she take care of herself, ‘qué tonta!’” or “She deserves that for dressing the way she does, she had it coming...” and the like. Yet once I taught at the *Nocturnos*, all that changed, because as a teacher, I learned to actively listen to my students. Most of my students were indeed young mothers with multiple children; they were, or had been teen moms. Talking to them at length and regularly, as adults, led me to understand that each one of them had specific stories and different reasons. They also all had their own aspirations and dreams and beliefs, and although right here it would take too much space to go into the multitudinous details of these young, individual women, as I listened to them, the previous judgmental societal comments started to fade away, at least in me. When I first started this journey, I met my students because they were chosen to participate in the Club. So, in a first instance, they were my students, and over the course of my research project, this relationship of teacher-student was always a priority for me. By this, I mean that my philosophy as a teacher always came first; I aimed to create an emotional bond, one in which there is caring, genuine interest for their well-being—all of this before attempting to initiate an academic-content teaching process.

Part of my role as a *Nocturno* teacher (before my doctoral program), went far beyond the classroom: My students had immediate and important needs. I was their advocate, in the sense that I would try to advise them, direct them to people who could give them support, to the counselor, or, occasionally, even give them some money. I remember food drives for my students, baby showers for my pregnant students, and many other teachers would do this kind of

thing for their students at *Nocturnos*. There were problems and we found solutions. And this is another big change in me in this journey: I can chart the very way I went from being a teacher and advocate, in the sense that I've described here, to becoming a teacher, advocate and a researcher.

Before pursuing my PhD, I had written a thesis on teacher self-reflection in the classroom, and this was a very helpful exercise. I recognized this advocacy role that my teaching had taken on. In part, this is what led me to do more theoretically-informed work and to conduct a study that would serve as my doctoral research.

As I learned more in graduate school, I became interested in going beyond finding immediate solutions to emergencies, beyond putting out fires. I wanted to find a holistic, long-term solution. How to help them develop permanent skills, to help them prepare and confront life in a more productive way. This is how Funds of Knowledge is key, because it is through their own self-recognition of what they already bring to the table, from their many life experiences, that gets us at least halfway to where they need to be.

On a very personal note, I will add that this research project changed how I perceived myself as a woman, and, while I do not wish to go into much detail here, I actually made very big changes in my life due to this dissertation. The teacher's role in awakening self-awareness in their students is key to the success of Funds of Knowledge, and, again, in a parallel way, I had my own self-awakening. Examining my research participants and, as a corollary, myself, from the point of view of Adult Education Theory and Feminist theory, led me to start to understand why I did certain things the way I did, certain things that made me unhappy, and I was able to identify elements of my personal life that were lacking and which I needed to change.

Funds of knowledge theory and the awakening of self-consciousness are an important thing to think about – they are game-changers. This research has definitely empowered me. I believe women are capable of rising above troubling situations. I have learned from my students possibly more than they have learned from me: about love, strength, resilience.

I have learned about freedom. I have learned that I'm not required to be subjected to ideologies and beliefs that I don't agree with. I've learned that knowledge and preparation can offer this option to me. If I understand how the world and society works, it cannot dominate me and decide for me, like it did in the past.

And what about my students? I have been mesmerized by their strength and courage. My goal is that, through this Funds of Knowledge approach to learning in the *Nocturnos*, they can opt for freedom too.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Protocol

This interview will serve as a data collection instrument for a research project I am currently carrying out. I intend to find out what are the resources students draw upon when informally learning EFL. My research questions are: What are the Funds of Knowledge resources that the women used? How does the use of these resources reflect their coping and learning strategies?

PART I

I. Personal Background information

Possible questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself (where are you from, your high school level, age, family members).

Covert Categories: Where they are from, high school level, age, family members (children, siblings) who they live with.

II. The life of a women adult student at El Cerro Night High School

1. Please describe a normal week day for you.
2. How do you prepare to go to school?
3. When do you study? Do homework?
4. Why do you study?
5. What do you do to be an excellent student?
6. Why did you decide to go back to school after so many years outside of school?
7. What are your plans after you graduate?

Covert categories: priorities, family life, routines, challenges, aspirations, goals, objectives, daily schedule. Jobs, children.

III. English language learning background information

Possible questions

1. Tell me about the first time you were in contact with the English language.
2. If it was a class, what was it like?
3. What was a memorable moment you remember about you first encounters with English?
4. How did you feel during this moment?

Covert Categories: Feelings about English at an early age, feelings of frustration, challenges, happy learning moments, discrimination in the classroom (age, gender, social class).

IV. Importance of English language learning

Possible questions

1. Why do you want to learn English?
2. What does it mean to you to know English?
3. How do you feel when you can say or understand something in English?

