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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TIME SPENT READING AT HOME WITH
PARENTS AND READING ACHIEVEMENT

by
Robbin F. Reed

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
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at
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ABSTRACT

ROBBIN F. REED

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TIME SPENT READING AT HOME WITH PARENTS AND READING ACHIEVEMENT

2004

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The purpose of this study was to offer support for reading to your child at home during the early elementary years to increase your child's reading readiness at school. It is hypothesized that the more time parents spend reading to their child at home the higher their scores should be on reading assessments. The sample population consists of 15 students, in grades kindergarten and first, from a parochial school located in southern New Jersey. The parents completed a questionnaire and the Marie Clay's Concepts About Print test was administered to the children. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between the amounts of time the parents stated that they read to their child at home and their child's test score. In contrast to the current literature, this study did not find that a significant relationship exists between the amount of time parents spent reading to a child at home and test scores.

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Chapter One: The Problem

Need-Rationale

Reading and teaching a child to read is one of if not the primary goal of our country's educational system. We live in a literacy driven society where reading is a crucial life skill. Today's students are expected to read and spell more fluently and earlier than decades past. The researcher believes that a child's early exposure to reading contributes to their future success in reading at school.

The researcher has had experience teaching a kindergarten classroom that was both ethnically and economically diverse. The students had varying degrees of success in their ability to read at the end of the school term. The researcher believes that most of the students who were successful in reading were read to home by their parents or guardians.

The researcher also has a seven-year-old niece who was classified for special education in the first grade due to her inability to achieve and retain the necessary reading skills required. It is the researcher's belief that lack of exposure to reading at home contributed to her lack of success in school.

Again success in reading has been shown to be an indicator in a child's overall academic success. If we as educators can discover and determine any behaviors that can improve a child's success in reading than we obligated to investigate those behaviors. The researcher believes that early exposure to reading at home before the child enters school has a direct impact on the child's reading readiness and reading fluency when they reach the first grade.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine if a relationship exists between reading at home to your child and your child's reading achievement at school. Should such a relationship exist then is that relationship positive or negative and to what degree. Does this study support the current belief that providing a child with literacy rich environment at home contribute to their ability to learn and master reading in school.

Hypothesis

Children who are read to at home before they enter school and up to the first grade are better readers and more fluent readers than their peers who were not read to at home before entering school or read to as often.

Theory

Marie Clay was the first researcher to use the term emergent literacy in 1960 (Golbeck, 2001). Emergent literacy theory assumes that children acquire some knowledge about language, reading and writing before they enter school (Golbeck, 2001). According to Clay literacy development begins early and continues throughout life, and that there is a profound relationship among the communication skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Each skill influences the other in the course of development that occurs in the everyday contexts of home and community life.

W. Teale also adopted an emergent perspective and viewed the development of early literacy as the result of children's involvement in reading activities mediated by more literate others (Goldbeck, 2001). The rich social interaction in these activities is particularly important to a child's development. According to Teale not only do interactive literacy events teach children the societal functions and conventions of

reading but they also link reading with enjoyment and satisfaction, increasing a child's desire to engage in literacy activities. Teale's emphasis on the social aspects of reading development reflects Lev Vygotsky's more general social theory of intellectual development that all higher mental functions are internalized social relationships (Goldbeck, 2001).

Lev Vygotsky has four basic principles of psychology and education: (1) children construct knowledge; (2) development cannot be separated from its social context; (3) learning can lead development; and (4) language plays a central role in mental development (Bordova & Leong, 1996).

Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, or ZPD, is a way of conceptualizing the relationship between learning and development (Bordova & Leong, 1996). Vygotsky used the term zone because he conceived development not as a point on a scale as Piaget but as a continuum of behaviors or degrees of maturation (Bordova & Leong, 1996). By describing the zone as proximal (close to, next to), he meant that the zone is limited to those behaviors that will develop in the near future (Bordova & Leong, 1996). Proximal refers not to all possible behaviors that will eventually emerge, but to those closest to emergence at any given time (Bordova & Leong, 1996). According to Vygotsky the development of behavior occurs on two levels, which form the boundaries of the ZPD (Bordova & Leong, 1996). The lower level is the child's independent performance, what the child knows and can do alone (Bordova & Leong, 1996). The higher level is the maximum the child can reach with help and is called assisted performance (Bordova & Leong, 1996). Between maximally assisted performance and independent performance lie in varying degrees of partially assisted performances

(Bordova & Leong, 1996). The skills and behaviors represented in the ZPD are dynamic and constantly changing (Bordova & Leong, 1996). What a child does with some assistance today is what the child will do independently tomorrow (Bordova & Leong, 1996). What requires maximum support and assistance today will be something the child can do with minimal help tomorrow (Bordova & Leong, 1996). Thus, assisted performance level will change as the child develops (Bordova & Leong, 1996).

D. Holdaway defined four processes that enable young children to acquire literacy abilities (Goldbeck, 2001). The first process, observation of literacy behaviors, is when children see adults read and write either for business or pleasure (i.e. writing directions or reading favorite stories at bedtime) (Goldbeck, 2001). The second is collaboration, whereby the child interacts with another individual and in the process, receives direct guidance, encouragement, motivation and help (Goldbeck, 2001). Third is practice, during which the child attempts the alone what has been learned previously in cooperation with others (Goldbeck, 2001). Whether it is role-playing or using invented spelling while writing, children have the opportunity to experiment without direction and adult supervision, evaluate their own their own performances, make corrections and increase skills. The forth process is performance; children share what is learned and seek approval from adults who are supportive and interested in their progress (Goldbeck, 2001).

Benjamin Blooms' work, *Stability and Change* (1964), reported longitudinal research indicating that the early years of are significant to cognitive development (White and Coleman, 2000). Bloom proposed that environment that the environment influences development during the first five years of life (White and Coleman, 2000). His research

was in conflict with prevail assumptions that intelligence was fixed at birth (White and Coleman, 2000). According to Bloom, any type of deprivation during these years could have impact cognitive and effective development (White and Coleman, 2000).

Consequently, Bloom proposed that preschool experiences could affect young children's learning.

