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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NIGHTTIME READING WITH CHILDREN
BY THEIR CAREGIVERS AND READING ACHIEVEMENT

by
Ashley J. Williams

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services, Administration, and Higher Education
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In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
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Thesis Chair: John Klanderman, Ph.D.

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Ashley J. Williams

Dedication

*I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my mother, Audrey R. McCant
I would also like to dedicate this manuscript to my love, Keron H. Crooks*

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my apprehension to Dr. John Klanderman and Dr. Roberta Dihoff for the all of their guidance, patience and help throughout this research.

Abstract

Ashley J. Williams

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NIGHTTIME READING WITH CHILDREN BY THEIR CAREGIVERS AND READING ACHIEVEMENT

2010/11

John Klanderman, Ph.D.

Masters of Arts in School Psychology

The hypothesis of this research project was to determine if there was a significant relationship between children who were read to by their caregivers in previous years and children who were not read to by their caregivers in previous years. The relationship between reading achievement and gender was also examined in this research study. Twelve fourth grade students (six male, six female) were asked to complete a questionnaire about their reading practices and take a brief two part reading assessment, consisting of word recognition and reading comprehension. A two way between groups ANOVA revealed that there was not a significant difference between children who were read to by their caregivers in previous years and children who were not read to by their caregivers in previous years. A dependent T-Test showed that there was not a significant difference between reading achievement and gender. A correlation test revealed that there was a relationship between word recognition scores and reading comprehension scores.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

While working in the public school system with third and fourth grade students participating in a life skills behavioral group, it appeared as though many children were not at the appropriate reading level specified by their age and/or school grade. The students were asked to read five sentences pertaining to friendship, yet they found it difficult to pronounce various two and three syllable words, and struggled with word recognition and pronunciation. Students also read the sentences in a broken fluency, and had a hard time comprehending what they read. A fourth grade student from a different school district was asked to read the same set of sentences, yet this student exhibited exceptional reading skills. None of the words were mispronounced and the sentence was read with excellent fluency.

It was initially believed that the difference in reading performance between the students in the life skills group and the other fourth grade student stemmed from the educational reading components in the different school districts. After further scrutiny of the two school districts, there seemed to be very little difference in quality of education, and access to informative resources. Both school districts were staffed with well educated teachers and multiple libraries in the school. Each school district also had computer laboratories as well as computers located in the classrooms.

It was then believed that the community in which each district was located in may have something to do with the vast difference in reading skills among the students. The students in the life skills group lived in an urbanized community whereas the other fourth grade student hailed from a more suburban community. Inner city distractions could have

led to the students in the life skills group having poorer reading levels. However, after an in-depth look into the other fourth grade student's family background, it was discovered that this student had siblings who were raised in an urbanized community. Their reading levels matched this student's reading level, even though siblings all grew up in different types of communities and attended different school districts.

After an informal conversation with the other fourth grader's mother, regarding the noticeable difference between the reading achievements her child and the children in the life skills group, the mother surmised that her child's achievement was due to the reading she did with her child since infancy. She explained that she would read stories to her children several times per week until her children learned to read, after which the children began reading to her. She explained that she made their story time the ultimate reward, which in turn developed a deep love for reading among her children.

The question then arose whether or not parents in general were making it a habit of reading to their young children. It seems that because society is highly influenced by television programming, parents are more likely to allow children to watch a program on television, instead of reading a book to their children. The convenience of television and video games may be preferred by busy parents more so than books. Resultantly, parental reading of stories to young children could be significantly related to a child's reading achievement.

1.1 Purpose

The main purpose of this research was to determine some of the causes of low reading achievement in young children. It was suggested that nighttime parental reading to children can help in the development of reading skills. Thus, this study examined the

reading levels of fourth grade students in order to determine if there was a relationship between reading levels and bedtime stories. It also examined if there is a difference between students that have had bedtime stories read to them consistently in earlier years, and students who have had little, to no bedtime stories read to them. If the relationships between these two variables were strong, then perhaps more parents who are not reading to their children can begin to do so. Ultimately, the propose of this study was to expose some of the reasons children's reading skills are lacking, in order to encourage parents to help their children become stronger readers.

1.2 Hypothesis

This study hypothesized that fourth grade students that had bedtime stories read to them by their caregivers in previous years would have significantly higher reading levels than fourth grade students who did not have bedtime stories read to them by their caregivers in previous years. An additional hypothesis in this study was that students who consistently had bedtime stories read to them throughout their lives will have higher reading achievement than students that had little to no bedtime stories read to them throughout their lives. This study also examined if there is a significant difference between male fourth grade students and female fourth grade students in terms of reading achievement.

1.3 Theory/Background

Crucial discoveries in reading development dates back as early as the 1900s, when Dr. Edward Nettleship linked a correlation between socioeconomic status and reading achievement. He suggested that there is in fact a correlation between the number of books found in a child's home and the child's reading level (class notes). When

considering reading levels among children today, socioeconomic status is not the only thing that can affect a child's poor reading levels. Caregivers are failing to engage in nighttime reading with their young children (Williams 2010).

