Title
Parent Literacy Activities and Interactions with School-Aged Children

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/65q0t3n4

Author
Zwass, Rachel

Publication Date
2014

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Parent Literacy Activities and Interactions with School-Aged Children

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Education

by

Rachel Helen Zwass

2014

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Parent Literacy Activities and Interactions with School-Aged Children

by

Rachel Helen Zwass

Master of Art in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Alison L. Bailey, Chair

Abstract.

This study sought to identify what language and literacy activities take place between school-aged children and their parents outside the classroom, as well as parents' motivations behind these activities. This investigation found that parents are aware of their children's abilities in language and literacy, are individualizing attention based on children's needs, and are fostering literacy and language development through both routine and special activities outside of school. However, parents could more effectively integrate literacy and language development into their busy lives with a better understanding of what is important for and expected of children in this age group.

Thesis of Rachel Helen Zwass is approved.

Carollee Howes

Kimberley Gomez

Alison L. Bailey, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Parent Literacy Activities and Interactions with School-Aged Children

The increasing language demands placed on children as they enter and move through their school years can be one of the most challenging aspects of learning for many students. In addition to content learning, the ability to read, write, listen, and communicate effectively in a school setting is a required set of skills. Parents have been shown to be important influences in children's language and literacy development in early childhood (e.g. Reese, et al., 2010; Chow, McBride-Change, & Cheung, 2010; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett's, 2006), but thus far their role in contributing to children's ongoing language development has not been sufficiently examined. Given the lack of knowledge in how parents contribute to language and literacy development in elementary school-aged children, this study explored what kinds of literacy related activities and interactions parents have with their children after children have begun formal schooling.

There is a wealth of research regarding the acquisition of language, language development, and children's experiences and environments during early childhood (e.g. Peterson, Jesso, & McCable, 1999; Primavera, 2000; Rodriguez et al., 2009; Snow & Dickenson, 1990; Imbens-Bailey & Snow, 1997; Taylor et al., 2009). Moreover, there is a large base of literature in early childhood research regarding the contributions of parents and the home environment on language development (Reese, et al., 2010). However, once children reach school age, there is a shocking paucity of similar information. After children enter formal schooling, the literature on the role of parent involvement in a child's language and literacy development decidedly shifts: in early childhood, there is a research base that includes the home activities and practices of parents with their children, such as observing dialogic reading practices (Chow, McBride-Change, & Cheung, 2010) or examining the home environment (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett's, 2006); after early childhood, the focus is mainly on parental

factors (such as SES) impacting academic outcomes (Castro et al., 2002) and a parent's involvement at the school site (Hill & Tyson, 2009; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). However, since children's language development is now recognized to continue beyond five years of age (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005), more research is needed to understand what contributes to this development as children grow and the demands on their language and literacy abilities change. While in recent years there has been an increased emphasis on the language and literacy demands of content learning for school-aged children (Bailey, 2010; Snow, 2010; Gomez & Gomez, 2007; Richardson Bruna & Gomez, 2009), little is known about the impact of parents' contribution to these language and literacy developments of this age group.

Considered through an ecocultural framework, parents exert a considerable influence over a child's development by and through the routine activities with which they engage their children (Weisner, 2002). While there are many factors that contribute to a child's academic success, including teacher quality, school climate, and the child's motivation, the role of a parent in a child's ongoing academic development may currently be undervalued or misrepresented in the literature because of a lack of knowledge of how parents contribute outside of the school setting. Given the well-documented contribution, impact, and effectiveness of parent involvement in developing language and literacy skills in children in early childhood, parents' roles with school-aged children should be explored with the same rigor to determine the developmentally appropriate ways a parent can contribute to a child's success in literacy. To begin to close this gap, this study sought to identify what language and literacy activities actually take place between school-aged children and their parents outside the classroom. This investigation found that parents are aware of their children's abilities in language and literacy, are individualizing attention based on children's needs, and are fostering literacy and language

2

development through both routine and special activities outside of school. However, parents could more effectively integrate literacy and language development into their busy lives with a better understanding of what is important for and expected of children in this age group.

Literacy Abilities and School Success

The term "literacy" can be conceived of in many different ways, ranging from a holistic view that focuses on the overall meaning-making and social capacities that come from the skill of being able to read and write, to a componential view that emphasizes each skill required to accomplish the deciphering and understanding of text (Snow, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the term literacy will be used to encompass the full spectrum of definitions associated with it, from the language interactions a child has in everyday socially and culturally embedded situations that help them make meaning of text, to the cognitive skills that are crucial to the ability to process text (e.g., letter recognition).

When children enter kindergarten, they are already expected to be able to distinguish print from pictures, recognize some letters and words, hear and separate some sounds in words, and have experience writing in a play fashion. Just four years later, at the end of the third grade, children are expected to have developed a solid foundation for literacy and be able to spell, read, and write with increasing complexity in various domains. As they continue through school, children will need to rely on this foundation to build on their analytic skills and content knowledge, as well as continually increase their abilities to read and write at higher levels (Snow, 2006). In the progression from early literacy to proficiency in literacy, we see a shift in concern from isolated letter and word skills to the ability to comprehend and analyze text.

Children's language and literacy skills are a crucial component to success in a US school setting. It has been shown that language ability in early childhood is predictive of reading comprehension as far along as high school, and that later language abilities build from earlier skills (Dickinson, 2011). In addition, as Dickinson (2011) illustrates in his review, gaps in language development, in areas such as vocabulary, syntax, and reading comprehension, persist and grow larger from early childhood through upper elementary. While early and positive opportunities to engage in literacy activities are predictive of later reading and in turn, long-term school success, the skills needed to perform well in a classroom environment evolve as a child progresses through school.

Once children enter formal schooling, they must learn to adjust to the language demands of a new setting. The academic setting, with its high emphasis on content learning, has developed a kind of discourse that is unique to the academic world; even different discourse practices for different content areas. Using this academic language in the oral and written domains of schoolwork can be one of the biggest obstacles to a student's academic success, and is only one of many challenging areas of language development as children progress through school (Snow, 2010). Students are expected to be able to perform many functions (such as appropriate turn-taking with different conversation partners in the classroom, using appropriate vocabulary, and learning content from a textbook) every day in the classroom with hardly any direct instruction on how to accomplish those tasks. Finding alternative means for fostering literacy development could help break down some of the possible barriers to learning, lessen the cognitive load on students while learning new content, and better facilitate learning both inside and outside the classroom. Discovering more about how parents are able to introduce, practice, and otherwise contribute to their children's literacy skills could provide some of the alternative

means that would help familiarize students with academic literacy skills in a more comfortable environment, freeing up cognitive processes to be able to focus more intently on comprehension and analysis.

Parent Practices Related to Young Children's Literacy Development

There has been much research that has examined parent activities or practices that contribute to a child's current and future success in literacy development, including children's emergent literacy skills, oral language skills, and general school readiness. Studies have documented parents' impact through home practices, home environment, participation in interventions, parent beliefs, and the socioeconomic status of the family.