J. M. Hunt also provided support for early educational experiences. His work, *Intelligence and Experience* (1961), questioned the assumption that intelligence was fixed and proposed the early educational experiences were critical to intellectual development (White and Coleman, 2000). Hunt also reported that a higher level of adult intellectual capacity could be attained by providing quality educational experiences during the early years (White and Coleman, 2000). Hunt expanded upon the work of Piaget's theories of cognitive development (White and Coleman, 2000). Piaget's work provided additional support for concentrating on children's experiences with the environment as a key element of cognitive development (White and Coleman, 200).

Definitions

Assessment: A process of gathering, recording, and analyzing information about a child's knowledge and skills from a variety of sources and, where appropriate, providing descriptive feedback to guide the child's improvement.

Comprehension: The ability to draw meaning from spoken and written words.

Comprehension strategies: Conscious plans that readers use to make sense of the text (e.g., by asking questions such as: "How does this connect with what I already know? What pictures does this text create in my mind? How can I say this in my own words?").

Concepts about print: Awareness about how language is conveyed in print. These concepts include knowing and understanding the following: directionality (reading left to

right, top to bottom); differences between letters and words (words are made of letters; there are spaces between words); capitalization; spelling patterns; punctuation; and common characteristics of books (title, author, front, back).

Decoding: The ability to sound out letters and words.

Emergent literacy: An early stage of literacy development in young children, characterized by a growing awareness of, and interest in, books and writing. Emergent readers and writers may, for example, "read" a book from memory, or "write" a message using scribbles, pictures, or approximations of letters. Children are most likely to demonstrate emergent literacy behaviors if others read to them, encourage them to talk about stories and events, and provide them with opportunities to explore books on their own.

Fluency: The ability to identify words accurately and read text quickly; the ability to read text aloud with good expression.

Grapheme: The smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as b, d, f, p, s; or several letters, such as ch, sh, th, -ck, ea, -igh.

Letter formation: The ability to print or write letters.

Letter recognition: The ability to name a letter that is displayed, or find a letter in a group.

Phoneme: The smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words. English has about 44 phonemes. A few words, such as a or oh, have only one phoneme. Most words, however, have more than one phoneme. The word if has two

phonemes (/i/ /f/); check has three phonemes (/ch/ /e/ /k/); and stop has four phonemes (/s/ /t/ /o/ /p/). Sometimes one phoneme is represented by more than one letter.

Phonemic awareness: The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

Phonics: Instruction that teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language.

Print Awareness: Awareness of the rules of written language, such as knowing that letters and numbers convey meaning and that words are separated by spaces.

Reading strategies: Methods used in reading to determine the meaning of a text.

Examples include substituting an appropriate familiar word for an unfamiliar one, and using root words to determine unfamiliar words

Sight word: A word that a child recognizes and reads instantly without having to sound it out.

Word identification: The ability to read familiar words automatically.

Word knowledge: The ability to use word identification strategies to read partially familiar or unfamiliar words.

Assumptions

This study makes several assumptions. The study assumes that parents spend time at home reading to their children. It assumes that parents who send their children to private parochial schools will have the same degree of interest in their children's education as the parents whose children attend public school. The study assumes that parents who chose to participate in the study will have similar reading habits to those

families who chose not participate. The researcher assumes that all the children will be assessed in the same manner, by the same individual and under the same conditions. The researcher assumes that no other variables in the home may contribute to the child's reading readiness.

Limitations

Limitations exist within this study. Most of the limitations occur within the sample population. The first is that the sample size is limited to 15 to 30 students. The sample population is limited to students in a parochial school setting. The sample population is also limited to a specific geographic location and lacks ethnic diversity. Because of the small sample size it is possible that although significance may be present it may not be seen in this study. Another limitation in the sample size and population is generalizability. If significance is found it may not be possible to generalize what was found in the sample population to all children. Another limitation is the use of a self-report survey. The use a self report survey may contaminate findings because respondents may chose to give more socially desirable answers than that of which is actually occurring in the home.

Summary

In the following chapter the researcher will be reviewing the research that has already been conducted in reference to early literacy skills in children age six and under. What factors influence reading readiness and reading achievement in young children and what if any relationships exist between reading at home and reading achievement in school?

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Children's early experiences with books and reading are thought to contribute to their later success or failure in learning to read (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager, 1991). In fact, many studies have examined the relationships among home literacy, emergent literacy and early reading and seem to be well published. (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995). Associations have been found between book readings and at home and, for example, phonemic print, print concept knowledge, familiarity with decontextualized use of language, and positive attitudes toward literacy (Dickinson & Tabors, 1991). Although in general, just modest relations have been reported, the overall findings seem to support and encourage the implementation of family and preschool literacy programs to enhance children's reading development in school. Upon review of the literature the researcher will show that a relationship between the amounts of time parents reads to a child at home and a child's reading readiness does exist.

Home environment and reading achievement

In 1981, Kevin Swick and Sara Lovingood examined the relationship between home support and reading readiness for kindergarten children. They examined three major questions in their study: (1) Do children whose parents provide a high level of supportive behavior in the home score significantly higher on a test in reading readiness in kindergarten; (2) Does socio-economic status significantly affect reading readiness; and (3) Is there a relationship between reading readiness and (a) a child's age, (b)

mother's education, (c) child's ability to copy letters accurately (Swick and Lovingood, 1981). Their sample comprised a 119 kindergarten children and their mothers from a military base in South Carolina (Swick and Lovingood, 1981). They used the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test (MRRT) to test reading readiness and the Home Support Inventory was used to measure the degree of home support provided to children in the area of academic readiness (Swick and Lovingood, 1981). The Home Support Inventory was used a basis for structured interviews to gather data on home support (Swick and Lovingood, 1981). The Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test was administered to all kindergarten pupils over seven separate time periods during the regular kindergarten day (Swick and Lovingood, 1981). Each question was analyzed separately to produce the following results: (1) Children whose parents provided a high level of supportive behavior in the home scored significantly higher on the test of readiness during their kindergarten year; (2) Socio-economic status, within this study, was not significantly related to reading readiness; and (3) The child's age was not significantly related to reading readiness scores, a mother's education and the child's ability to copy letters accurately were significantly related to reading readiness scores (Swick and Lovingood, 1981). The results of this study do indicate that reading readiness in kindergarten children is influenced by some behaviors of parents in the home. Parents who provide an atmosphere the conducive to reading as indicated in the Home Support Inventory (reading aloud to the child; providing books, records, and writing materials in the home; setting a model for reading; and encouraging the child's interest in written words) can give their children an early start in the skills necessary for reading (Swick and Lovingood, 1981).

