

Disrupting assumptions: The literacy practices of white, middle-class families at home and in a
preschool book club

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, who have supported me in so many important ways throughout my coursework, research and writing processes. I especially thank my book club “co-teacher” Jonah, for his helpfulness and enthusiasm. I am so blessed to be his mom!

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Abstract

The current research builds upon the sociocultural orientation to family literacy with the creation of a community-based family literacy experience, “the preschoolers’ book club,” for a group of white, middle-class preschool children and their families. These families and their shared literacy experiences were framed as a set of nested case studies. Through the theoretical lens of Holland et al.’s (1998) *figured worlds*, small-scale case studies of each family informed evolving book club gatherings, allowing for flexibility and responsiveness to families’ needs and interests. Families, despite their common demographic background, demonstrated a variety of conceptualizations of and purposes for literacy, displacing the assumption that this population of families practice school-like literacies at home. The book club gatherings grew into a home-school hybrid space wherein families explored various roles and the traditional teacher-student relationship was deconstructed. Implications from this research include: (re)positioning the researcher as a participant-observer, the feasibility of building a evolving group education experience based on existing family literacy practices, and the need for schools to become increasingly aware of and responsive to the diverse and unique literacy learning in which *all* young children engage at home before entering a formal school setting.

Introduction

“Children begin their schooling in the contexts of their families and communities. They enter formal school settings holding knowledge that arises within these contexts. When educators in formal school settings fail to seek out knowledge that resides within families, they fail to acknowledge a significant part of a child’s identity” (Marsh & Vorbeck, 2010, p. 1).

Family literacy researchers and practitioners have identified a number of diverse goals for the field, including the prevention of future reading and academic problems in children, improving family relationships and decreasing the unemployment rate (i.e., Burningham, 2005; Darling, 1988; Darling & Hayes, 1989; Darling, 2005; Nickse, 1989; Nickse, 1990a; Nickse, 1990b; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal, 2006; Snow & Tabors, 1996; Sommerfield, 1995; Stegelin, 2003; Swick, 2009; Ullery, 1992; Unwin, 1995). The HeadStart movement came to include family literacy programs, called EvenStart, and attempted to remedy social ills by increasing literate activities in the homes of young children (i.e, Tao, Gamse & Tarr, 1998; St. Pierre, 1995). Other similar literacy program evaluations were done to support the value of family literacy interventions (Madison Family Literacy, 2010; Nation Center for Family Literacy, 2008). Since then, the field has divided itself along epistemological lines, with one group of researchers designing, implementing and evaluating intervention programs aimed at improving and increasing school-like family literacy activities, especially among minority and families of low socioeconomic status (SES). A second group of researchers criticize deficit models of family literacy and are establishing a sociocultural model in which diverse (both school-like and non-school-like) literate practices in families are identified and celebrated (i.e, Auerbach, 1989;

Auerbach, 1995; Brenner, Jayroe & Boutwell, 2003; Britsch & Meier, 1999; Dail & Payne, 2010; Edwards, 1995; Jay & Rohl, 2005).

In this dissertation, I describe a research project intended to contribute to the sociocultural approach to family literacy. I addressed the following three research questions:

- What kinds of literacies are practiced in the homes of white, middle-class families with preschool children in a small, Midwestern city?
- How do white, middle-class parents of preschool children identify, view and reflect upon their home literacy practices?
- How might bringing these parents and their preschool children together in a group format work to support families' home literacy practices?

This study had a two-tiered focus. First, I addressed the experiences of the participating families, both with their home literacy backgrounds and as members of the family literacy group, which we came to call the “preschool book club.” Second, I framed the development and implementation of the group as a constructionist, strengths-based approach to working with families of preschool-aged children.

Purpose of the Study

As I considered the sociocultural perspective on family literacy, based largely upon the work of Compton-Lilly (2003) and Taylor (1983, 1997), I questioned how early childhood educators could reframe their instructional practice to account for the unique literacy practices occurring in the homes of their students. How would a teacher build a meaningful literacy

learning experience for preschool students and their families grounded in their existing literacy practices and experiences? Gadsden (1996) suggested that for family literacy programs to have lasting positive impact with families, programs must be relevant to and cognizant of family culture and strengths. Gadsden complicated the notion of culture by highlighting the ways culture is tied to language, ethnicity, religion, history and families' lived experiences. Gadsden suggested that family literacy programs that strive to account for family diversity must identify the affordances and limitations of existing program structures. Practitioners must deconstruct program materials and content, and then reconstruct these components according to the strengths, interests and concerns of participating families. Programs must encourage families to identify their own conceptions of literacy, as well as the roles that literacy plays in their lives. Gadsden urged practitioners to carve out specific goals for family literacy programs and to work toward these goals in mutually respectful ways with families. Finally, Gadsden suggested that programs provide integrated and relevant content, as well as sufficient family support resources.