The benefits of reading to children at an early age are tremendous for a child's development. Reading reduces stress and crying for irritable infants and caregivers. Infants respond very well to the comfortable connections made with their caregivers when reading. Reading a twenty minute bedtime story to a child can also help with a child's language and speech development. Children can learn multiple languages through reading in addition to learning the proper pronunciation and phonic for the English language. A child can also improve logic and reading skills through nighttime reading with caregivers. When a child is read to they are encouraged to listen to the story, thus learning the importance of listening. More importantly, children can develop an overall love for books and a love for reading. Reading is viewed as an enjoyable activity and not as an unwanted punishment (Health Today 2010).

Unfortunately, many children may be missing out on the multiple benefits associated with nighttime reading with caregivers. Caregivers, mainly middle class working caregivers, seem to be failing to read to their young children (Williams 2010). Many caregivers are overworked, and are struggling to provide essentials such as food and shelter for their children. Many parents are finding it much easier to put their children in front of the television instead of actually reading to them. Most working caregivers are considered too busy to read to their children. Therefore, television is viewed as an easy way to hold the child's attention while parents are busy cooking, cleaning, etc. The twenty minute task of reading to their children tends to take a backseat when the

struggles of everyday living seem to overpower such activities (Williams 2010). The lack of parental reading of bedtime stories may potentially be leading to reading problems for children.

One article discussing the importance of reading to children depicts two second grade children who were asked to briefly describe the same book. The one child's description consisted of one short sentence which explained the overall idea of the book. He then mentioned that the book was nice and he enjoyed it. The second child's description was slightly different consisting of several paragraphs in which he provided an in depth summary of the plot and mentions his own thoughts and feelings about the book. Additionally, the child described the illustrations in the book and related them to the story. Although both children completed the assignment correctly, the second child clearly had a much better understanding of the story (Carol Hurst's 2010).

It is evident that the second child has read this story at home with his caregivers. Because he is so knowledgeable about the story, it is assumed that he has read the story several times and has had quite a few discussions about the story with whomever it was that read it with him. The fact that this child was also able to describe the illustrations in the book and provide insight on how the pictures related to the story shows how much he enjoyed reading this book (Carol Hurst's 2010).

This is a clear depiction of the benefits associated to nighttime reading. Children are much more aware of details and are able to recall information in more depth, thus developing reading comprehension skills. A child's grammar and sentence structure strengthens, along with vocabulary and spelling. This helps develop reading recognition within children.

1.4 Definitions

There are several words that will arise throughout this thesis that may be better understood if defined. The definitions for those words are as followed: Parental reading relates to a mother, father or caregiver reading a book/story to their child. Nighttime reading/ bedtime stories relate to books/stories read at night before a child goes to sleep. Caregivers are the person(s) legally in charge of taking care (feeding, educating, bathing, keeping healthy and safe) of a child. This person does not have to necessarily be the child's biological parent; this person could be a relative, foster parent(s) or adoptive parent. The terms caregivers and parents will be used interchangeably throughout this study. Reading achievement/levels relates to the level at which a child reads; in this study reading recognition and reading comprehension will be the main focus.

1.5 Assumptions

This study consisted mainly of African American and Hispanic fourth grade students in an inner city public school. Many of the students used in this study were among the same socioeconomic status and attend the same school district. It was assumed that the students used in this study will represent the entire population for fourth grade students. It was also assumed that the information received from the interviews and questionnaires used in this study will be reported truthfully from the fourth grade students.

Testing the reading achievement levels for fourth grade students was a key component in this study. The Reading Ability Screening Test from the Child Development Institute will be used to measure the reading levels. It was assumed that the Reading Screening Test from the Child Development Institute was a valid and accurate

measuring device for testing the reading achievement levels of the students involved in this study.

1.6 Limitations

This study is limited to a small sample of students in one school district. The students used in this study were mainly among the same race and socioeconomic status. Perhaps traveling to other school districts with a more various population of students, (in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and parental educational background) would have unlimited the research conducted in this study. This study was also limited to only collecting data from students. Results may be more adequate if the parents of the students were available during the data collecting process. Due to the amount of time allotted for the completion of this study, data from students were the only data collected. It would have been helpful if parents were given the opportunity to explain their reasoning for either choosing to read or choosing not to read to their children within the earlier years of their lives.

1.7 Summary

In the upcoming chapter, this thesis will review literature relating to the topic, the relationship between parental reading of bedtime stories to children and reading achievement. The literature will consist mainly of peer reviewed journal articles. Between fifty and seventy journal articles will be examined and reviewed to show a significant understanding of the previous related research concerning this topic.

Chapter three will consist of the method used to perform the intended research. This section will identify the independent and dependent variables. It will explain in detail the population of students used in this study, and the type of questions they were

asked during the questionnaire/interviewing process. This chapter will also explain the reading measurement used to determine which reading leveling the student at which each student is performing.

Chapter four will be an analysis of the data collected in the previous section. It will determine if there was a significant relationship between parental reading of bedtime stories to children and the reading achievement of that child. It will also determine if there was a significant difference between male and female reading achievement.

The final chapter of this thesis will summarize the entire thesis. It will review the first chapter's introduction and again explain the purpose of the research and what the research was hypothesizing. It will review the history and background of the topic, along with the assumptions and limitations the research may have. This chapter will briefly reexamine the literature reviewed in chapter two and the methodology used in chapter three. Finally, this chapter will review the findings found in analysis of data in chapter four. This chapter will then conclude the research in this thesis.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Early reading skills can have a significant impact on the several academics outlets such as writing abilities (Hooper, 2010), along with communication abilities and reading/literacy abilities. Parental reading with children at an early age is very important to the development of early literacy skills. In an article discussing literacy within Aboriginal children, the researches explain that oral storytelling is an essential part of early literacy across cultures (McKeough, 2008).