In 1983 David Share, Anthony Jorm, Rod Maclean, Russell Matthews and Bobbie Waterman conducted a study examining the relationships between early reading achievement, oral language and a child's home background in a group of 543 school-entry age children. They divided home background factors into two classes: socio-economic status variables (e.g. parental occupation, income and education) and process variables (e.g. aspirations for child, literacy of the home, language models, and academic guidance). Using a hierarchical multiple regression it was found that socio-economic status was associated with both reading achievement and oral language ability (Share, Jorm, Maclean, Matthews & Waterman, 1983). However, this association occurred largely because of socio-economic status was associated educational processes in the home which contribute more directly to early achievement (Share, Jorm, Maclean, Matthews & Waterman, 1983). In addition home educational processes were found to contribute to early reading achievement primarily by providing oral language skills and to lesser extent by providing specific reading skills (Share, Jorm, Maclean, Matthews & Waterman, 1983). The study concludes by discussing the inadequacy of using socio-economic status to investigate the relationship between the home and school achievement (Share, Jorm, Maclean, Matthews & Waterman, 1983).

In 1990, Barbara Anglum, Michael Bell and Darrell Roubinek examined the relationship between reading ability and the home environment to determine what variables most accurately predict reading achievement. A parent survey was distributed to all students in grades 1 through 6 in one school, of those invited 492 responded (Anglum, Bell, & Roubinek, 1990). The questionnaire was aimed at assessing sixteen variables of the home environment of the subjects and was developed by the researcher (Anglum,

Bell, & Roubinek, 1990). Six of the questions on the form asked for social information while the other ten questions on the form pertained to the literacy variables of the home environment (Anglum, Bell, & Roubinek, 1990). The instruments used for testing in grades 1 and 2 was the Iowa Test For Basic Skills and the Missouri Mastery and Achievement Tests were given in grades 3 to 6 (Anglum, Bell, & Roubinek, 1990). The results indicate that the single most significant social variable linked to reading achievement was the educational level of the father (Anglum, Bell, & Roubinek, 1990). Of the literacy variables, the strongest relationships and predictors of reading achievement were the frequency of reading to the child before school entry and the variety of print materials in the home (Anglum, Bell, & Roubinek, 1990).

Hollis Scarborough, Wanda Dobrich and Maria Hager examined preschool literacy experience and later reading achievement. They examined 56 middle class children and their 112 biological parents who participated in a larger study in 1980 (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager 1991). The children were observed in the preschool years and followed up at the end of second grade (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager 1991). The mothers were asked to complete questionnaires and the children were tested and observed at ages 30 mo, 36 mo, 42 mo, and 48 months (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager 1991). The assessments tool used was the reading cluster of the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager 1991). The parents were asked about the frequency of adult reading, parent-child reading, and children's solitary book activities in the home (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager 1991). Taken altogether, the results suggested by the time these children entered school, those who became poor readers had accumulated substantially less experience with books and had less frequent

early literacy-related experiences than those who became better readers (Scarborough, Dobrich, & Hager 1991):

Paul Leseman and Peter de Jong examined home literacy and reading achievement in 1998. According to their study home literacy is considered a multifaceted phenomenon consisting of opportunity, instruction quality, parent-child cooperation, and social-emotional quality (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). The sample was a multiethnic, partly bilingual sample of 80 families with 4-year-old children, living in the inner city areas of the Netherlands (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). Measures of home literacy were taken by means of interviews with parents and observations of parent-child book reading interactions when the children were target ages 4,5, and 6 years (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). At the age 7, by the end of the first grade, after nearly one year of formal reading instruction, vocabulary, word decoding, and reading comprehension were assessed using standard measures (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). Correlation and multiple regression analyses supported their hypothesis that home literacy is multifaceted (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). Home literacy facets together predicted more variance in language and achievement measures at age 7 than each of them separately (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). The researchers also state that structural equations analysis also supported two additional hypothesis of the present study (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). First, the effects of background factors (SES, ethnicity, parents' own literacy) on language development and reading achievement in school were fully mediated by home literacy, home language, and early vocabulary (Leseman & de Jong, 1998). Second, even after controlling for the effects of early vocabulary and predominant home language, there remained statistically

significant effects of home literacy, in particular, opportunity, instruction quality, and cooperation quality.

Peter de Jong and Paul Leseman from the University of Amsterdam conducted another study in 2001, which examined the lasting effects of home literacy on reading achievement in school. The specific effects of home literacy on the development of word decoding and reading comprehension from first through third grade were examined in a social-economically heterogeneous sample of 69 children (de Jong and Leseman, 2001). Three facets of home education were distinguished: opportunity for educational interactions, and instructional and social-emotional quality during joint activities of children with primary parent (always the mother in this sample) and these facets were examined in two domains: home literacy activities and nonliterary problem-solving activities (de Jong and Leseman, 2001). Home environment was assessed before first grade, reading achievement and the end of first and third grade, and oral language skills at the end of first grade (de Jong and Leseman, 2001). According to the researchers their results support at least two major conclusions. First, the effects of home literacy on the development of reading are both specific and nonspecific (de Jong and Leseman, 2001). Opportunity for literacy activities, but not for play activities, was related to reading development (de Jong and Leseman, 2001). A second conclusion is that the two components of reading – word decoding and reading comprehension – follow partly different developmental trajectories (de Jong and Leseman, 2001). After three years of instruction, the influence of the home educational on word decoding had disappeared, whereas lasting effects on reading comprehension could be traced (de Jong and Leseman, 2001).