This study built on Gadsden's (1996) recommendations and contributed to the existing literature on constructionist, socioculturally-based family literacy programs. While this conceptual foundation is well-established, there is a paucity of examples of community-based initiatives stemming from this orientation (Handel, 1996). Therefore, I explored how the sociocultural perspective informed the identification of family literacy practices, the gathering of descriptions and reflections by parents and children on these practices, and the implementation of an evolving, responsive family literacy group.

Families in the preschool book club

The group of families who participated in this study were not typical of the population usually targeted by interventionist family literacy programs. Families who speak languages other than English, of minority racial or ethnic background or those families living in poverty have been the subject of much family literacy research (Darling & Hayes, 1989; Kerka, 1991; Levin, Moss & Swartz, 1997; Levin, et al., 1997; Morrow & Young, 1997; Saracho, 2008). In contrast with previous research with urban minority families, Compton-Lilly's (2003) work highlighted the purposeful literacy practices of diverse families, and revealed the unique ways in which literacy was practiced and enacted in each family's life. The current study approached family literacy in much the same way, but focused on a different group of families, those of white, middle-class background. Coincidentally, each family in the current study had at least one parent with a doctorate degree.

It can be assumed that this currently understudied demographic group has been largely successful in school and is therefore worthy of little attention by educational researchers. However, I argue that this assumption is misleading; the current research suggests that even families of dominant group background practice literacy in diverse and unique ways. Indeed, the families in this study did not all prioritize perceived school models of literacy; some families expressed a skepticism of reading and writing in schools, and of teachers' instructional methods. These parents, despite their personal school achievements, had broad goals and aspirations for their children in which literacy practice was inherent, but were not bound by institutional conceptualizations of success.

For this study, I chose research methods that would allow me to address each unique family and to co-create with them a meaningful group literacy learning experience. First, I studied each family as an individual case study, gathering information about the role of literacy in each household. The framework of Holland et al.'s (1998) *figured worlds* was helpful in conceptualizing and describing each family's literate life and how parental experience influenced literacy practices with their children.

Then, to describe the book club experience families, I framed the data as set of nested case studies. As opposed to top-down curricular interventions studied in family literacy research, the experience presented here allowed for flexibility, responsiveness and attention to individual families within the group learning environment. The family participants, including my own, generated activities based on the evolving interests and skills of parents and children.

Exploration into each family's literacy practices revealed that these families had integrated a variety of literate acts into their daily lives. Generally, parents modeled reading behavior and frequently read to their preschoolers. Families discussed reading and writing not as separate activities from the functions of daily life, but how literacy was integrated at various times of the day and for a variety of purposes, including practical (i.e., the writing of a grocery list or following a recipe), routine (i.e., reading every night before bedtime) and for entertainment ("reading" books on long car rides). Beyond these shared practices, families also used literacy for unique purposes related to their goals and priorities. Of the four families who participated, only one mother, who had been a third grade teacher, described her family's literacy in school-like terms. The other three families discussed distinct non-school-like literacy

practices related to church and religious life, natural child development and leading a healthful lifestyle.

It was the goal of the book club gatherings for families to share some of these practices with one another in order to make the group learning experience relevant and interesting. However, as established in previous research (i.e., Jay & Rohl, 2005), parents were initially reluctant to do this. These parents embodied figured worlds based upon their own memories of and successes in school, wherein the traditional roles of “teacher” and “student” were well-entrenched. Over time, parents became slightly more comfortable with offering suggestions for activities for the book club, but it was only the final gathering’s activities that were completely contributed by a participating family.

While it was also my purpose to relinquish my own role as the teacher or “expert” in the book club setting in order to encourage parent leadership, I found that my own figured world tied me strongly to the role of “teacher.” This was evident in the discursive artifacts I employed, recorded both verbally during book club meetings and in my written field notes. Indeed, my history-in-person, as a mother of a preschool-aged boy and as a classroom teacher, influenced the evolution of the book club, my understanding of literacy and literate acts, as well as my interpretation of the family data in complex ways.

The current research suggests that *all* families practice literacy for unique purposes in unique ways, including white, middle-class families who have been assumed to practice school-like literacy with their young children at home. Parents’ figured worlds, experiences with school and learning to read, and adult literacy habits influenced their philosophies on their child’s

literacy development. Each of the families presented here was unique in how they prioritized time together and goals for their child's future.