Parents have proven to be an excellent resource for fostering early literacy skills through routine activities with their young children. Hood, Conlon, and Andrews (2008) found that parental teaching (i.e., having a child read a few words from a book) was positively related to word and letter identification. Shared book reading has been positively associated to morphological knowledge and vocabulary (receptive and expressive) development (Sénéchal et al., 2008; Hood, et. al, 2008). Bracken and Fischel (2008) looked at a combination of parent-child interactions that included more detailed information about shared reading (such as duration of the episodes, frequency, and age at which shared reading began) and found that it was a significant predictor of not only vocabulary, but other early literacy skills and general emergent literacy skills. However mixed results have also been documented in this area. Kim (2007) found that parent teaching was related to lower scores in phonological awareness, vocabulary, and word reading, though the results actually suggested a bidirectional relationship where parents used more direct teaching practices in response to their child's lower achievement. This

indicates that parents are not only capable of improving their children's outcomes through basic practices or activities, but that they can also be sensitive enough to their children's needs to adjust their level of involvement accordingly.

Researchers have also found positive results by drawing connections between the overall home environment and parent attitudes to the child's academic success. Skibbe and colleagues (2008) found mothers with less positive literacy beliefs also reported less literacy practices, and that literacy practices were a predictor of children's print-related knowledge. Son and Morrison's (2010) study of the change in the home literacy environment as children entered preschool showed that positive changes in the home environment contributed separately to children's language skills. Weigel, Martin, and Bennett's (2006) model connects parent's literacy practices and beliefs to literacy practices with their children to the positive associations with children's early literacy outcomes. Similarly, literature on bilingual children explores the connection between family attitudes about language and the language environment to children's success in the classroom, as well as the culturally embedded nature of this connection (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003; Gutiérrez-Clellen & Kreiter, 2003; Mushi, 2002; Romero et al., 2004).

A robust and ongoing literature placing parents in key roles in language-based interventions highlights another way parents are involved in their children's language development. These interventions generally involve training parents on some specific skill or in a program that as a continued practice should improve a language skill or range of skills that increase student achievement, such as memory (Boland, Hayden, & Ornstein, 2003), reading or speaking in a second language (Chow, McBride-Chang, and Cheung, 2010; Van Tuijl & Leseman, 2004), or school readiness and emergent literacy skills (Sheridan et al., 2011).

6

Through interventions, we see that parents are capable of helping their children advance their literacy skills through activities and practices at home, as each of the studies was able to show improvement in some academic language skill through parent participation in the intervention.

Much research has been conducted to investigate how parent-child interactions and parent beliefs and attitudes impact language development in children during early childhood, and how those language abilities are tied to academic success, but far less is known about how these elements affect children as they grow older. Though children have other opportunities to develop literacy skills in the classroom and on their own as they become independent readers, the home is still an important and influential environment. The home is a setting where children have opportunities to engage in and offer topics for less formal conversation that can still be guided by adults (Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1997), which can differ from the typical structure of talk and instruction in classrooms (Cazden, 1988). However, parents can support discourse in a number of ways (including enabling children to choose topics of conversation and asking children questions to encourage them to elaborate their thoughts) that contribute to literacy learning (Lacasa, Reina, & Alburquerque, 2002; Bailey & Moughamian, 2007).

In early childhood, socioeconomic status (SES) has been shown to be a strong predictor of language and literacy outcomes, home literacy environments, and parent-child interactions. However, more research is necessary to understand how socioeconomic status impacts parent-child literacy and language interactions, particularly in school-aged populations. Hart and Risley (1995) found that in early childhood, children in higher SES homes enjoy more and better quality language input than those in lower SES families. Factors such as low parent education and minority status in ethnicity or home language impact the quality of the home literacy

7

environment (Reese, Goldenberg, Loucky, & Gallimore, 1995), and higher SES children tend to see and experience more literacy activities (Adams, 1990; Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995). However, there is great variability in school outcomes within SES groups, and in the kinds of parent-child interactions that are associated with later language and literacy (Bailey & Moughamian, 2007).   More research is needed to see how SES impacts not only predicts academic outcomes in school-aged children, but also how it affects the mechanisms that contribute to these outcomes, such as parent-child literacy and language interactions.

Summary

Parents are uniquely motivated to improve the odds for success in their children (Reese, et al., 2010). It has been shown that parents can contribute positively to academic language and literacy skills in early childhood, learn and implement new skills to improve their children's academic success, and adjust their level of involvement based on their child's needs.   Further research is necessary to discover how parents most contribute to their children's literacy development as their children become independent readers and progress further in school. It may no longer be appropriate for parents to simply read to children once they become independent readers, or take their children to the library to help them research a report when they have the resources to accomplish the same task at a home computer.

Before we can quantify which practices, whether they be activities that include literacy for enjoyment or practical purposes, help with or discussions around homework, or parents setting an example through their own literacy practices, we need to know what practices are happening and when and where they occur between parents and their children. To begin to understand how parents adapt to the changing literacy needs of their school-aged children, this

study explored through semi-structured interviews what parents identify as the out-of-school language and/or literacy activities they engage in with their child that contribute to or impact their child's school or literary success. The research questions motivating this study were: *What are the language and literacy related activities that parents and their children do together outside of school?* and *How do these activities vary due to familial socioeconomic status characteristics, such as household income and parental levels of education?*

Methods

Participants

Participants were selected from volunteer parents of upper elementary students (ages 9-11) from the Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco areas who volunteered to take part in interviews. One parent was recruited through a letter that went out through his school. All other parents were recruited through recommendations through common acquaintances or other parents who had already participated in the study. Participation was completely voluntary.

I conducted 12 interviews involving 13 parents (in one family both parents wished to be interviewed). The unit of analysis was the family, accounting for the possible participation of both parents in one interview or multiple school-aged children in a household. While it was not required that English be the primary home language, participants were required to be fluent in and comfortable speaking English during the interview. Parents completed a basic demographic questionnaire before taking part in the interview. The interviews took place in locations that were convenient for the participant and were both quiet and private (e.g., the participants' homes or offices). Income ranged from $50,000 a year to over $100,000 a year, with all but two

participating families earning over $100,000 a year. All of the parents interviewed had completed at least some college. Three of the parents interviewed were fathers and the rest were mothers. All of the participants were married and all of the families had two to three children in the home. Of the target children, seven were boys and six were girls. While the participants were not particularly socioeconomically diverse, an array of racial and ethnic backgrounds were represented[*]: Middle Eastern, North African, Latino, Euro-American, Japanese, and Indian.