Home environment and reading development

Jo Weinberger conducted a longitudinal study of children's early literacy experiences at home and later literacy development at home and in school. She investigated the literacy experiences and abilities of 42 children at ages 3, 5, and 7 yrs, and the relationship of home factors to literacy development (Weinberger, 1996). Data was collected through interviews with parents and children; teacher observations; and vocabulary, reading, and writing tests (Weinberger, 1996). Findings are reported concerning the children's reading level at age 7 yrs, as determined by difficulty level of their reading book, and whether or not children at age 7 yrs literacy difficulties (Weinberger, 1996). Significant factors included having a favorite book at age 3 yrs; letter knowledge and parents reading to children at school entry; and at age 7 yrs, access to home computers, and parents' knowledge of literacy teaching in school (Weinberger, 1996). Results showed that children with literacy difficulties owned fewer books, were less likely to read to themselves or their parents, and generally had less support for literacy at home (Weinberger, 1996). The findings underline the importance of home factors for children's literacy development (Weinberger, 1996).

Elizabeth Griffin and Frederick Morrison studied the contribution of home literacy environment to the differences in early literacy skills. The psychometric utility of a home literacy environment measure is evaluated and its unique contribution to predicting literacy skills is examined (Griffin & Morrison, 1997). The scale was derived from information provided by parents of kindergarten children about the amount of reading materials in the home, and the frequency of library visits, adult literacy-related behaviors, adult-child reading, and television viewing (Griffin & Morrison, 1997).

Measures of language, reading general knowledge and math were collected from 295 children in fall of kindergarten, and spring of second grade (Griffin & Morrison, 1997). The home literacy environment scale did predict unique variance in language-based literacy skills but not number-based literacy skills (Griffin & Morrison, 1997). Hence, the simple and easily administered measure of home literacy environment proved to be psychometrically strong and uniquely predictive of differences in early literacy (Griffin & Morrison, 1997).

In 2002, Clare Wood studied the nature of joint (parent-child) pre-school activities in the home and their potential to contribute to the development of early reading skills (Wood, 2002). This study examines sixty-one children from two playgroups in North Hampton, England. Parents were given questionnaires asking them to give details regarding the nature and frequency of any play based that they routinely completed with their children: *Do you play language games/Read to your child/Play memory games/Sing with your children at home/If, so please briefly describe typical activities and how often do you do each with your child* (Wood, 2002). The children were then assessed on various aspects of phonological awareness, as well as their receptive vocabulary, and short-term memory at four years old (Wood, 2002). Then one year later, they completed a similar battery that also included measures of reading and spelling ability (Wood, 2002). The assessments utilized by Wood were: the British Ability Scales II word reading test and spelling test; British Picture Vocabulary Scales II; phoneme deletion; letter sound knowledge; rhyme/alliteration awareness task; British Ability Scales II recall of digits; Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB) non word reading test; PhAB rhyme detection assessment; and the PhAB alliteration detection test (Wood, 2002). The results were that

children who engaged in a variety of preschool, parent-child activities showed the best achievement in reading one year later (Wood, 2002). The frequency of joint activities was also found to impact on reading attainment, vocabulary, memory and aspects of phonological awareness (Wood, 2002). The importance of shared storybook reading for later independent reading ability was also reiterated by this study.

The relations of the home literacy environment (HLE) to the development of reading related abilities were studied in a one-year longitudinal study by Stephen Burgess, Stephen Hecht and Christopher Lonigan. According to the researchers the home literacy environment is an important variable in the development of a number developmental and educational outcomes. This study examined the relations of six different conceptualizations of HLE to oral language, phonological sensitivity, and early literacy development in a longitudinal sample of 115 preschoolers. The six different conceptualizations were based on the manner in which previous researchers have combined different aspects of the HLE and on different theoretical descriptions of the HLE (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). *Overall HLE* included all the aspects of HLE that were used in creating the other conceptualizations (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). The *Limiting Environment* conceptualization assumes that parent's ability and disposition to provide literacy opportunities to children are determined by the resources at their disposal (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). The *Literacy Interface* conceptualization assumes that parents participate in a number of activities that serves to expose children to literacy activities either directly or indirectly or to the parent's view about the importance of literacy (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). The *Passive HLE* conceptualization includes those parental activities that expose children to models of

literacy usage (e.g. seeing parents read a newspaper) or to models of alternative leisure activities (e.g. watching non-educational television) (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). The *Active HLE* includes those parental efforts that directly engage the child in activities designed to foster literacy or language development (e.g. rhyming games) (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). Finally *Shared Reading*, the most commonly used measure and conceptualization of HLE (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). Multiple Regression and correlational analyses indicated that each of the conceptualizations was consistently related to the outcomes studies (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). However, the magnitude of the relations varied considerably outcomes and when other developmental predictors were taken into account (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002). The article concludes that the results indicate that further examination of the HLE and its role in language and literacy skills need to take into account the manner in which the home environment is conceptualized (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002).

Previous work has suggested that the best predictor of early reading ability, phonological awareness, appears to be associated with the acquisition of letter sound and vocabulary knowledge and with the development of well-defined phonological representations (Foy & Mann, 2001). It further suggests that at least some of the aspects of phonological awareness critically depend upon literacy exposure (Foy & Mann, 2001). In this study of forty monolingual children from three private schools in southern California, the children ranged in age from 4 to 6 years old (Foy & Mann, 2003). They examined whether aspects of home literacy environment are differentially associated with phonological awareness (Foy & Mann, 2003). Parental responses to a questionnaire about the home literacy environment are compared to children's awareness of rhyme and

phonemes, as well as their vocabulary, letter knowledge, and performance on measures of phonological strengths (nonword repetition, rapid naming skill, phonological distinctness, and auditory discrimination)(Foy & Mann, 2003). The results showed that a teaching focus in the home literacy environment and exposure to reading related media are associated with phoneme awareness and indirectly associated via letter knowledge and vocabulary (Foy & Mann, 2003). Exposure to reading related media and parents' active involvement in children's literature were also directly and indirectly linked with rhyme awareness skills via their association with letter and vocabulary knowledge (Foy & Mann, 2003).