Covert Categories: Personal growth, personal realization, self-esteem, autonomy, independence, economic growth/ independence, self-image, jobs.

PART II

I. El Capullo EFL Multimodal Club

Possible questions

1. When did you know about the El Capullo EFL multimodal club? Who told you about it? How was the process?
2. How did you feel when you knew you were going to be a part of it?
3. Why did you want to be in the Club?
4. What was difficult about belonging to the Club? How did you manage these difficulties?
5. What was fun/easy about the Club? What do you think made it fun/easy?
6. What was a memorable moment (good or bad) you had during your participation in the Club?
7. How did this moment make you feel?
8. What was your favorite assignment of the Club? (Have a list of the assignments ready)
9. Why was it your favorite?
10. What was your least favorite assignment of the Club?
11. Why was it your least favorite?

Covert Categories: time management, challenges related to other responsibilities they may have, feelings of growth, importance, empowerment, self-directed learning, autonomy, feelings of success.

II. After El Capullo EFL multimodal club

1. What do you miss about the Club?
2. Do you have moments when you wish we still had the Club? When do these moments usually come up?
3. What three adjectives would you use to describe the Club?

Curriculum Vitae

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Educational Experience

PhD. Indiana University, Bloomington. 2023
School of Education. Department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education

MEd. Universidad Latina de Costa Rica, 2013.
English Teaching (TESOL)

Teaching Certificate. Elementary School (1-6 grade)
Universidad de San Jose, 2011. Elementary Education

Licentiate. Universidad de Costa Rica, 2008.
English Teaching (TESOL)

Thesis Title: Teachers' Knowledge about their Action System as a Possible Cause to Successful Teaching Outcomes in the Colegios Nocturnos Académicos de la Dirección Regional de Educación de San Ramón.

BA. Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001.
English Teaching (TESOL)

Research Interests, informal education, adult education, women education, funds of knowledge, equity, inclusion, diversity, social justice in Education, professional development, professional learning communities, Global Education, , cultural immersion, language and power.

Grants and Awards

The Harste Alternative Literacies Fellowship Fund, Indiana University, Bloomington, \$5904, 2021-2022 academic year

Award in recognition of fostering innovative changes in research and scholarship within education. Graduate Student Conference awards. University of Illinois Urbana- Champaign. \$300

Covid-19 Rapid Response Grant by the US Embassy in Costa Rica. Project: Creating digital storybooks and distance learning guidelines to support primary-school English language teachers' reading comprehension skills teaching **for \$2000**
LASPAU- administered Fulbright scholarship for doctoral studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. 2016-2018

Universidad de Costa Rica scholarship for doctoral studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. 2016-2021

US Department of State grant to participate in the course: Study of the United States Institute on U.S. Culture and Society/ Multinational Institute of American Studies (MIAS). New York, USA. 2015

Professional Experience in Higher Education	School of Education, Department of Curriculum and Instruction	08/2022-06/2023
	CI2EAR Faculty Research Fellow	
	Visiting Instructor	
	Purdue University	
	School of Education, Department of Teacher Education.	
	Associate Instructor for the Global Gateway for Teachers program	08/2021-12/2022
	Indiana University, Bloomington	
	Research Assistant. Assisted in data entry and Coding for Learning Presence research Project in LCLE and IST departments.	Summer 2020
	Indiana University, Bloomington	
	Student Academic Center	01/2019-05/2021
Associate Instructor X158 “Culture of College” course		
Indiana University Bloomington		
English Teacher/ Researcher of the EFL Multimodal Project in Costa Rican Night Schools	07/2018-07/2019	
Writing Center Services		
Writing tutor for graduate and undergraduate students	08/2018-12/2018	
Indiana University, Bloomington		
Universidad de Costa Rica, English Professor		
English Teaching Major		
Sede de Occidente, San Ramón	2010/2016	
Graduate Course:		
Culture, Society and Language		
Undergraduate Course:		

English Oral Communication I-VI, Lab I-VI,
English Written Communication I-IV, Reading
Strategies for ESP I and II, Basic English I and II,
Conversational English for Tourism I and II,
Corporal Expression, Phonetics Lab
Conduct Research- Student advisor
Design and Implementation of Introductory
Leveling English course for Freshmen students.
Participation in Program evaluation and
accreditation process of the English Teaching
Major.

Universidad De Costa Rica
English Teaching Major 2006
Sede del Pacífico, Puntarenas, Costa Rica
Undergraduate Course: Oral English
Communication I

Publications

Rojas, R. Ramírez, N. (**Under review**).“Reconceptualizing bilingual literacy teaching materials development: A social justice education-oriented framework for primary school teachers.”