Table 1: Participant Information

Parent Name(s)*	Gender	Annual Household Income	Education	Race	Marital Status	Number of Children	Gender of Target Child	Ages of Children
Hakim	Male	$100,000-250,000	Graduate or Professional School	White (Middle Eastern)	Married	2	Male	11,18
Mirna	Female	$50,000-75,000	Bachelors Degree	White (North African)	Married	3	Male	8 (twins), 10
Diana	Female	$100,000-250,000	Graduate or Professional School	Latino	Married	3	Female	10, 12, 16
Aubrey	Female	$100,000-250,000	Associates Degree	Latino	Married	2	Female	10, 14
Malik	Male	$100,000-250,000	Graduate or Professional School	White (North African)	Married	2	Male	10, 15
Jaime & Berta	Male & Female	$75,000-100,000	Bachelors Degree	Latino	Married	3	Female	4, 8, 10
Jane	Female	$100,000-250,000	Bachelors Degree	White (Euro-American)	Married	3	Female	10 (twins), 13
Tina	Female	$100,000-250,000	Graduate or Professional School	Other (Japanese and White)	Married	2	Male	9, 11

---

[*] Information regarding race and ethnicity was gathered both from the demographic survey and through participant report in the interviews.

Donna	Female	$250,000-500,000	Bachelors Degree	Latino	Married	3	Male	7, 9, 11
Giva	Female	$250,000-500,000	Graduate or Professional School	Indian	Married	2	Female	10, 12
Julia	Female	$100,000-250,000	Graduate or Professional School	White (Euro-American)	Married	2	Male	9, 12
Karen	Female	$100,000-250,000	Bachelors Degree	White (Euro-American)	Married	2	Male	10, 12

Procedures

Demographic survey

Participants completed a survey to determine basic demographic information (race/ethnicity, household income, parental education, number of family members, gender of child) that was used to determine SES and ethnicity (See Appendix A).

Interview protocol

Participants took part in semi-structured interviews designed to discover and discuss the literacy activities they engage in with their children. Interviews were audio-recorded and began with a general question asking the parent to explain a typical day or week, followed by specific questions focusing on the activities identified by the participant to elaborate further on their descriptions. Follow up questions also included asking the parent about possible activities not mentioned, such as conversations in the car, bedtime routines, dinner conversations, etc. If the participant did not identify any literacy or academic activities, follow up questions were asked specifically to explicitly address any possible literacy or language related activities. Participants were also asked to identify their motivations for these activities and any perceived connections

they made to their child's academic outcomes (See Appendix B). Interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Researcher Notes

After parents had consented to participate in the study, relevant comments made by the parents were noted by the researcher. These included notes during the interview as well as notation of affect and comments made after the interview was finished, such as if a parent remembered a literacy activity after the audio recorder was turned off.

Analysis

Interviews were analyzed utilizing a grounded theory approach using inductive coding based on the themes that arise from the data. I searched for themes on several different levels. First, I identified themes relating to the different kinds of activities that took place (such as the parent-child activities versus the parent-directed activities, or what the activity consisted of). I also looked at the descriptions of the individual parent theories of the connections between home practices and school outcomes (such as seeing a direct link between helping with homework and a child doing well on a test, or believing that fostering a general love of reading will lead to better outcomes in multiple domains). Finally, I looked at similarities and differences in parents' answers across questions. In identifying and quantifying themes, both the frequencies of occurring themes and absolute value (or strength and salience) of a theme were taken into consideration.

The final coding scheme for the themes reported in this study was determined by fully coding three interviews. The interviews were coded in a stepped process that was both inductive and comparative (Merriam, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For the first three interviews, responses to each question were assigned a theme. Then similarly themed responses were

compared across interviews and the assigned theme was refined and subcategories were developed. This scheme was then applied to the remaining interviews.

Findings

Parents identified a number of activities they and their children take part in outside of the classroom that involve literacy and/or language components. However, it is important to note that before, after, and during almost every parent interview parents expressed that they did not feel they did enough for literacy and language development at home and were eager to hear what other parents in the study were doing with their children. Many parents admitted to being nervous to participate because they were not sure they would be able to contribute very much to the study, and when asked directly what literacy and language activities they did with their children outside of school, they had difficulty answering. In large part, the target activities reported in this study were uncovered in discussions about typical daily routines and family practices. In and of itself, it is not unusual for research participants to feel some nervousness about being part of a study; however, it is notable that, as these findings will show, parents that actually do so much to foster language and literacy development at home have such difficulty articulating what they do with their children. This finding will be explored further later in this report.

The findings of this study are arranged in two larger categories. First, the parents' definitions of literacy and language development will be presented. Next, the most prominent literacy and language activities from the interviews will be reported, including homework routines and the activities parents identified as their families' best practices.

Definitions of Literacy and Language Development

At the beginning of each interview, parents were asked to define the terms "literacy" and "language development" to understand what constituted literacy and language development and any activities that support this development from their own perspectives. All parents were able to articulate a definition for each term, however they generally gave more detailed definitions for literacy than language development.

Literacy

In defining literacy, almost all parents included an element of application of literacy skills. For parents, being able to read and write was not enough to describe being literate. One father of two, Hakim[†], said, "Literacy basically to me means, uh, the most basic form being able to read, understand, and, uh, apply what you read to practice." Diana, a mother of three, elaborates on this notion:

> "Oh I think literacy encompasses reading, writing, and communication. So being able to… And when it comes to reading obviously that's broken down into different components. Um, comprehension, you know understanding of the material. The basics of the language structure, phonics, etc… And then writing is about again not just, everything from spelling to grammar to conjugating sentences, and content. Putting together coherent content of thought… And that also, not just the content of thought but meaningful content of thought and elaboration."

Diana and Hakim both felt that literacy was a concept that encompassed several different abilities and was also the basis for understanding and communication. While Diana's definition is particularly elaborated, these sentiments were echoed by all of the parents interviewed to some extent. They held the belief that a person is not literate if they are only capable of decoding text; a person must also be able to make meaning of text, and further to be able to somehow apply that meaning elsewhere.

[†] All names of participants are pseudonyms.

The dictionary definition of literacy contains some of these elements, with Oxford Dictionaries defining literacy as "the ability to read and write" ("Literacy," 2010). Oxford Dictionaries' definition of literacy also extends further to "competence or knowledge in a specified area," or the notion of having literacy in a certain content area. However, the parents interviewed in this study added to their definitions what literacy connoted for them, which was generally the notion of being able to *apply* literacy skills beyond the more basic act of phonics, spelling and even higher level skills like comprehending text. A few parents took their definitions even further, equating literacy with greater success in life. One mother, Aubrey, a mother of two, said, "To me, literacy means knowing or learning what you need to succeed in life." These parents saw literacy skills as the building blocks for communication and described them as key to opening the doors that would lead them to success in academics, the arts, the workplace, and social interactions.

Language development

In contrast, parent definitions of language development were somewhat less idealistic. While some parents still included an element of application in their definition, many instead tended to focus more on language production and their children's growing language skills over time. Many parents mentioned adding to a child's vocabulary as an indicator of language development. Mirna, a mother of three, for example, described language development as,

> "Um, vocabulary. You know, like um building up your vocabulary. And um, um I guess, I'm talking for his age, kind of. Before it would be different things if he was younger, but you know now to me it's vocabulary. Building up his vocabulary and building up his um, um… like I want him to start reading different books so that he can have a, he won't say "oh this is so fun," he can use other words and express himself through a, um, a vocabulary."