This research also suggests that for family literacy initiatives to be relevant and meaningful, attention must be paid not only the individuality of families, but also to the importance of existing relationships and roles. The importance of involving families in the education of children is well-established (i.e., Grant & Ray, 2012), but to authentically *engage* (Greene & Long, 2011; Marsh & Vorbeck, 2010) parents in education requires a displacement of the traditional power dynamic between schools and families. On a small scale, I negotiated these roles with the families in this study. Lastly, this research brings to light the importance of questioning the established traditional relationships between schools and families. While researchers have brought forth the many barriers between schools and minority families, the current research suggests that even white, middle-class families are using literacy in ways that schools may not assume or expect. This adds to the increasingly complex task of educators who must take into consideration the diverse backgrounds of all their students and their families.

Chapter 1

A Literature Review of Family Literacy Research

Family literacy research has been divided along epistemological lines, with one set of studies focused on remediation and intervention. These studies focused on deficit-based models of family literacy intended to remediate families (i.e., Burningham, 2005; Darling, 1988; Darling & Hayes, 1989; Darling, 2005; Hibpshman, 1989; Jordan, Snow & Porche, 2000; Philliber, Spillman & King, 1996; Ricciuti, et. al, 2004; Seaman & Hoffman, 2001; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Senechal, 2006; Smith & Dixon, 1995; Ullery, 1992), especially those of minority background. These researchers have implied that some families do not engage in sufficient or effective reading behaviors at home before children enter school, and therefore children from these backgrounds are not prepared for school reading instruction (Strickland, 1996; Strickland & Morrow, 1990a; Strickland & Morrow, 1990b; Strickland, Morrow, Taylor & Walls, 1990). Family literacy programs grounded in the deficit model have tried to teach families how to develop and practice the “right” reading habits at home. The “right” reading skills in these studies typically have constituted a single conceptualization of literacy, one that is commonly defined by and taught in schools. This singular idea of literacy incorporates those skills measured by the National Reading Panel, such as alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, text comprehension and fluency (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; United States Department of Education, 1991). A school-like definition of literacy and remediating families are factors that characterize the objectivist model of family literacy (Brizius & Foster, 1993; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995; DeBruin & Parecki, 2009; Durham & Smith, 2006; Neuman, 1997, Powell, 1995)

The genesis of a sociocultural and constructionist approach to family literacy began in response to the objectivist models. This body of research conceptualizes literacy differently. The sociocultural body of research has demonstrated the need for educators to recognize multiple forms and conceptualizations of literacy, to broaden the definition of literacy away from a single, measurable skill set, and to accept the notion of literacy as social practice (Street, 1984; Street, 1985). From this perspective, educators in the classroom must acknowledge family strengths, create instructional practices in concordance with those strengths, and (re)conceptualize themselves as partners with families in the literacy development process of children (Auerbach, 1988; Auerbach, 1995; Brenner, Jayroe & Boutwell, 2003; Compton-Lilly, 2003; Dail & Payne, 2010; Heath, 1983; Jay & Rohl, 2005; Nistler & Maiers, 1999, 2000; Street, 1995; Souto-Manning, 2010; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Taylor, 1997;; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001).

Sociocultural researchers have described a set of home literacy practices in low socio-economic status (SES) families and families of diverse backgrounds revealing that these families do indeed value and practice literacy at home, although not always in the way schools and teachers seek and value. Constructionist researchers such as Compton-Lilly (2003) have described how families create and practice their own literacies, thus moving away from the objectivists' singular definition for literacy. They have applied a sociocultural or sociocontextual (Auerbach, 1989) model to family literacy programs. Within this model, researchers have described the many literacies practiced by diverse families and how these literacies are rooted and relevant in the lives of families. In some instances, minority families have been assumed by educators to be uninterested in their child's schooling, and unwilling or unable to work with

children at home. Constructionist sociocultural research has helped discount these assumptions by providing descriptions of families' literate practices in a broad and inclusive light (Compton-Lilly, 2003; Edwards, 1995; Edwards, 1996, Elish-Piper, 1997, Heath, 1983/2003).

Sociocultural family literacy studies have also called attention to the historical privileging of one particular type of literacy: that which is taught in schools. Schools have typically valued the literacy represented by the types of skills identified by the National Reading Panel in 2000, (including phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, rapid automatic naming of letters, digits and objects, name writing and phonological memory). Constructionist family literacy researchers have revealed that families are not limited by practicing literacy in one form. Indeed, families engage in many forms of meaning-making for many reasons, including religious practice, employment, and information gathering, as well as for entertainment and communication. Sociocultural researchers also recognized the importance of oral language traditions less prevalent in white culture, but highly prevalent in other cultures (Edwards, Pleasants & Franklin, 1999). Sociocultural research demonstrates the need for teachers and schools to explore literacy with families and to relate classroom instruction to families' existing literate practices.