The role of the environment in the development of reading skills was studied in another one-year longitudinal study by Victoria Molfese, Arlene Modglin and Dennis Molfese. Participants were 113 children, including 35 children with poor reading skills, who were part of a longitudinal study of cognitive development (Molfese, Modglin & Molfese, 2003). Socio-Economic Status (SES), Home Observation Measurement of the Environment (HOME) scores at age 3 and 10 years of age, and school administered and individually administered reading achievement scores were obtained (Molfese, Modglin & Molfese, 2003). Both SES and HOME scores were found to be related to reading abilities, but preschool environment measures were more strongly related to and predictive of reading scores (Molfese, Modglin & Molfese, 2003). In conclusion, the environment plays an important role in the development of reading abilities (Molfese, Modglin & Molfese, 2003). Activities in the home, home characteristics, and parenting practices contribute to the development of children's cognitive abilities – both intellectual abilities and reading abilities (Molfese, Modglin & Molfese, 2003). Assessments seeking

to characterize children's cognitive development must include assessments of the family environment (Molfese, Modglin & Molfese, 2003).

Home environment, reading achievement and socioeconomic status

In other research, children who grow up in low-income environments have lower than average levels of reading achievement and higher than average rates of special education (Rush, 1999). Research suggests that this discrepancy can be linked to differences in experiences in early childhood years. Karen Rush studied 39 Head Start children's early literacy skills and expressive and receptive vocabulary skills were assessed and correlated with measures of caregiver-child interactions observed in the home (Rush, 1999). Caregivers were also asked to report rates of early literacy activities. The results indicated that the children in the Head Start demonstrated a range of early literacy and language abilities, and variation in these skills was related to some aspects of the children's home environments (Rush, 1999). In particular, degree of caregiver involvement, rate of language interactions and participation in early literacy activities were related to early literacy and language skills (Rush, 1999).

Home environment, reading achievement and minorities

In 2000 Mary Guavain, Susan Savage, and Dean McCollum stated that Hispanic children are twice as likely as European American children to read below average for grade level. They hypothesized that this difference may be related to the home literacy practices children experience. To study this, the school reading achievement of 75 European American and 53 Hispanic second graders was examined in relation to their home reading practices (Guavain, Savage, & McCollum, 2000). Results indicate that reading at home, specifically how often children read, with whom they read, and their

active initiation of reading, are related to reading achievement in both groups (Guavain, Savage, & McCollum, 2000). The results indicate that these relations were more pronounced in for European American boys and Hispanic girls, and fewer relations were found for Hispanic children whose mothers spoke solely Spanish (Guava in, Savage, & McCollum, 2000).

Home environment and early interest in reading

In contrast to examining the home environment and reading achievement Lesley Morrow examined the home and school correlates of early interest in literature. She developed a composite measure to identify kindergarten children from 21 classrooms who had a high or low interest in literature. Parent questionnaires, teacher evaluations, and test provided information concerning the children's free-time home activities, parents' characteristics and activities, school achievement and the quality of the in-classroom literary environment (Morrow, 1983). Significant differences were found between the high and low interest groups in most areas. Overall, high interest children were read to more often than low interest children, watched television less and had more children's books placed in the home many rooms at home (Morrow, 1983). Parents and teacher of high interest children provided supportive literary environments at home and in the school, whereas those in the low interest group did not (Morrow, 1983). The results were compared to investigations of both early readers and older voluntary readers (Morrow, 1983).

Family influences and reading development

Another study examined literacy development in the family context. Research has demonstrated that families provide children with language experiences in the home

environment that contribute to their literacy development. The purpose of this study was to examine the types of literacy activities and materials that family members use to promote their children's literacy development in the home environment (Saracho, 2000). The sample consisted of families of children who were enrolled in four kindergarten classrooms in one school (Saracho, 2000). The initial sample was 60 families of which 36 participated. The Family Literacy Questionnaire was used to collect information the data. It provides information on the types of activities and materials family members used to promote their children's literacy development (Saracho, 2000). Results show that all the families read to their children at home, with approximately one third of the families reading daily (Saracho, 2000). The results also showed that family members are sensitive to their children's interest and skills in their selection of activities and the materials that promote their children's literacy development and family-child interactions in their home environment (Saracho, 2000). Families mostly engaged in informational reading (Saracho, 2000). Family members also engaged in literary activities both inside and outside the home including trips to the library (Saracho, 2000).

Olivia Saracho conducted a similar study in 2002 examining family literacy and exploring family practices. In this study she discusses the influence of family literacy on children's reading academic abilities (Saracho, 2002). According to her research factors that appear to influence young children's acquisition of literacy includes access to books, singing songs heard on the radio or television, and reciting nursery rhymes (Saracho, 2002). Families can extend their children's acquisition of literacy within a variety of contexts and situations, including reading food product labels and road signs (Saracho, 2002). The home environment must provide a positive influence on children's literacy

development by making books accessible to children (Saracho, 2002). The research has shown that parent involvement is essential in children's learning (Saracho, 2002).

Reading material in the home positively affects reading performance, and parent's literacy levels affect children's later academic success (Saracho, 2002).

Early schooling and reading development

In contrast to examining home environment and family literacy some research has study the effects of schooling on emergent literacy. One study by Deanne Crone and Grover Whitehurst examine the effects of age and school on early reading skills of 337 children from low-income backgrounds. Results indicated that the oldest children in preschool and kindergarten had significantly stronger emergent literacy skills than classmates who were younger by 10 months (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999). However, these differences did not translate into differences in reading skills at the end of 1st and 2nd grade (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999). Also children who began school a year earlier than same age peers outperformed these peers on measure of both emergent literacy skills and early reading skills (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999). The impact of a year of schooling on emergent literacy skills was 1.7 times greater than the impact of other processes associated with age (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999). The impact of a year of schooling on early reading was 4.3 times stronger than the effect of age (Crone & Whitehurst, 1999).

In a somewhat similar study Shulamit Ritblatt, Sarah Brassert, Ronn Johnson, and Francisco Gomez examined whether children attending Head Start for two years have better developmental outcomes than children attending for one year and whether their families enjoy a more positive family environment. They examined 45 children in a one-year duration group and 29 children in a two-year duration. They used the Family

Environment Scale (FES) and the Child Development Scale (CDI), and demographic questionnaire was administered (Rittblatt, Brassert, Johnson, & Gomez, 2001). Results indicated that children's score on the CDI did not differ as a function of the length of participation in Head Start (Rittblatt, Brassert, Johnson, & Gomez, 2001). However, the families that participated for two years reported an increased intellectual-cultural orientation, and increased active recreational orientation (Rittblatt, Brassert, Johnson, & Gomez, 2001). Those families that participated for two years placed greater emphasis on organization, and read more times to their child during the week than families who participated in the program for only one year (Rittblatt, Brassert, Johnson, & Gomez, 2001).