15

Mirna's definition of language development exemplifies a couple of the trends in other parents' responses: that language development had something to do with building vocabulary and that language development was different somehow now that their children were older than when they were very young. As young children, language development was more about learning how to speak and communicate. Now that their children are older, parents focus on developing a more expanded vocabulary. This element of change over time in the definition of language development for children shows that parents recognized a developmental perspective and gave examples of what was salient to them at the different stages they had witnessed to this point. One couple, who were also raising their children to be bilingual, equated language development for their children with mastery of the languages. This was in keeping with the general sentiment that there was a lot of "work" to be done during the early years of a child's life as far as language development was concerned, but that by this age the focus was mainly to become better communicators through larger vocabularies to reach some kind of point of overall competency with language, or "mastery."

These sentiments stand in stark contrast to those attached to literacy, which found literacy to be the foundation for many of life's future accomplishments. Parents also seemed to have a more difficult time formulating a definition of language development than they did for literacy. In the following exchange, this father of two, Malik, is particularly eloquent, but still stumbles with his definition of language development:

> "INT: But since I'm going to be asking a lot of questions about that, I wanted to know, to you, what is literacy? So, there's a big range of definitions for that, and I just want to know what you think that means.
>
> MALIK: That is a very interesting, I think a kind of agility and comfort with reading and writing, and as it plays out in communication, actually, primarily.
>
> INT: Ok.

MALIK: An ability to weave, to weave ideas together.

INT: Ok. And then what does, what is language development to you? What does that make you think about?

MALIK: *Personally*, it makes me think about the ability to organize and present ideas in a way that is readily digestible.

INT: Ok. And you said for you, do you mean that for you as an adult, or is it, would you think about it the same way for your sons?

MALIK: Definitely, yeah. I'll strike *for me*. For *us*, yeah."

When Malik defined literacy, he did not hesitate or make qualifying statements, but when defining language development he began his answer with "personally," signaling that this may not be an all-encompassing definition. However, when asked to clarify if he felt the definition for language development applied in the same way for his children, he took a few moments to think before responding, appearing a little bit baffled. A similar clarification question was asked of many parents, as several either referred to language development as it applied to their children in early childhood or what it meant for adults. These parents expressed similar puzzlement, seeming to find it difficult to reconcile their definition that described a certain act or state of being with the concept of development, which implies change over time. So even though, as previously discussed, parents were tuned into the idea that language development changed over time, they were not necessarily able to describe how all of the stages of development were meant to look. In her response, Aubrey expressed this confusion, but also gave some explanation:

"INT: Ok, um and what is, what does language development mean to you? What is that?

AUBREY: Um, let's see, let me think.

INT: Take your time.

AUBREY: Language development I would imagine... as far as my 10 year old is concerned or as far as my kids are concerned, is learning um... Totally not prepared for

this! [both laugh] I would imagine reading-- well first of all for language, vocabulary and have, to pronounce and sound out. Which goes along with reading as far as I'm concerned. How to communicate effectively, whether it's written or verbally. Um, and just increasing your vocabulary base.

INT: Ok. You said that this was specifically for your children. Do you think of language development as being different for different for different people or different ages?

AUBREY: Well I think at a certain, once you, at a certain age you have to desire it for yourself. So as an adult I would imagine you want to continue to build your lang-- I don't know! I have never thought of it. I just always focus on my kids and where it will help them get on their own, so I never really thought about it."

Aubrey was clearly challenged by my question to verbalize a definition for language development, stopping and starting again at several points. By the end of her initial answer, she has described that language development for her daughters has to do with reading, communicating effectively, and building vocabulary. When asked to clarify her statement regarding for whom this definition applies (all people or just children her daughters' age), Aubrey instead described her role as a supporter in the process of language development with her children, which was more tangible for her than the actual development she may have been fostering at any one point. She seemed to feel that at a certain point, it would not be necessary for her to be involved in her children's language development, though she could not be precise about when that point was.

Overall, the clarity with which definitions of literacy were articulated and the idealistic views of the roles literacy played in the lives of their children expressed by parents stood in contrast to the difficulty parents experienced in describing language development and the relatively ambiguous nature of those definitions. These concepts of literacy and language development are both distinct and intertwined, but parents were generally not able to marry them in their definitions. While it was encouraging that parents saw that language development was something that changed over time, they could not necessarily talk about how those changes

should look. Instead, literacy became the all-encompassing foundation for written and oral communication for these parents.

Literacy and Language Activities

Generally, when discussing their families' typical routines, parents ran felt that the best unit of time was the week. Several parents expressed that there was no such thing as a typical day, instead describing patterns of a typical week (e.g., on Mondays and Wednesdays certain things happen, on Tuesdays and Thursdays different things happen, etc.). All of the parents described family lives full of school, work, family, and extracurricular activities. Reported in these findings are the literacy and language activities that were the most common across the families and those activities that were most salient to the parents, including homework practices, family time, and those that pertained to social and emotional development.

Homework routines and practices

Each of the parents gave a detailed description of both the homework routine and the reasons for how the homework routine came to be that way. This was an activity that was salient for both parents that worked outside the home and those who in the home full time. These descriptions revealed that parents were attuned to their children's individual needs, were available for help and/or provided other resources for homework help, and with even the most independent children had some level of regular involvement in the homework routine.

Parents are in a unique position to understand under what conditions their children work best and can (and do) adjust these conditions over time for homework based on schedules and the work habits of individual children. One parent, Mirna, describes how she tried several different routines around homework before landing on her family's current arrangement, which includes

each of her three children sitting in separate areas of the house to do their own work after having

had about an hour of time to play and eat after school:

"Um, because I tried like different things. I tried when they get home, and as soon as they get home they start their homework. That didn't work because "I'm hungry, I'm thirsty, I'm" you know, blah blah blah blah. So, and I started doing it where, I slacked off a little bit and I said ok, you know what we'll do homework after you've eaten and did home where you're watching TV. Then it was started at 6:00. And that didn't work either because they're too tired. You know, they don't wanna. So that worked, I think that was the perfect time where it's around, I want to say 4:00, started at 3:30/4:00. Oh actually no, I want to say 4/4:30, 4/4:30 we start doing homework. They're still fresh, they're still um, you know, they've had a little bit of fun at school. That's why I leave 'em 'til 3:00. They eat something really fast and they do homework. At that time they've done their fun, they've eaten, they don't have any excuse not to sit down and, you know? And I separate them, you know. I set, everybody sits in a different place. Because they don't have their own rooms. I mean they, all three share a room, I live in an apartment, so they share a room. So I separate them. One sits outside, one sits in um the room, and one sits in my desk in my room. So, I try to make it where everybody has their own, you know, mind."