2.1 Home literacy

According to Klauda (2008), there are three components to reading fluency and reading comprehension: word individualization, syntactic unit, and the entire passage. If a child has not practiced early literacy skills upon entering kindergarten, it may be extremely difficult for the child to grasp the concepts stated by Klauda (2008). In a study that examined growth rate in oral reading fluency and its important in predicting reading comprehension achievement, the researchers were interested in determining if various literacy skills (phonological awareness, letter-naming fluency, vocabulary, etc) within first graders through third graders, in relation to reading comprehension. After performing a series of tests with students of various gender and ethnicities, for a four year period, the researchers determined several outcomes. Oral reading fluency is strong predictor when considering reading comprehension and oral reading fluency prevailed over the various literacy skills, such as phonological awareness, letter-naming fluency, vocabulary, etc. (Kim, 2010). A key way for a child to strengthen their oral reading skills is through joint parental reading.

Ideally, parents should begin reading to their children while the child is still a fetus in the mother's womb, but infancy is also sufficient. A study examining the schooling and age of children, showed children that begin learning and schooling earlier tend to outperform their classmates (Crone, 1999). In an article pertaining to shared parent-child book reading, investigators examined over one hundred eight month old infants and their parents to determine if the parents began reading to their infants. The investigators tested various factors such as an infant's temperament, gender and other attributes along with the parent's level of education, socioeconomic status, income, etc. Investigators predicted that certain parental behaviors would account for infant's early reading and language development. They also predicted parents that weren't as educated would be less likely to read to their infants, along with predicting child gender differences in reading. The last prediction was that mothers that read to their infants would have encouragement and sensitivity behaviors whereas mothers that did not read to their infants would not have those parental behaviors. Many of these predictions were proven to have a significant relationship. A major finding from the research conducted in this study is that language development is strengthened through early shared reading, along with superior emergent literacy skills, and overall academic accomplishment (Karrass, 2003).

In an article pertaining to literary activities performed at home and their effect on early literacy skills, researchers collected data from over sixty children and their parents. The children's households all varied in terms of socioeconomic status. The researchers were interested in determining if there was a significant relationship between reading to children in the home, coaching children when reading at home and the overall home

literacy activities taking place in the home. The researchers also wanted to determine if after considering the children's cognitive ability and the parents level of education if the literacy activities taking place in the home were contributing to several literacy areas (letter sounds and names, receptive vocabulary, phonological sensitivity). Finally, the researchers wanted to determine if reading comprehension and spelling in the first and second grade was a prediction from the "outside-in" and "inside-out" skills acquired in kindergarten. The overall findings in this study proved that the literacy activities in the home unfortunately did not develop general reading skills in children (Evans, 2000).

In a slightly older article pertaining to habitual parent book reading with children, investigators researched to what extent parents became less directive when teaching their children (due to the child's age and communicative status). The investigators also researched to determine the relationship between the way parents interact with children and the child's verbal IQ. After collecting data from over one hundred families, the investigators concluded their research with the following results: the findings were supported through the data collected (Pellegrini, 1985).

In an article that examined the affects of children's emergent literacy from the quality of adult book reading, the investigators examined forty-eight preschool children to determine which particular style of reading would be most sufficient when considering three separate styles. A describer style (describing the picture in the book while reading it), a comprehender style (concentrating on the overall meaning of the story) and the performance- oriented style (introducing the book before reading it, and discussing the book after completing it) were the read styles of reading. The investigators predicted that children with greater reading skills would respond better to higher demand styles and the

children lesser reading skills would respond better to lower demand styles. They predicted styles that had more interruptions (comprehender and describer) would be best for the children with lesser reading skills. Overall, the investigators predicted that performance- oriented style would be suitable for more advance children, describer style would be suitable for less advanced children, and the comprehender style would be the median for average children. The results indicated that the predictions made by the investigators were concurrent. The reading style for children is very much dependant on the skill level of the child (Reese, 1999).

Interactive book reading is a very viable method when reading with children. If children are involved in interactive activities while reading, they can significantly advance their reading level and vocabulary skills. It allows the child to see the words with concrete objects (Wasik, 2001). A study that examined interactive book reading with parents of at risk families consisted mainly of training parents in interactive book reading and having them perform the activities with their children. The investigators speculated whether this training would result in a higher amount of reading and more effective reading between parents and their children. They also questioned if children vocabulary would increase through interactive book reading with their parents. The final speculation was whether or not parents would find the training in interactive book reading successful and adequate. After testing six families from low socioeconomic statuses, the study proves that parents and child communication from book reading did improve, along with the IQ's of several children. Most parents also found the training to be sufficient; proving the importance of this study in terms of parental reading with children (Tavern, 1995).

An article was written to determine how a three year old child recalls the information in a picture book after reading the book jointly in their home. The researchers predicted that children would actively point to ensure memory of the book material was taking place. The child would point at the correct item in the book when the item was spoken aloud (either by the parent or the researcher). After testing and collecting data from over one hundred families, the researcher concluded that the results concur with the prediction that children will be able to recall information in storybooks (Cornell, 1988).