Parental influences and increasing reading achievement

Researchers generally agree that reading problems are extremely prevalent in today's schools and that this issue presents a problem for both educators and parents. Many educators and researchers state that children must be read to and have ample opportunities for practice in order for reading to improve at a steady rate (Badian, 1988). They recommend increasing the use of parent involvement in improving students' reading. In response to these findings a considerable amount has been written on how to involve parents. One such study examined the parent's verbal and affective interactions with their first grade children during shared storybook reading and how these interactions relate to the growth in children's reading activities and achievement (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). Participants were 61 children and their mothers who were taking part in the Early Childhood Project, a longitudinal study of children's literacy development. Participants varied in both income level and ethnicity. The nature and

amount of meaning related talk was similar regardless of whether the parent or child assumed primarily responsibility for reading, but there was more talk about the reading process itself (word recognition) when the child read (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). Talk that went beyond the immediate content of the story was more common was more common among middle-income families (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). Positive affective interactions were associated with meaning related talk, and negative interactions were associated with parental attempts to have the child use decoding strategies to identify unknown words (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). Regression analysis indicated that the interactions observed during storybook reading did not contribute to growth in children's reading comprehension (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). The home experience that was most predictive of subsequent growth was reading chapter books in second grade (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001). The regressions also indicated that one aspect of the storybook interactions, namely the affective atmosphere did predict children's reading activity in the 3rd grade (Baker, Mackler, Sonnenschein, & Serpell, 2001).

Another article examined the impact of a collaborative family/school program on student reading rates. Lisa Kelly-Vance and Donna Schreck studied 28 students and their families in a Midwest elementary school (Kelly-Vance & Schreck, 2002). The parents were encouraged to increase the amount of time spent reading with their children at home and the school provided easily accessible reading materials, suggestions for encouraging reading at home, prizes and special activities (Kelly-Vance & Schreck, 2002). Results showed that program participants demonstrated a higher increase in reading rate and

accuracy than the matched peers (Kelly-Vance & Schreck, 2002). At the end participants were asked to fill out questionnaires regarding their attitudes towards reading, overwhelming both the parents and the students expressed positive attitudes towards reading together (Kelly-Vance & Schreck, 2002).

Parents again play a crucial role in the literacy development of their children. Motivation is a central ingredient of reading success (Baker & Scher, 2002). Many articles have been written as a guide for parents. In an article by Linda Baker she outlines several suggestions for parents to motivate their struggling readers at home. According to her finding unmotivated readers preferred personal choice from a narrowed selection rather than an entire library, nonfiction, illustrations, seeing movies based on a books and then reading the book, listening to the teacher read an entire book aloud, and completing book related art activities and magazines (Baker, 2003). She suggests a variety of materials likely to capture in the interest of struggling and unmotivated readers: comic books, joke books, audio-taped books, some television programs (e.g. Reading Rainbow) and closed captioning, and other forms of technology such as computers with educational software, the internet, and electronic books (Baker 2003).

Parents build images in the minds of their children (Smith, 1988) Parents become a visual model for children to imitate. The role of the parent has become one of the most prominent aspects in the educational movement (Smith, 1988). However, even highly motivated parents may feel overloaded with a variety of literacy activities from which they can choose (Rasiniski & Fredericks, 1988). These range from discount stores “how to teach your child read” manuals to “reading skills” workbooks found in the grocery store. Since parents realize that in many cases the time they can spend with their children

in literacy activities is limited, parents need to consider activities that have the highest value. Those activities that are highly regarded include: parental modeling of literate behavior, reading aloud, scribbling/drawing/writing, story telling and reading predictable literature (Rasiniski & Fredericks, 1988). Timothy Rasiniski and Anthony Fredericks (1988) offers parents 8 principles of parent-child literacy activities: (1) Regular daily time – As little as 20 minutes of child-parent reading interaction each evening can help children begin a lifelong reading habit; (2) Purpose and Motive – Reading activities for children and parents must be purposeful, the reasons for the activity should relate directly to the child's immediate life and interests; (3) Real literacy activities – Parents and children should read real books and write real stories; (4) Internal Interest – Parent-child activities should be directed toward the child's interests; (5) Tolerance and patience –Growth in reading and writing is not always as fast as one would wish; (6) Support and encouragement – Regardless of how easy an activity may appear to an adult, it may overwhelm a child, parents can offer support by providing sufficient background for activities, giving elaborate explanations and sharing examples; (7) Informality – Informal activities create an environment that encourages children to take risks and to be creative; and (8) Interaction – Parents should encourage their children to ask questions and to answer them, to be the leader at times, and to engage in give and take dialogues (Rasiniski & Fredericks, 1988).

The evidence keeps growing on the critical importance of the early years in the development of literacy. Research confirms that if wish to have junior and senior high school to read better than we must see to it that they do better in preschool and in the early school years (Chall, 1987). In her article "Reading and Early Childhood Education:

The Critical Issues” she examines 5 of the most important questions about the teaching or reading. Is reading always the same or does it undergo developmental stages? There are 6 stages Reading Development: Stage 0 – Prereading – from birth to age 6- it is characterized by growing control over language; Stage1 - Initial Reading and Decoding- Grades 1 to 2 – involves the alphabetic principle, developing skills and insights to sound-letter relations and decoding; Stage 2 – Confirmation, Fluency and Ungluing from Print – Grades 2 to 2 – consolidates what students have learned earlier; Stage 3 – Learning the New - Grades 4 to 8 – marks the beginning of reading as a tool for acquiring knowledge; Stage 4 – Multiple Viewpoints – High School- requires more complex language and cognitive abilities; Stage 5 – Construction and Reconstruction – College Level – the most mature level, students read books and articles in the detail and depth that they need for their purposes (Chall, 1987). Should we teach reading skills or let children learn by just reading? The evidence from research would suggest that both are needed for optimal reading development. The knowing how (reading skills) is necessary but not sufficient; and learning from “just reading bogs down when the student’s skills are deficient (Chall, 1987). How easy or hard should instructional reading materials be? Research and theory have found that books that are challenging – at or somewhat above the student’s reading level – produce higher reading achievement than easier books (Chall, 1987) To test or not to test? Considerable research indicates that frequent tests characterizes schools that have improved reading achievement, particularly in the early grades (Chall, 1987) Finally, what about the research, does it improve practice? While research can help administrators make teaching and policy decisions, it wise to realize that one study of an issue, by itself, is usually not sufficient to inform successful practice (Chall, 1987). It is recommended to

rely on syntheses of research – reports that sift through and interpret related studies on specific topics (Chall, 1987).