Mirna is also quite involved in her children's schoolwork. Two of her children have learning

disabilities related to reading, so she has arranged separate tutoring and monitors their work

closely. She works with teachers to provide her children with extra practice and resources to

improve their literacy skills. Even with all of the extra time and effort Mirna expends on

providing her children with adequate help and her sensitivity to their needs, she questions

whether or not she's always doing the right thing, showing a clear awareness and investment in

her children's literacy outcomes:

"Uh, Caleb, I'm very involved with him. He's a one-on-one person, very much. And um, I don't know if it's a mistake for me, or it's something that um, because of that disability, or, or, or something that he got used to. I haven't felt, I can't figure it out to this day. Um, like I see my daughter. She's very, um, hands on, she does her own thing and, you know she doesn't even bother with me unless she has a question. Tina, just like Caleb, the little one. She always requires one-on-one. You know, and I, she's the one also with that disability. So I don't know if it's, that has to do with that, or if I'm used to it because I'm always on him, "did you do this, did you finish this, did you do this," you know? Could be that he got used to having, having um, somebody looking over. So now he feels like he's not gonna do it right unless I'm around. And I'm trying to wean him off of that."

As she begins to explain above, Mirna's high level of involvement in her children's literacy and general academic outcomes can be a double edged sword; while it is a high priority for her to provide all the support her children could need, it is also a source of stress and insecurity for her. Mirna is not sure how much help is too much help for her son, at times becoming emotional during the interview when explaining her efforts. She wants to help her son succeed and she also wants him to be independent. Even with all of the help she has sought out regarding his disability, she is not sure where that line is.

Another mother of three, Diana, has taken a different approach to where her fourth grade daughter does her homework. While she admits that she would prefer her daughter, Ella, to be able to focus and complete her homework efficiently at a desk in her room, a combination of their family schedule and the fact that she finds her daughter to be easily distracted, Ella typically does her homework in the living room near her mother, and sometimes even starts working on her homework in the car during their long commutes. And although Ella can be easily distracted without someone there to keep her on task, Diana says that Ella is very independently motivated with her work. She generally receives less direct oversight on homework assignments than her two older children did at this age, instead only needing some help staying focused. Both of these parents, Mirna and Diana, are examples of parents who are very involved in their children's homework routines in varying ways that specifically address the needs of their children.

Even in families where parents were able to be less involved in their child's homework, parents could give the same level of detail about the routine. One mother, Aubrey, reported that her younger daughter had always been independent with her homework. She grew up watching her older sister and cousins come home after school and do their homework, and had even asked

for homework from her grandmother when she was very young so that she could be more like her sister and cousins. When asked how this routine had come to be, Aubrey responded that it had always been that way in her family. This notion of the homework routine was not just what she did with her daughters, it was family practice that spanned generations.

Parent-defined best practices and routines

After discussing both the routine and less frequent activities that occurred in their families, parents were asked to identify the practices they defined as the "top three" that related to language and literacy in their family or with their children. To find out what parents felt were "best practices" in their households regarding literacy and language development with their 8- to 11-year-old children (the focus of the interview), they were asked "If I were to do a documentary on the literacy and language practices of your family, what are the three things you would definitely want me to capture?" Almost every parent identified some very straightforward activities, such as setting aside time for the child to read regularly, reading together, helping children with homework or instilling a good homework routine, or modeling good reading habits to their children. However, parents also gave some more unexpected answers, ranging from joking around at home to supporting social and emotional development.

Family time: Four of the parents interviewed described some kind of informal time with the family, where their children were able to talk to parents or siblings about any topic on a regular basis, as one of the best practices of their households. For example, Diana saw a direct link between the time her family spends talking and joking around with each other to language development:

"Um, definitely the family time, and a lot of that expressive family time and our interaction, because I think that's pretty enriching to them. And I used to worry like, "gee I have less time for her than the other two," but at some point when she was two or something, I realized having

siblings is very enriching and even just as supportive for her, you know, learning and cognitive growth as just me, one person. Now she's got a whole household."

She sees family time as an opportunity for enrichment. Moreover, Diana believed that her older children could be as enriching to her younger daughter as she could be. Hakim said that he felt facilitating friendships and good relationships with family was one of his top practices. He felt that developing his son's self esteem through trusting relationships would help him do better in school, and that having time with his parents so that he could feel connected to them—unrelated to school work—would bring this about. Julia, a mother of two boys, felt the time the family spent talking informally at dinner and finding out what was going on in her sons' lives was particularly important for their language development. Malik said that the time they spent joking around and even watching television together was one of the top practices of his family: "And then just, informally, the humor. The chit-chat, the wry humor. A lot of the programs that the kids watch are language-based." Malik cites joking around as one of his family's best practices because it is "wry" and language-based, meaning that even their down time is a chance for the children to play with language.

Most families also listed at least one practice that was somewhat distinctive to their family. Jane, a mother of twin girls and one boy, said that she and her children like to "huggle," which is when she and the children cuddle together and read. Two different mothers, Donna, a mother of one girl and two boys, and Karen, a mother of a boy and a girl, listed going to the library as one of their top practices. For most parents in this study, going to the library (if done at all), was not a very regular occurrence. But for Donna and Karen, there was an amount of ritual to going to the library as a family, and much enjoyment. Giva, a mother of a boy and a girl, reported that she and her daughter would read the same book at the same time, but on their own. Giva and her husband both had very busy schedules between working and the children's

23

sports so having time to sit and read with her daughter every night was not always an option. Instead, they would pick a book that they could both read separately and talk about. Diana said that one of the best things she and her husband had done for their children was matching their interests and abilities to the right school programs, providing what they felt was the best environment for their children to feel challenged and engaged, and ultimately to thrive. What is similar in all these responses is that each parent lists some practice that works well specifically for his or her family or child. They have found some way to work literacy and language development into their lives in way that best suits them.

One parent in particular, Tina, emphasized the importance of practices unique to her family in creating her "top three" list. Tina, a mother of two boys, described her sons throughout the interview as being very uninterested in reading. In fact, before a particular third grade teacher really advocated for reading, she could hardly get her sons to read at all. As an avid reader herself, Tina was baffled as to how her own children could not enjoy reading at all. Tina tried eliminating television and video games for the whole family during the week, requiring reading daily, even putting books in the family bathroom, but just could not get her sons to want to read for enjoyment. Instead, she found other ways to integrate literacy into their lives. One of the top activities she identified was the Claymation movies her younger son made with her husband. Her son loved creating the art, and even though the movies were very short, it was a way for him to make stories come to life. Another activity she listed was taking educational trips. When her family went on vacation, Tina would make a workbook for each of her sons to fill out. These workbooks were filled with activities for them to complete during the trip, including writing about something that happened each day, one thing new they tried, or even figuring out the directions to get from one place to another. Since her sons were not interested in

reading in the car or during their down time, Tina wanted to make sure her sons were engaged

and learning during these trips, so she found a way to make literacy activities relevant and

stimulating.

Facilitating social development: Another interesting category that three of the parents

highlighted in their "top three," and that almost every parent mentioned at some point in their

interviews, was the idea that their children's social development was connected to literacy and

language practices. Hakim said,

> "The number two would be giving them the opportunity and room for developing friends
> and facilitating their friendship by um, with the family atmosphere such as cousins. Or
> outside, you know uh friends who have become as equal friends or even sometimes more.
> So we would, we do have to help them with that, and we do that too by facilitating a
> willingness to have them go over to the friends."