In an article written about the involvement of storybook reading in helping kindergarteners learning new vocabulary words, researchers had children listen to a storybook repeatedly, then complete a posttest, to determine how knowledgeable students were concerning several new vocabulary words. As a result of this test, children were more knowledgeable about words in the story than the word not in the story. This proves the importance of reading to children at a young age (Robbins, 1994).

In an article pertaining to researched based techniques for parents to tutor children in reading, five first grade students with poor literacy skills were selected to participate in the study. The parents of these children were trained on tutoring their children in several literacy components such as practice in reading, modeling, phonological awareness and fluency in oral reading. After concluding this research it was found that children that were tutored by their parents improved their overall literacy significantly. This reinforces the importance of parental involvement in terms of reading to children (Resetar, 2006).

In an article discussing early literary within the culture of families, investigators questioned families about their overall engagement in their child's literacy development.

The investigators asked probing questions pertaining to the family's routine dinner time, joint reading between parents and child, and scheduled homework times. The investigators also had the families complete a series of surveys and questionnaires about the child's literacy development. After concluding the research, the investigators found that there were strong correlations between the child's reading and joint reading with their parents.

An article pertaining to influences from home literacy on oral vocabulary and written language hypothesized that kindergarten children will gain better written languages skills and oral vocabulary if they went beyond simple joint reading and explore parental initiated literacy activities. Overall it was found that there is a relationship between home literacy activities and early literacy development (Frijters, 2000).

2.2. Preschool literacy

Preschool has been proven to be the time when many students begin learning essential early literacy techniques. It is very beneficial for children to already have some of those skills through parental reading at home. These skills prepare children with phonological skills, letter knowledge, and begin to build vocabulary important for decoding (Lonigan, 2000).

In a recent study, researchers analyzed preschool children literacy practices at home along with their overall literacy development. Parental reading to their children was analyzed along with the parental teaching of letters, words, etc. Surprisingly, there was only a small correlation between parental reading to children and children's overall literacy skills (Hood, 2008). Similar studies, assessing preschoolers' literacy in classroom

settings found that students performed better when working in small intimate groups (no more than ten other students), rather than whole classroom settings (Connor, 2006).

An article discussing preschooler's attention to printed words in books, found that preschoolers rarely look at the printed words in a books (their mainly concentrating on the pictures). When an adult reads the words and makes comments about the words, the preschoolers will then pay attention to the printed words (Justice, 2008).

A recent study examined the effects of early literacy professional development program. The researchers explored this intervention with children and teachers in the Head Start program. Teachers were trained using the professional development for the duration of one semester and then instructed to teach their preschool classes. The professional development was proven to be a positive approach for students' literacy, improving their overall language development, blending skills and letter knowledge (Powell, 2010).

An article highlighting a reading recovery program for at-risk first grade students discussed the effectiveness of the program. The students who used the reading recovery program score considerably better than a control group of students, randomly assigned to an intervention technique (Schwartz, 2005).

Another article sought out to determine whether first through third generation children differ in reading level upon entering first grade. The researchers also wanted to determine if immigrant groups had different growth rates in terms of reading skills from kindergarten through third grade. Lastly, the researcher examined if there was a difference between what may cause a difference between the rate and level of the growth of reading achievement in immigrants. The researcher collected data from the students,

parents, and the teacher five times during a four year span. Overall, the researchers found that first and second generation children have an advantage over third generation children when considering academics (Palacios, 2008).

In a study that involved voluntary summer reading with children between the first and fifth grades, the researched primarily wanted to test if students would improve their reading literacy more because they were voluntarily reading in the summer. Students were pre-tested before the completion of their school year then given several books to read during the summer months. At the end of the summer, students were given a post-test. The data indicated that though more students, voluntarily read during the summer, there was not a significant improvement in the student's literacy (Kim, 2007).

2.3 Parent and teacher involvement in early literacy

It has been speculated that minority families can help their child's school and literacy achievement by becoming more involved in school. Though mothers are more influential to the development of a child's literacy achievement, fathers were found to be also very influential (Martin, 2010). Children need a lot of support when learning literacy skills; support can come from parents, teachers, and other household family members.

Recently, an article was written to determine a way in which minority parents (specifically African American) can become more involved with their preschool children. The researcher developed and distributed a preventive intervention called the companion curriculum (TCC). Data was collected from the parents of over two hundred Head Start preschool students. The researched speculated that parents that used the TCC intervention more often would have greater involvement in their child's home and school educational

settings than compared to parents that did not used the TCC intervention program.

Another speculation by the researcher was that the relationship between the parent and the teacher would be greater with the parent using the TCC intervention than with the parents not using the intervention. The last speculation was that the parents' emotional characteristics (i.e. depression) would not be as prevalent in parents using the TCC intervention. The results of this study show that though involvement in the study began to decrease, the TCC intervention did in fact increase parental reading with children and parent-teacher relationships (Mendez, 2010).

A study researched the way teachers and parents felt about the teaching techniques for early literacy. Both parents and teachers completed a survey asking them to rate their belief about the teaching methods concerning beginning reading. Surprisingly, parents and teachers had contrasting data in terms of their method of choice. Parents felt the bottom up approach was the better method, while teachers preferred graphophonemic component (Evans, 2004). Though, parent and teachers do not always agree on the appropriate method of teaching their children, it is important that there is positive relationship between the two. Parents are motivated to participate in their child's school and classroom functions when there is a positive relationship between the parent, child, and teacher (Green, 2007). Teachers effect the children's development just as much as the parent. The teaching style the teacher presents is very important in developing literacy skills (Byrne, 2010).