Summary

Overall the findings indicate that both home environment and parental involvement play an important role in a child's literacy development. In fact many researchers would argue that they are most essential ingredients in creating successful lifelong readers. That regardless of gender and socio-economic status home environment and parent-child interactions enhances early childhood literacy. Although the research may be in conflict as to which home environment variables most directly influence reading development and achievement they do agree that time spent at home reading with your child is a critical element. In the review of the literature several studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between time spent at home reading to a child and a child's early reading development and achievement. It is the purpose of this study to lend support to the current research that a significant relationship does exist between the amounts of time spent at home reading to your child and your child's reading achievement.

Chapter Three: Design of the Study

Sample

This study, examining the relationship between the amount of time spent reading to child at home and scores on reading readiness test, drew from a pool of kindergarten and first grade students in one parochial elementary school located in rural area of southern New Jersey. The school district is comprised primarily of white middle class families. The school itself is small in size with eight classrooms in the main building, with the preschool and kindergarten classrooms located in the Early Child Development building between the main building and parish. The total sample size is 15, with a breakdown of 5 males and 10 females from kindergarten and 1st grades.

Measures

Each student was administered the *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print* test by the same experimenter at the student's home classroom. The test took from about 10 to 15 minutes, so the students were given no breaks during the administration. The *Marie Clay's Concept About Print* is a reputable test. The concurrent validity is reported at .79 (Test manual, page 159). The reliability using split half is .95 (Test manual, page 160).

The *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print* is typically used by classroom teachers to customize reading instruction to the individual needs of their students and by reading specialist who work individually with children having difficulties in literacy learning. The *Marie Clay's Observation Survey* (Concepts About Print) was standardized on 796

New Zealand school children, aged between 5 and 7 years, drawn from a representative sample of 199 schools (4 from each school) chosen randomly from the age group.

Testable Hypothesis

This study hypothesized that the more students are read to at home by their parents the higher their scores will be on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*. This study set out to find enough support for this hypothesis as to reject the null hypothesis with 95 percent confidence. The null hypothesis states that the amount of time parents read to their child at home will have no effect on the scores on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*.

Design

In order to best compare if a relationship exist between scores and the amount of time read to at home, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) is used. Amount of time read to at home serves as variable X or the independent variable. Variable Y or the dependent variable is the score on the *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print* test.

Procedure

The first step in this study was to find the total number of candidates and gain written parental consent so that each student could participate. The parents of every student in kindergarten and 1st grade were informed of what would be required and the purpose of the study. Participation was requested on a voluntary basis and each parent was requested to give his or her written consent since no student in the study is over 18 years of age. The consent forms and questionnaire were sent home with each child. No discussion was given prior to the forms being sent so that the students would not feel singled out should their parents choose not to participate.

After written consent was obtained, each student was administered the *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*, by their classroom teacher, in a time that did not conflict with regular class instruction. Each student was given the same limited instructions, which were listed in the Observation Survey Manual. The classroom teacher recorded all responses. As each student was administered the test, all scoring sheets were coded by date of birth.

Summary

The focus of this study to examine if the amount of time parents read to their child at home improves their child reading achievement. The hypothesis stated that the more students are read to at home by the parents the higher their scores will be on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*. Variable X is the amount of time parents read to their child at home (independent variable) and variable Y is the test score on the *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test* (dependent variable).

Chapter Four: Analysis of Results

Introduction

The aim of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between the time parents spend reading with their child at home and their child's early reading achievement in school. In order to best examine the impact of the amount of time spent reading with your child at home was compared with the students' scores of the Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print Test*.

Hypothesis

This study hypothesized that the more students are read to at home by their parents the higher their scores will be on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*. This study set out to find enough support for this hypothesis as to reject the null hypothesis with 95 percent confidence. The null hypothesis states that the amount of time parents read to their child at home will have no effect on the scores on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*.

Interpretation of Results

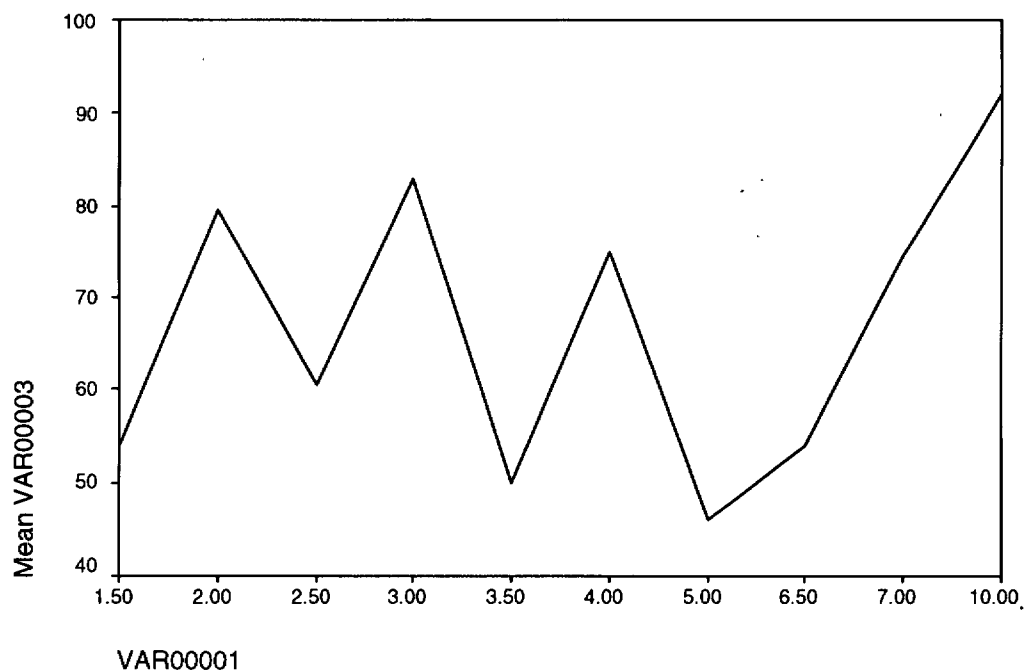
This study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) a correlation between the variables was found to be .268 in a one tailed test and .333 in a two-tailed test. As seen in table 4.2 the amount of time spent reading with your child at home seemed to have an almost random effect on the test scores. The mean rank for time spent reading at home with parents was 4.3 hours with a