Earlier in the interview, Hakim emphasized that this practice of encouraging friendships was

important for fostering self-esteem in his son, which he felt would lead to better performance in

literacy as well as generally at school. As a result, he believed that not only allowing his son to

have plenty of time to socialize but facilitating this time was an important family practice. In

two other families, they felt the manners and expressive abilities of their children reflected

important family language practices. Jaime and Berta, parents of a boy and two girls, were

proud of how articulate their daughter was. They cited that being respectful and kind were

qualities they emphasized to their children, and they were pleased to see this represented in the

way their oldest daughter, a 10-year-old, expressed herself. Jane, a mother of two boys and a

fourth grade teacher, expanded this concept further by explaining that now that her sons could

speak and read, the area of development she was focused on now was application of those skills.

She thought that encouraging her son to speak for himself properly in different social situations,

improving his pragmatic language skills, was an essential family practice.

Discussion

Overall, the parents in this study placed great value on literacy and its importance in their children's lives. In the midst of incredibly busy schedules filled with jobs and multiple children with academic and extracurricular activities, they made time for individualized attention to the needs of each child in regards to literacy and language development in the best way they knew how. These parents created time and space for literacy practices, were routinely involved in their children's education and could report in which areas of literacy and language their children excelled or needed work. They also did other special and fun activities that were unique to their families. However almost every single parent interviewed expressed some doubt about whether they were doing enough for their children, and at the close of our sessions together—usually after the recording was stopped—implored me to share with them what other parents were doing, to give them some hint of what they could do for their children that might really make a difference. This disconnect between my perspective as a researcher and theirs as parents, one where I saw them as conceptually understanding literacy and weaving it creatively into their children's lives while they felt inadequate or ill-prepared, reflects a larger disconnect between educators and parents about a parent's continuing role in literacy and language development, which will be explored here.

In many ways, the descriptions parents gave of their family lives were very similar to the findings of Tamar Kremer-Sadlik and Kris Gutierrez with middle-class Los Angeles families (Kremer-Sadlik & Gutierrez, 2013). The families they observed and interviewed as part of the Center on Everyday Lives of Families (CELF) also led incredibly demanding lives. The children in these families often participated in multiple extracurricular activities, and the parents were

26

usually very involved in both the extracurricular activities and the children's schoolwork, whether directly (e.g., coaching teams and checking homework) or indirectly (e.g., managing time and driving children to and from activities). The parents in the current study reported similarly hectic schedules and also maintained, as the CELF parents did, that they valued all of these activities as important for their children's development. Homework was also the most prominent regular educational activity for both groups.

Kremer-Sadlik and Gutierrez characterize parents' involvement in their children's educational and extracurricular lives as manic and stressful, but voluntarily so. They describe parents as "parent managers," who maintain children's schedules through some combination of frequent reminders to complete homework, shuttling children to activities, and oversight of these activities (e.g., checking homework or discussing sports goals with coaches). However stressful this may be for parents, they choose to keep such hectic schedules because of what the researchers describe as a desire and an anxiety to make sure they give their children the best opportunities possible to acquire the skills they will need to do well in life and at least maintain their middle class status. Kremer-Sadlik and Gutierrez argue that parents have internalized the messages that involving children in extracurricular activities will lead to more well-rounded adults and that homework is an important part of academic success in which parents should be involved.

Parents in this study showed a similar internalization of these messages, which is particularly evident in the ease with which every parent was able to describe their children's homework routines. Children had a place to do homework, parents had carved out time for their children to do homework around activities and when they would be at their best, and parents would differentiate homework routines between children to best suit each child's needs when

27

necessary. Homework was a relevant practice for parents to discuss in reporting children's

literacy and language activities since for children in upper elementary school homework does

involve daily reading and homework assignments involve written responses. However, the fact

that several parents also felt that instilling good homework habits or being involved with their

children's homework was one of their family's best literacy and language development practices

is revealing. Homework, as well as required reading for homework, is an activity that originates

from school, not home. Yet parents had completely integrated these activities into their

demanding family lives to the point where they took ownership of the activities and saw doing

them well as a source of pride. Beyond the idea that parents have internalized the importance of

homework for general academic purposes, this complete commitment to a specific activity or set

of activities communicated to them by educators to be important demonstrates that when parents

have clear instructions about what to do for their children, they can execute these instructions

under diverse conditions and in many circumstances.

Parents are capable educational contributors for their children when they have clear goals

(e.g., fostering productive homework routines). The disconnect when it comes to purposefully

integrating literacy and language development into family lives appears to be a lack of

understanding of what that might look like or entail. When initially describing the study to

parents who volunteered to participate in this study, virtually every parent said s/he was not sure

s/he would really have much to contribute, that she did not really think his/her family was doing

very much with literacy or language development at home. In the interviews however, every

parent described many different literacy and language activities as they explained typical family

routines. Parents were integrating literacy and language development into their children's lives,

they were just unsure about whether or not they were doing what was best for their children academically.

Parents also appear to have unequal understandings of the concepts of literacy and language development, which could be contributing to this uncertainty about how to nurture progress in both areas. Parents described literacy as the foundation for their children's future in education and in life; it would allow them to learn new subjects, communicate, and understand whatever new things they encountered in life. Literacy was not just seen as a skill that consisted of being able to read and write, it was also the more generalizable ability to be able to apply what is learned in text into real-life situations. With such broad views of literacy, it was unsurprising when parents highlighted reading with their children, children's independent reading habits, children's independent homework habits, and other activities like trips to the library as some of their families' best practices. These definitions are also consistent with the New London Group's conception of multiliteracies (Cazden et. al, 1996), which posits that people must now make meaning and communicate using multiple sources and be able to perform this function in many different situations (e.g., cultures and contexts). From this perspective, the ways parents in the current study defined and enacted literacy practices in their families would be especially useful for furthering their children's ability to participate in meaning-making in the multiple spheres they may enter as they grow.

In contrast, language development was seen in a much more narrow way, mainly as the trajectory toward reaching some level of mastery of vocabulary and being able to speak well. Parents did not identify such elements of language development as pragmatic language development, academic language development, or acquiring a wider array of communicative skills like public speaking. However, parents did emphasize many best practices that involved

29

these same areas of language development, such as children speaking politely and articulately or families spending leisure time and dinnertime talking together.

This lack of integration of the definition of language development with these important communicative language skills, as well as with the definitions of literacy they provided that mentioned elements of language development, is a step away from what previously appeared to be an adequate lay understanding of multiliteracies. Instead, parents in the current study saw only a slice of the picture of literacy and language development, not fully understanding, or at least not fully articulating, how these concepts overlap and are intertwined as the definition of multiliteracies suggests. Even with this incomplete understanding of language and literacy development, parents were doing a great deal to foster language development intuitively. One possible reason they would not self-identify as parents who do a great deal of language development at home is that they simply do not know how to categorize or define these optimal practices.