Despite many prevailing socioeconomic constraints, parents can positively impact a child's literacy performance by getting involved in school. It has been proven that children respond better in school when parents are involved in the school/classroom

(Dearing, 2006). In an article pertaining to a family literacy program designed to connect a child's schooling and home life, researchers supplied parents with necessary materials needed to spark the child's literacy interest. The parents' fifty-six African American and Latino students met weekly with their children and the teachers to determine way in which the student can become motivated about reading and literacy. Concluding the study, researchers found that students read the material of their enjoyment (i.e. highlights magazines) with their parents in the household and eventually began reading alone in their spare time (Morrow, 1997).

2.4 The effects of socioeconomic status on early literacy

There are many factors that should be considered when determining the appropriateness of a child's reading achievement. The poverty conditions of public schools, along with parental involvement and neighborhood conditions significantly correlate with low reading achievement in children (Aikens, 2008). Certain parental behaviors and beliefs reflecting poverty can affect the way children perform in terms of literacy (Davis-Kean, 2005).

An article investigated the differences in socioeconomic statuses when pertaining to children's reading achievement. The investigator performed a longitudinal study in which two sets of preschool students were tested; each set having fathers whose occupation differed in education and skill level. The investigator speculated that the socioeconomic status differences of preschool student's phonological abilities will in turn effect early reading achievement once those students are in the first grade. After testing the students in preschool and conducting phone interviews with the parents, the investigator retested the children two later upon completion of first grade. It was found

that there was a significant difference in preschool students' phonological sensitivity when comparing their father's occupation. It was also proven that socioeconomic status differences did in fact result in a difference in reading and arithmetic achievement (Bowey, 1995).

Minorities are mainly ranked at the lower spectrum of socioeconomic status, and in turn seem to have the lower reading levels in children. Children in poorer neighborhoods, attending poorer schools, do not get access to certain literacy opportunities such as printing, cultural literacy discussions, etc. (McGill-Franzen, 2002). Though, children living in poorer conditions do not have access to all things, they still can be taught and can still learner similar to other students. Even English language learners have the ability to learn early literacy (Betts, 2008).

An article that was written in response to the limitations of another article, examined three reading techniques with over seventy children from low socioeconomic status families. The first technique consisted of children being read to at school (day-care) with their teachers and with at home with their parents. The second technique consisted of children only being read to at school with their teachers. The third technique was a control group in which the researchers examined the children's play time while at school with their teachers. The researchers predicted that the children who used the first technique of reading with their teacher and their parents would show stronger effects than the other two techniques due to frequency of the reading. Children who used the second technique which included reading only with their teacher would show stronger effects when compared to the third technique (the controlled) but not the first technique. The

researchers concluded this study finding that their prediction was true; teacher and parent reading to children will significantly increase a child's reading levels (Whitehurst, 1994).

2.5 Summary

In conclusion, there is a variety of supported research advocating for parental-child joint reading. The benefits associated with reading to children are endless, and the effort it takes to read is minimal and in many cases enjoyable. Early literacy activities, prepare young children literacy skills such as phonological awareness, letter knowledge, oral fluency and vocabulary, and reading comprehension. If parents are willing to become involved in their child's academic literacy achievement, children will benefit throughout their educational life. Despite undesirable socioeconomic status, neighborhood, schools and classrooms, parents can still provide their child with the same foundational skills as their peers and classmates. This study will help parents understand the importance of the parent-child reading and other early literacy activities.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Reading achievement is thought to be a very important factor in the educational development of children, though many students are expected to be achieving at a lower level. One reason as to why this phenomenon may be occurring is because caregivers might be failing to read to their children in the home. It is extremely important for a child to be previously equipped with a foundational understanding of reading upon entering school.

In this study, students were interviewed to determine whether or not caregivers are actively reading with their children in the home. In order to establish whether students that have been read to in the home with caregivers have better reading achievement than students that have not been read to in the home, students were asked to participate in a non-academic reading assessment which tested the areas of word recognition and reading comprehension.

3.1 Participants

The participants for this research project were randomly selected from three fourth grade classrooms in a southern New Jersey elementary school. Twelve fourth grade students (six males and six females) from the New York Avenue Elementary School participated in this research project. The participants range in ethnicity; majority of the participants are of African descent or Hispanic descent.

3.2 Design

The design of this research project consists of two independent variables; the first independent variable being the children's home reading practice (Children who were read to at home by caregivers; Children who were not read to at home by caregivers). The second independent variable is the type of reading assessment (word recognition; reading comprehension). The dependent variable consists of the scores of the reading assessments.

It was previously mentioned that the reading assessment tool used to measure the reading achievement of the participating children would be assumed to be a valid instrument. This assessment is not going to be weighted as an academic requirement for the student; therefore the results of it will not impact the student's class ranking in any way. In terms of reliability, it is proposed that the reading assessment be administered two times to ensure reliability.

3.3 Procedure

Each participant was privately brought into a secluded section of the school's library in order to ensure necessary conditions for concentration. The research had a copy of the interview questionnaire (see Appendix A) and a copy of the *Child Development Institute – Reading Ability Screening Test* (see Appendix B) for each participant. The researcher number coded each participant's questionnaire and test (ex. a male participant will receive a code of M001; a female participant will receive a code of F002).