standard deviation of 2.38. The minimum amount of time spent reading at home with their child was 1.5 hours a week, while the maximum was 10 hours a week. The mean rank for test scores was 68.86 with a standard deviation of 14.21. The minimum test score was 46.00, while the maximum test score was 92.00. An examination of the data shows that for this population there was not a significant relationship between times spent reading at home and tests scores as to warrant the rejecting of the null hypothesis.

Table 4.1

	VAR000001	VAR000003
VAR01 Pearson Correlation	1	.268
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.333
N	15	15
VAR03 Pearson Correlation	.268	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.333	.
N	15	15

Table 4.2



Statement of Significance

Statistical analysis of the data, using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) a non-parametric test revealed that there was no significant relationship between the amount of time parents spend reading to their child at home and their child's test score on Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print Test*. The lack of significance between the two variables did not support the hypothesis that the more students are read to at home by their parents the higher their scores will be on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*.

Summary

This study aimed to support the current research that the amount of time a parent spends reading to their child at home during the preschool and early elementary years affects their child's early reading achievement and development. The measure of reading achievement was the student's scores on the Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print Test*. However, the statistical examination of the two variables showed that there was no significant relationship between times spent reading at home and test scores. In fact, the findings indicate that the time spent reading at home had an almost random effect on test scores. Overall, this study did not support the hypothesis that there would be a significant relationship between amount of time spent reading at home with your child and reading achievement.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

Summary

This study set out to support the current research that the amount time parents spend reading to child at home during the preschool and early elementary years will affect their child's reading achievement. The analysis focused on an examination between the number hours parents spent reading to their child at home and the child's score on the Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print Test*. A hypothesis stating that the more students are read to at home by their parents the higher their scores will be on *Marie Clay's Concepts About Print Test*. The hypothesis was based on previous research on home environment variables and their effects on reading development and reading achievement during the preschool and early elementary years. The practice of spending time reading to your child at home and modeling reading has been supported throughout the literature as a significant variable in promoting early reading development and reading achievement in young children. However, this study did not find that a significant relationship existed between times spent reading at home and test scores.

This study used the Marie Clay's *Concepts About Print Test* on 15 students, 5 boys and 10 girls in grades kindergarten and first. All of the students attended the same parochial school and were administered the test by the same individual. This study used the total number of hours read a week at home with their parents and their test scores. The findings did not show a significant relationship exists between time spent reading and test scores.

Conclusions

The relationship between the amount of time spent reading to your child at home and the child's test scores was not found to be significant. The mean rank of time parents spend reading to their child at home is 4.3 and the mean rank for test scores is 68.86. Forty percent of the participants' fathers had earned bachelor degrees while thirty-three percent were high school graduate. Fifty-three percent of the participants' mothers held associate's degree or higher. Sixty-six percent of the respondents reported that there were more than a hundred children's books in their homes. Ninety three percent of the participants stated that their child had been to a public library and fifty-three percent of the children in the sample have their own public library cards. All of the respondents reported that their children are read to at home and began reading to them in infancy.

Discussion

Both the literature and the research indicate that both home environment and parental involvement play an important role in a child's literacy development. Clare Wood's study in 2002 found that parent-child reading interactions had a significant impact on later reading success. Linda Kelly-Vance and Donna Schreck's 2002 study of showed that program participants who increased the amount of time spent reading to their children at home demonstrated a higher increase in reading rate and accuracy than that of their matched peers. Although these studies and the majority of the literature suggest that there should have been a significant relationship between the amounts of time parents spend reading with their child at home and their test scores, this study did not achieve statistically significant findings. The results showed that the amount of time parents spent reading to their child at home had an almost random effect on test scores. The results do

raise the question as to what other variables could explain the differences in test scores. Socioeconomic status is said to have an impact on early literacy, it is a possible explanation for the discrepancies. All the respondents reported to have begun reading to their child in infancy and that the children had access to numerous books in the home so those variables have been excluded. Relationships between the mother and father's educational background and test scores were also examined and found not to be significant. The accuracy and truthfulness of the respondents' answers may also explain the lack of significance. Also the expertise of the test administrator could have played a role in the results.

Implications for future research

This study, in contrast to the majority of research and literature reviewed, did not find a significant relationship between the amounts of time spent reading to their child at home and test scores. These findings suggest a need for further research in the amount time spent reading to your child at home and reading achievement. This investigation was searching for support for the practice of parents spending more time at home reading to their child, especially in early elementary years and none was found. The next logical step would be to attempt a more detailed investigation, possibly taking socioeconomic status into consideration and examining a larger sample. Another way to reexamine this study would be to administer the other tests in Marie Clay's Observation Study. It is possible that significance could be found in areas other than concepts about print. Research could explore the relationship between the amount of time spent reading at home with parents and letter identification, word reading, writing vocabulary and or hearing and recording sounds in words.

As previously stated, there are a number of ways in which a study of this type could be redesigned in order to bring about different results and possibly support the practice of increasing the amount of time parents spend reading to their child. Any future research should seek to utilize these options, such as increased sample size, socioeconomic status and increasing the areas of literacy explored, as to best examine the relationship between the amounts of time spent reading with your child and early reading achievement.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. Child's date of birth? _____
2. Mother's educational background. _____
(i.e. high school diploma, college, degree's held)
3. Father's educational background. _____
(i.e. high school diploma, college, degree's held)
4. Is your child read to at home? _____
5. If so, how many hours a week is your child read to at home? _____
6. How old was your child when you began reading to them? _____
7. How many children's books are there inside your home? _____
8. Has your child ever been to a public library? _____
9. Do you have a public library card? _____
10. Does your child have a public library card? _____