Implications and Next Steps

If by the upper elementary grades children have ideally made the switch from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (Chall, 1983) then being able to use language (both spoken and in print) effectively is critical for academic success, and is a tangible skill that is necessary beyond the classroom. Parents are already doing a great deal to be involved in their children's academic lives and they do so with both great enthusiasm and great anxiety. This enthusiasm and anxiety seem to be inextricably intertwined, with enthusiasm to give children every opportunity to succeed causing overloaded schedules and feelings of self-doubt over whether parents are doing the right things, or enough of the right things.

The findings of this study show that many parents are actually already engaging in many rich and creative practices to support literacy and language development in their homes. Based on these findings, it seems that what parents need more than ideas for new activities to add to their already full schedules is a greater conceptual understanding of what language skills children at this age need to develop and how routine daily practices can support this growth. Parents will be more likely to able to sustain literacy and language development practices if they can integrate these practices into their existing activities and routines (Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Weisner, 1993). Educators need to more clearly communicate with parents about expectations around language development to help parents more purposefully integrate supportive language practices into their children's daily lives. Further, a better understanding of language development could help ease some of the anxiety and feelings of "not enough" that parents expressed by demystifying what children really need.

However, more research is needed to understand how literacy and language practices outside of the classroom impact children's academic success at this age. While this study gives a window into how parental involvement in education is enacted in daily life and how it might be helpful to children, it is not able to link these practices to each child's classroom performance, academic outcomes, or social outcomes. Additionally, this kind of research into home literacy and language practices needs to be done with more diverse populations. What literacy and language activities do parents with less financial and educational resources do with their children? How do language minority parents foster literacy and language development for school purposes with their children? Pinpointing which activities and practices are most beneficial for children may not only be a way to alleviate parental anxiety, but could also provide concrete steps for parents from diverse backgrounds to take when their children are struggling.

Name:
Best Phone Number: Email:

Screening and Basic Information Form
Parent Literacy and Interactions with School-Aged Children

1.   What is your relationship to child enrolled in school: Mother

                                                                  Father

                                                                  Legal Guardian

                                        Other (specify): _____

2.   What is your marital status?   Married   Single   Divorced

3.   What is your race/ethnicity?   White/Caucasian Not of Latino Origin

                                               Latino

                                               African American

                                               Asian/Pacific Islander

                                               Native American

                                               Other: _____

4.   What is your average annual household income level?

                                                              Less than $30,000

                                                              $30,000 - $49,999

                                                              $50,000 - $74,999

                                                              $75,000 - $99,999

                                                              $100,000 - $249,000

                                                              $250,000 - $499,999

                                                              Above $500,000

5.   What is your child's gender?   Female   Male

6.   What is your household size?   _____ children (under 18)   _____ adults (over 18)

7.   What is the highest level of education that you have attained?

                                                    Some high school

                                                    High School Diploma/GED equivalent

                                                    Some college/university

                                                    BA or BS completed

                                                    Graduate or Professional School

**Parent Literacy Activities and Interactions with School-Aged Children
Interview Protocol**

Question	Target Information
1. To you, what is literacy? Language development? Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. There is a range of definitions for these terms, and I'm really just interested in what they mean to you.	To gain an understanding of the parent's metacognitive understanding of the constructs of literacy and language.
2a. Can you please take me through the daily routine? If you do different things on different days, please explain. What activities do you participate in? What activities does your child participate in?	Get a sense of the family routine and when language/literacy activities may take place within them.
2b. Based on previous answer, follow up on each activity with the child mentioned that includes literacy or language: • When does this activity typically take place? How often? • Why do you do this activity? • Have you always done this activity? When did you start?	Details and motivations behind the activities parents first identify.
2c. Are there any other typical literacy activities you (or other parent) and your child do together that you can think of that you have not already mentioned? (May prompt with ideas such as vocabulary review in the car, homework help, games, etc.) • When does this activity typically take place? How often? • Why do you do this activity? • Have you always done this activity? When did you start?	Probe for more (possibly less obvious or salient) literacy/language activities. Details and motivations behind the activities.
3. What if I were doing a documentary on the literacy practices of your family? What are the 3 things you think would be best to capture? What would you like to do more of, or what hasn't worked out? For the activities identified: • When does this activity typically take place? How often? • Why do you do this activity? • Have you always done this activity? When did you start?	What does the parent identify as "best" literacy practices of and "ideal" literacy practices for the family?

4a. What do you do when you have unexpected time together (such as days off school, power goes out)?	Uncover activities that may not be a part of the routine, but may still contribute to literacy/language development and/or give a window into family attitudes toward language/literacy.
4b. Are there any other special or non-routine literacy activities that you do with your child throughout the year? (May prompt with ideas such as events at the local library, trips to the book fair at school, reading a book before/after seeing a movie): • When does this activity typically take place? How often? • Why do you do this activity? • Have you always done this activity? When did you start?	Uncover any other activities that may not be a part of the routine, but may still contribute to literacy/language development and/or give a window into family attitudes toward language/literacy.
5. What literacy activities do you and your children engage in independently? (May prompt with reading the news, doing homework, etc.)	Identify activities that may be done separately, but still contribute to language development. Are there more of these activities, or less, than those done together? Build a more complete picture of the home literacy environment.
6. When you or your child have a question/need to find information, what do you do? For example, if you are watching TV together and have a question about the city where the show takes place, what do you do?	Find out how the family navigates finding new knowledge and potential chances for infusing literacy practice into the home. Does the family use technology?
7. When your child needs help with homework, where does he/she go for help? Who does your child like to read with?	Does the child go to parents for homework help? What other supports does the child use?
8. How would you describe your child's language and literacy abilities, such as reading, writing, and speaking?	If it has not already come up in the interview, ascertain the parent's perception of the child's language and literacy abilities.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

References:

Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bailey, A. L. (2010). Assessment in Schools – Oracy. In Peterson, P., Baker, E., & McGaw, B. (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education*. (pp. 285-292). Elsevier, Oxford.

Bailey, A. L., & Moughamian, A. C. (2007). Telling stories their way: Narrative scaffolding with emergent readers and readers. *Narrative Inquiry, 17*(2), 203-229.

Baker, L., Serpell, R., & Sonnenschein, S. (1995). Opportunities for literacy learning in the homes of urban preschoolers. In L.M. Morrow (Ed.), *Family literacy: Connections in schools and communities* (pp. 236-252). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Boland, A. M., Haden, C. A., & Ornstein, P. A. (2003). Boosting children's memory by training mothers in the use of elaborative conversational style as an event unfolds. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 4*(1), 39-65.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1997). *Dinner talk: Cultural patterns of sociability and socialization in family discourse*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bracken, S. S. & Fischel, J. E. (2008). Family reading behavior and early literacy skills in preschool children from low-income backgrounds. *Early Education and Development, 19*(1), 45-67.

Castro, D. C., Lubker, B. B., Bryant, D. M., & Skinner, M. (2002). Oral language and reading abilities of first-grade Peruvian children: Associations with child and family factors. *International Journal of Behavioral Development. 26*(4), 334-344.