The researcher explained to the participant that they are going to be asked a several questions pertaining to reading in the home, and then take a short verbal reading

test. The researcher explained to the participant that they can choose to end their participation at anytime if they felt uncomfortable.

The researcher then asked the participant personally developed questions pertaining to reading at home with caregivers. Participants were asked the general question, “Did your parents/guardians read bedtime stories to you when you were younger?” If the participant answered yes, they would then answer questions pertaining to the rate and time in which stories were read, and the feelings attached to the shared reading. If the participant answered yes or no to the general question, they would have to answer several general questions that pertain to their reading habits.

After the questionnaire was completed, the participant partook in a verbal reading test. The *Child Development Institute – Reading Ability Screening Test* is comprised of two sections. The first section is the word recognition test. The participant was asked to read twelve words that increase in difficulty. Every word the participant pronounced correctly was scored, whereas every word that the participant mispronounced was not scored.

The second section consisted of the comprehension test. The participant was asked to read a detailed sentence aloud. Upon completion of the reading, the participant was asked twelve questions pertaining to the sentence. If the participant answered a question correctly, the question was scored; if the participant answered a question incorrectly, it was not scored.

3.4 Analysis

In order to analyze both of the independent variables along with the dependent variable, a two-way between groups (independent groups) ANOVA was used.

Supplemental data such as the descriptive statistics was also collected. In order to determine if there was a difference in reading ability between female and male, a dependent T-Test was performed.

3.5 Summary

In order to determine whether nighttime reading with caregivers makes an impact on the reading achievement of fourth grade students, a random selection of students had the opportunity to participate in this previously explained research. Students were asked several questions pertaining to their reading preference, and then they were given a short, non-academic reading assessment. The collected data was analyzed using a two-way between groups ANOVA in order to analyze both of the independent variables along with the dependent variable. The findings for all the data collected will be thoroughly explain in the upcoming chapter of this research project.

Chapter 4

Results

Due to the perceived notion that reading achievement in particular students are lacking, this research study set out to examine reading achievement in fourth grade students. The purpose of this research was to determine if there was a significant relationship between children who were read to by their caregivers in previous years and children who were not read to by their caregivers in previous years. Since it is usually thought that gender is a factor when examining reading achievement this study also examined if there was a difference in reading achievement between male and female students.

Twelve fourth grade students, six females and six males, were interview about their reading habits. All students were asked if their parent/guardian read bedtime stories to them when they were younger. Six students stated that they were read to, and six students stated that they were not read to. Students who stated that they were read to had to answer a five questions pertaining to duration, frequency, and their feelings toward the shared reading with caregivers. Most students stated that the shared reading with caregivers occurred every night. Majority of the students also stated that they sometimes did the reading within this shared reading with caregivers. Students who stated that they were not read to by their parents/caregivers along with students who stated that they were read to by their parents/caregivers answered several questions pertaining to their reading habits. Majority of all the students reported that they like to read, though, all of the students who participated in shared reading with caregivers reported that they read all the time, while majority of the students who did not participate in shared reading with

caregivers reported only reading in/for school. Upon completing the interview questionnaire, all participating students were asked to take a verbal non-academic reading assessment. The data from the assessment was used to determine whether several relationships had occurred.

In order to test if there was a relationship between reading achievement and children who were read to by their caregivers in previous years and children who were not read to by their caregivers in previous years, a two-way between groups ANOVA was performed. The results of this test concluded that there was not a significant difference between the children that were and were not read to in previous years by their caregivers (see figure 1).