Ramirez-Casalvolone, N. (2022). The story behind Jacky’s cell phone: bringing the invisible forward. In Bonk, C.J., & Zhu, M. (Eds.). (2022). *Transformative Teaching Around the World: Stories of Cultural Impact, Technology Integration, and Innovative Pedagogy* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003213840>

Ramirez-Casalvolone, N. (2020). Synergistic Team Teaching for Professional Development: A Case Study Approach. *Pensamiento Actual*, 20(35).

Degner, D., Gashan, A., & Ramirez Casalvolone, N. (2019). Case Studies. In B.L. Samuelson, J.M Frye, S. Hare & M. Covington (Eds), *Short guides in education research methodologies*.

Ramírez, N. (In progress). *Defying the benefits of traveling abroad through the implementation of innovative tools that guarantee cultural immersion in the Costa Rican ESL/ EFL classrooms*.

Ramirez, N. Vega, H. (2016). A Leveling English Course for Prospective First Year Students of the English Majors of the

UCR, SO. *Proceedings of the II English Teaching Congress, Huetar Northern Region, Costa Rica.* (243-253)

Symposiums and
Conferences

Presentation at AECT22 Conference (*Online, 2022*) “International and Interdisciplinary Inclusive Online Professional Development”

Presentation at TESOL Conference (*Pittsburgh, PA 2022*) "Funds of knowledge & Online CR Night School Female Students"

Presentation at AAAL Conference (*Pittsburgh, PA, 2022*)
“Reconceptualizing bilingual literacy teaching materials development: A social justice education-oriented framework for primary school teachers.”

Presentation Instructional Systems Technology Student Conference (Bloomington, Indiana, March, 2022) “Identifying Costa Rican Night School female students’ Funds of Knowledge in an online informal learning environment”

UIUC College of Education Graduate Student Conference (GSC 2021)(Virtual) “Creating digital storybooks and distance learning guidelines to support primary-school English language teachers’ reading comprehension skills teaching.”

Presentation at TESOL Conference (*Accepted-Conference cancelled due to COVID*) (Denver Colorado, 2020) “

Presentation at TESOL Conference (*Accepted-Conference cancelled due to COVID*) (Denver Colorado, 2020) “

Presentation at the Learning Sciences Graduate Students Conference (Northwestern University, Illinois 2019) “An Ethnography on Feminism, Language and Culture.”

Presentation at the Literacy, Culture and Language Education Conference (Indiana University, Bloomington, 2018) “Revisiting Critical Situations to determine types of preparation graduate international students need prior to arrival at their host institutions”

Presentation at the Literacy, Culture and Language Education Conference (Indiana University, Bloomington, 2018) “Practical applications for cultural awareness and identity formation in contemporary global classrooms”

Presentation at the Literacy Research Association (LRA) (Tampa, Florida, 2017) “Constructing Cultural Imaginaries through Literacy

Pedagogies in Contact Zones: What does it mean to critically prepare Literacy Scholars in Contemporary times?

Presentation at the Share Fair (Indiana University, Bloomington, Fall Semester, 2016) Activity: *Using YouTube News Clips to Develop Cultural Awareness and Language Knowledge. (2016)*

Symposium: Repensar las Prácticas Educativas: Un Apoyo a la Pedagogía Intercultural. Presentación Proyecto de Investigación: *El Aprendizaje Intercultural en el Proceso Didáctico de la Comunicación Oral: Análisis de la Plataforma Aula Global (Universidad de Costa Rica, Recinto de Tareas (2015)*

K-12 Teaching Experience

Colegio Nocturno de Naranjo 2003-
Alajuela, Costa Rica 2012
Seventh- tenth grade English Teacher
Coordinator English Department 2005,2008

Colegio Patriarca San José 2002-
Alajuela, San Ramón, Costa Rica 2006
Eleventh and Tenth Grade Conversational English Teacher.

Colegio Nocturno Julian Volio LLorente 2003
Alajuela, San Ramón, Costa Rica
Ninth and eighth grade English Teacher

Escuela Federico Salas 2002
Alajuela, San Ramón, Costa Rica
Fourth, fifth and sixth grade English Teacher.

Colegio Maria Inmaculada 2000
San Jose, Costa Rica
Tenth grade English Teacher

Service

Board member of Fulbright Association at IU

Member of SLED Organizing Committee (LCLE
Department Symposium, Indiana University- 2019-
Bloomington) 2022

Volunteer at the Monroe County United
Ministries 2017,
2018

Radio Station ICER (Instituto Costarricense de
Educación Radiofónica)

Hogar Calasanz Nocturno (San José, Costa Rica) Year 2000 2016
Seventh Grade English Teacher. 2000

Membership
in
Professional
Organizations

TESOL