Cazden, C. B. (1988). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Cazden, C., Cope, B., Kalantzis, M., Luke, A., Luke, C., & Nakata, M. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 60-92.

Chall, J. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Chow, B. W., McBride-Chang, C., & Cheung, H. (2010). Parent–child reading in English as a second language: Effects on language and literacy development of Chinese kindergarteners. *Journal of Research in Reading, 33*(3), 284-301.

Craig, H.K., & Washington, J.A. (2006). *Recent research on the language and literacy skills of African American Students in the Early Years.* In D.K. Dickinson & S.B. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research, Vol. 2* (p. 198-210). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Dickinson, D. K., (2011). Teachers' language practices and academic outcomes of preschool children**. *Science, 333*, 964-967

El Nokali, N. E., Bachman, H. J., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2010). Parent involvement and children's academic and social development in elementary school. *Child Development, 81*(3), 988-1005.

Gallimore, R., Goldenberg, C. N., & Weisner, T. S. (1993). The social construction and subjective reality of activity settings: Implications for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*(4), 537.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Gomez, L. M. & Gomez, K. (2007). Reading for learning: Literacy supports for 21st-century work. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 89*(3), 224-228.

Gutiérrez-Clellen, V. F. & Kreiter, J. (2003). Understanding child bilingual acquisition using parent and teacher reports. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 24*, 267-288.

Hammer, C. S., Miccio, A. W., & Wagstaff, D. A. (2003). Home literacy experiences and their relationship to bilingual preschoolers' developing English literacy abilities: An initial investigation. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 34*, 20-30.

Hart, B., & Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children.* Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(3), 740-763.

Hood, M., Conlon, E., & Andrews, G. (2008). Preschool home literacy practices and children's literacy development: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(2), 252-271.

Imbens-Bailey, A. L., & Snow, C. E. (1997). Making meaning in parent–child interaction: A pragmatic approach. In C. Mandell, & A. McCabe (Eds.), *The problem of meaning: Behavioral and cognitive perspectives.* (pp. 261-295). Amsterdam, Netherlands: North-Holland/Elsevier Science Publishers.

Kim, Y. S. (2009). The relationship between home literacy practices and developmental trajectories of emergent literacy and conventional literacy skills for Korean children. *Read Writ, 22*, 57-84.

Kremer-Sadlik, T. & Gutiérrez, K. (2013). Homework and recreation. In Ochs, E. & Kremer-Sadlik, T. (Eds.), *Fast-Forward Family: Home, Work, and Relationships in Middle-Class America*. (pp. 130-149). Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA.

Lacasa, P., Reina, A. & Alburquerque, M. (2002). Adults and children share literacy practices: The case of homework. *Linguistics and Education, 13*(1), 39-64.

Leseman, P.P.M., & van Tuijl, C. (2006). Cultural diversity in early literacy: Findings in Dutch studies. In D.K. Dickinson & S.B. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research, Vol. 2* (p. 211-228). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Literacy (2010). In *Oxford Dictionaries online.* Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/literacy

Mapp, K. (April, 2002). Having their say: Parents describe how and why they are involved in their children's education. Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Menyuk, P. & Brisk, M.E. (2005). *Language Development and Education: Children with Varying Language Experiences*. Hampshire, U. K.: Palgrave MacMillan.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Mushi, S. L. P. (2002). Acquisition of multiple languages among children of immigrant families: Parents' role in the home-school language pendulum. *Early Child Development and Care, 172*, 517-530.

Ochs, E., Smith, R. & Taylor, C. (1989) Dinner narratives as detective stories. *Cultural Dynamics, II*(2), 238-57.

Peterson, C., Jesso, B., & McCabe, A. (1999). Encouraging narratives in preschoolers: An intervention study. *Journal of Child Language, 26*(1), 49-67.

Primavera, J. (2000). Enhancing family competence through literacy activities. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 20*(1-2), 85-101.

Reese, E., Sparks, A., & Leyva, D. (2010). A Review of parent interventions for preschool children's language and emergent literacy. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 10*(1), 97-117.

Reese, L., Goldenberg, C., Loucky, J., & Gallimore, R. (1995). Ecocultural context, cultural activity and emergent literacy of Spanish-speaking children. In S. Rothstein (Ed.), Class, culture and race in American schools: A handbook (p. 199-224). Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Richardson Bruna, K. & Gomez, K. (Eds.). (2009). *The work of language in multicultural classrooms: Talking science, writing science*. New York, NY. Routledge.

Rodriguez, E. T., Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Spellmann, M. E., Pan, B. A., Raikes, H., Lugo-Gil, J., & Luze, G. (2009). The formative role of home literacy experiences across the first three years of life in children from low-income families. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 30*(6), 677-694.

Romero, A. J., Robinson, T. N., Haydel, K. F., Mendoza, F., & Killen, J. D. (2004). Associations among familism, language preference, and education in Mexican-American mothers and their children. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, 25*(1), 34-40.

Sénéchal, M., Pagan, S., Lever, R., & Ouellette, G. P. (2008). Relations among the frequency of shared reading, and 4-year-old children's vocabulary, morphological and syntax comprehension, and narrative skills. *Early Education and Development, 19*(1), 27-44.

Skibbe, L. E., Justice, L. M., Zucker, T. A., & McGinty, A. S. (2008). Relations among maternal literacy beliefs, home literacy practices, and the emergent literacy skills of preschoolers with Specific Language Impairment. *Early Education and Development, 19*(1), 68-88.

Son, S. H. & Morrison, F. J. (2010). The nature and impact of changes in home learning environment on development of language and academic skills in preschool children. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(5), 1103-1118.

Snow, C. E. (2010). Academic language and the challenge of reading for learning about science. *Science, 328*(5977), 450-452.

Snow, C. E. (2006). What counts as literacy in early childhood?. In K. McCartney and D. Phillips (Eds), *Blackwell Handbook of Early Childhood Development*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Snow, C. E., & Dickinson, D. K. (1990). Social sources of narrative skills at home and at school. *First Language, 10*(2), 87-103.

Taylor, N., Donovan, W., Miles, S., & Leavitt, L. (2009). Maternal control strategies, maternal language usage and children's language usage at two years. *Journal of Child Language, 36*(2), 381-404.

Van Tuijl, C. & Leseman, P. M. (2004). Improving mother-child interaction in low-income Turkish-Dutch families: A study of mechanisms mediating improvements resulting from participation in a home-based preschool intervention program. *Infant and Child Development, 13*, 323-340.

Vernon-Feagans, L., Scheffner Hammer, C., Miccio, A., & Manlove, E. (2002). Early language and literacy skills in low-income African American and Hispanic children. In D.K. Dickinson & S.B. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of Early Literacy Research*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Weigel, D. J., Martin, S. S., & Bennett, K. K. (2006). Contributions of the home literacy environment to preschool-aged children's emerging literacy and language skills. *Early Child Development and Care, 176*(3-4), 357-378.

Weisner, T. (2002). Ecocultural understanding of children's developmental pathways. *Human Development, 45*, 275-281.