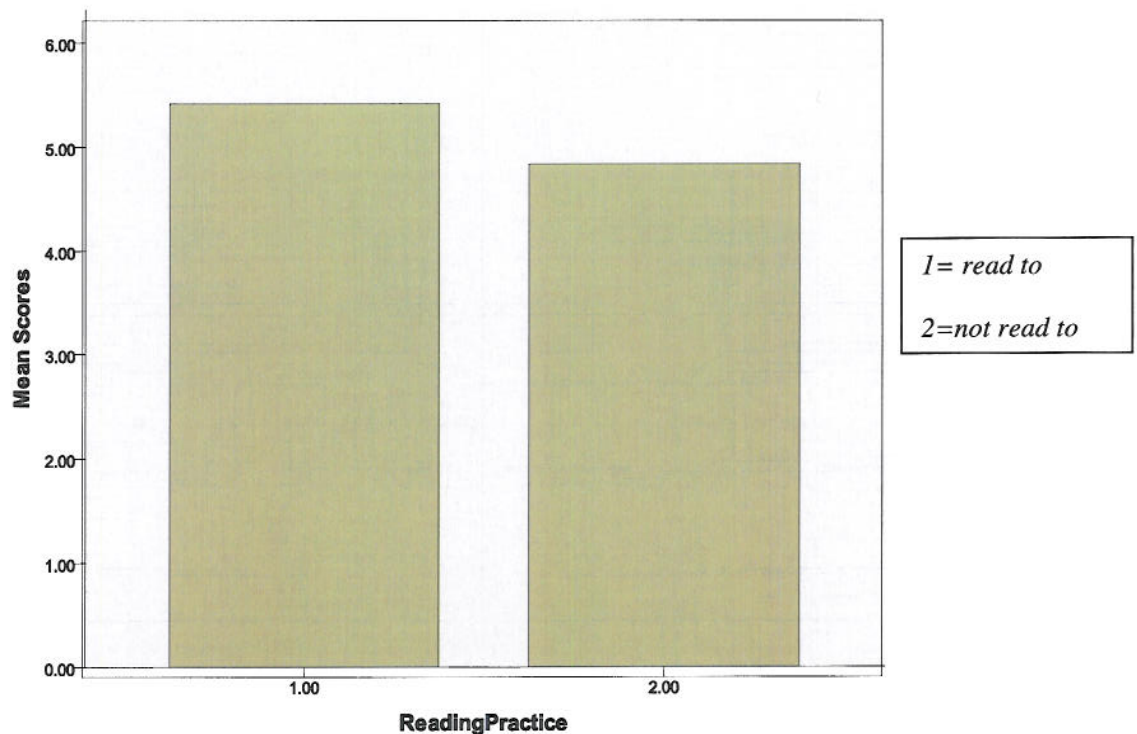


Figure 1: Reading Practices differences in reading achievement

In order to test if there was a significant difference between the reading achievement of male and female students, a dependent T-Test was performed. The results of this test concluded that there was a not significant difference between males and female students (see figure 2).

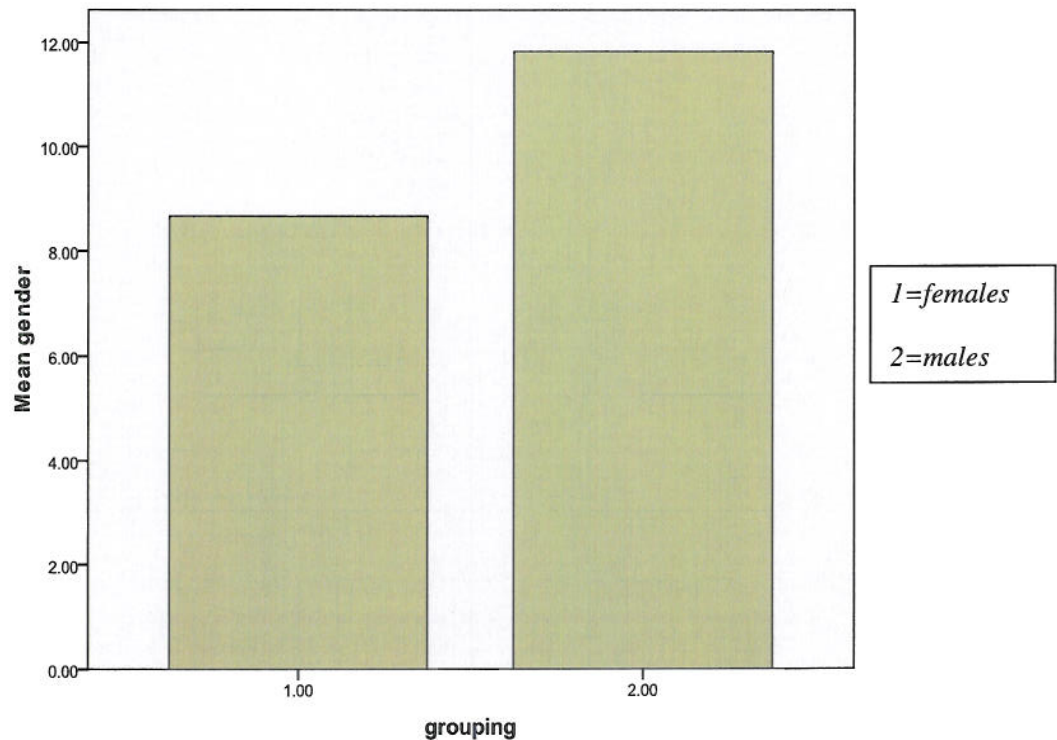


Figure 2: Gender differences in reading

This study utilizes a two part reading assessment which consisted of a word recognition section and a reading comprehension section. In order to determine if there was a relationship between these two variables, a correlation test was performed. The results of this test determined that there was a correlated relationship between word recognition scores and reading comprehension scores.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The primary hypothesis of this research project was to determine if there was a significant relationship between children who were read to by their caregivers in previous years and children who were not read to by their caregivers in previous years. After performing a two way between groups ANOVA from the data collected from fourth grade students, the results showed that there was not a significant difference between children that were and were not read to in previous years by their caregivers. A gender component was also examined when in this research study. In order to determine if there is a difference between the reading achievement of male and female students, a dependent T-Test was perform. The results concluded that there was not a significant difference between males and female students. Though, both of the hypotheses were not supported, there was a significant correlation between word recognition scores and reading comprehension scores.

5.1 Limitations

There were several limitations posed while performing this research study. The first limitation consisted of the sample size in the study. When research is performed with participants under the age of 18, it is required that informed consent (see Appendix C) is signed by the parent/guardian of the participant. Before performing this research, informed consent was distributed to three fourth grade classrooms (with approximately twenty students in each class). Twenty informed consent forms were returned, eight stating that their child was not allowed to participate in this study. Thus, the sample size for this research project consisted of twelve participants. In most research, a larger

sample size is needed in order to see a truly significant difference. It is felt that if this research project could have expanded its sample size then the hypothesis would have proven to be significant.

The second limitation in this study consisted of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The participants in this research study attended the New York Avenue Elementary School which is the same school in which the researcher is employed. The researcher has previously worked with some of the participants for various work-related reasons. The participants know the researcher as a faculty member in their school. The current relationship between the researcher and the participants could have affected the way participants' performed during the interviewed questionnaire and/or during the reading assessment. Participants were probably apprehensive about admitting their true feelings about reading and/or accurately reporting if they were read to by their caregivers.

The third limitation that was posed in this research study was the way in which the background data was collected. In order to determine if the participant was read to by their caregiver in previous years, an interview questionnaire was given to the participant. The participant then stated whether or not he/she was read to by their caregiver in previous years. It would have been more beneficial to somehow ask the caregiver directly if he/she read to their child in previous years. Since the participant is still a child, they may not be able to remember all the times when they were read to in previous years. The caregiver might have been able to provide more accurate information.

5.2 Future Aspirations

In future research, it is hoped that a broader sample size could be utilized (approximately one hundred participants or more). Branching out to different types of school districts is also an aspiration. The current study was performed in an inner-city elementary school. The data may look vastly different if the research was performed in a different school district, perhaps suburban middle school or high school. It is also hoped that future research could explore several other factors toward low reading achievement. Ethnicity, age, culture, socio-economic status, onset of reading age, etc. are all factors that could possibly alter the reading achievement of children. Another aspiration for future research would be to investigate the other benefits that are associated with nighttime reading with children by caregivers. Perhaps children who are read to by their caregivers have better relationships (peer, family, intimate). Children may be more active in particular activities, or tend have similar career aspirations.

5.3 Summary/ Conclusion

The current study investigated the relationship between nighttime reading with children by caregivers and reading achievement. This research was performed after low reading achievement was noticed in third and fourth grade students. A review of the literature revealed that children's reading habits in their home environments before entering the formal school setting will be better developed if home literacy practices are performed. Adequate parental involvement and preschool literacy programs are also beneficial to a child's reading achievement.

Twelve fourth grade students were interviewed about there reading habits and then briefly assessed in the areas of word recognition and reading comprehension.

Results proved that there was not a significant difference between the children who were read to by their caregivers in previous years and children who were not read to by their caregivers in previous years. This was probably due the small sample size used in the study.

Though the hypotheses in the current study failed, night time reading with children by caregivers is still thought to be very important to the development of the reading achievement of children. Children who are read to in their home before entering school, may readily welcome the new challenges given to them in the classroom environment. Parents are encouraged to pick out the enjoyable storybook and read to their youngsters. This activity can not only strengthen the child's passion for reading, but also better connect the parent-child relationship. Though the hypothesis was not supported in this research, there are few (if any) downfalls to reading with children. If nothing else, quality time will be gain through story time between a caregiver and their child.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

****Did your parents/guardians read bedtime stories to you when you were younger?**

YES

NO

If Yes...

1. How often did your parent/guardian read to you when you were younger?
Every Night Once a Week Once a Month Once a Year
2. Did your parent/guardian only read at night?
Yes, only at night No, other times too
3. Did you and or parent/guardian take turns reading?
No, they did all the reading Yes, I read sometimes
4. How did you feel when your parent/guardian read to you?
Happy Excited Interested Bored Sad Mad Tired
5. Do you remember some of your favorite stories you read with your parent/guardian? What were they?
Yes No

If Yes or No....

1. Do you like to read?
Yes No
2. How often do you read?
All the time Only in school/For school Never
3. How many pages was the longest book you've ever read?
4. Do you think reading is...?
A fun and enjoyable activity Hard and boring schoolwork

Appendix B

Child Development Institute
Reading Ability Screening Test

Word Recognition

sat turtle paint bulk nuisance vassal
depreciate dialogue grotesque bohemian
cornice heinous

(Please cut or fold along the dotted line so you can present one test at a time.) - - - - -
- - - - -

Comprehension

**One spring day 3 sailors rowed a 14 foot boat 9 miles down the
Red River from Lena, Montana to Elm Springs in less than 3
hours.**

Appendix C

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a graduate student in the School Psychology Department at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Roberta Dihoff as part of my master's thesis concerning the relationship between nighttime reading with caregivers and children's reading achievement. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this research. The goal of the study is to determine if there is a significant relationship between nighttime reading with caregivers and reading achievement in children.

Each child will be invited to participate in an interview session pertaining to reading with caregivers and their personal reading habits. The child will then be invited to complete a short reading assessment. Any child who expresses a desire not to participate will be escorted back to their classroom immediately. The reading assessment is not an academic requirement; it will not affect the child's academic grades. Therefore the results will not be shared with students or parents, though the scores will be kept confidential. The results of the interview session and the reading assessment will be retained by me until the end of the study. Every child that participates will remain confidential. All identifiable data collected from the child (i.e. name, age) will remain with myself and not be disclosed in the study. The results of the interview and the assessment may be viewed by other researchers when the data are presented at a professional conference.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this study will have absolutely no effect on your child's standing in his/her class. At the conclusion of the study a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested parents. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me via email at willia0g@students.rowan.edu or by telephone at (609)442-7306. You may also contact Dr. Roberta Dihoff at (856) 256-4500 ext 3776. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ashley J. Williams
willia0g@students.rowan.edu
(609) 442-7306

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher by Feb. 1.

☐ I grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.
☐ I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

(Parent/Guardian signature)

(Date)