Broadening the definition: The foundation of socioculturally-framed family literacy

Heath's landmark (1983/2003) *Ways with Words* documented a decade long "ethnography of communication" in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas. For 10 years, Heath lived and worked among the residents of two small towns, Trackton and Roadville. Trackton's population was black, and Roadville's was white. The towns were located only a few miles apart. Heath also presented the "townspeople," those black and white middle-class families living in the same

region.¹ Heath collected her data during the early years of desegregation in the South, just following the Civil Rights Movement. This historical context was crucial to Heath's mission. In this region, black and white Americans needed to communicate with one another more than ever before in workplaces, schools and community environments. Communication between racial groups was difficult, and as a linguist and anthropologist, Heath uncovered and documented the differences between these groups' socially- and culturally-related language practices.

Heath (1983/2003) analyzed how parents enacted their roles as parents and as teachers. She observed how families in each community practiced oral and literate traditions and then passed these practices on to their children. Heath followed the children to school and described their early academic progress. Finally, Heath worked with teachers in the area schools to demonstrate the value of ethnographic-style data gathering and to explore how this type of information could inform and improve instruction in this community.

Heath's (1983/2003) conclusions about the children of Roadville, Trackton and the townspeople revealed the differences in language and literate practices among the three communities. For instance, Heath described children in Trackton as using language as a tool in multiple social situations.

“Flexibility and adaptability are the most important characteristics of learning to be and to talk in Trackton. Children learn to shift roles, to adapt their language, and to interpret different meanings of language according to varying situations” (p.111).

The language and literacy practices of Trackton children were oriented toward social communication within a complex community system in which the responsibility for child care

¹ I will revisit Heath's “townspeople” in a later section of this chapter on middle-class families.

and upbringing was a community-wide commitment. Children in Roadville, on the other hand, learned to use language within a cultural community where their parents (or grandparents - depending on the age and/or marital status of parents) held primary responsibilities for care and early education. For example, in Roadville, Heath documented a question-and-answer system embedded in the familial language patterns. Indeed, Heath described Roadville parents as “training” their preschool children with language (p.145). For example, parents placed a priority on “rightness” which was embedded in the ways they talked about their own upbringing and Biblical teachings. Indeed, families in both communities valued church teachings and used religious discourse in their homes.

Children from both communities attended school when they reached kindergarten age, and Heath (1983/2003) observed how the children negotiated their home/community discourses with the newly introduced discourses they encountered in school. The literacy practices of the mainstream townspeople most closely matched those in schools, while Trackton and Roadville children were often challenged by unfamiliar language and literacies encountered in their new school environments.

Heath (1983/2003) noted that all physiologically normal children in both communities learned to talk, yet “the social and linguistic environments which surround young children as they grow into their language competence differ strikingly in a number of features.” These differences included:

“the boundaries of the physical and social communities in which communication to and by children is possible; the limits and features of the situations in which talk occurs; the what, how and why of patterns of choice which children can exercise in their uses of

language, and the values these choices of language have for the children in their communities and beyond (p. 144).”

Indeed, Heath’s ethnography of communication (1983/2003) provided a close examination of how literacy, often assumed to be a singular concept, was practiced and taught in diverse cultural communities. Heath fueled the search for a broader definition of literacy, one in which cultural and community identity are key factors.

Building upon the earlier ethnographic work of and Heath (1983/2003), Auerbach (1989) argued against family literacy programs that attempted to remediate diverse families. Auerbach argued that children whose families teach skills that closely resemble school-like early literacy skills experience success in school - these are typically white middle-class families. Parents from diverse families often do not transmit school-like skills to their children. Auerbach argued that assumptions about diverse families (i.e. parents don’t care about school or reading, parents don’t provide print-rich home environments, parents can’t read themselves, parents don’t know how or what to teach their children) have fueled many family literacy interventions.

Auerbach described the need for a socio-contextual model of family literacy to replace the transmission-of-school model. The socio-contextual model recognizes the many forms and functions of literacy enacted in families of diverse backgrounds. The model provides a broader definition for forms and uses of literacy and does not model privilege school-like literacy skills. Based on the socio-contextual model, Auerbach made recommendations for family literacy activities:

“to investigate home language use, to explore family literacy practices, to explore cultural issues, to model whole-language activities that parents might do with children, to validate

culture-specific literacy forms, to explore parenting issues, to use literacy to explore issues of teaching and learning, to address community, workplace and health care issues, to practice advocacy in dealing with schools, and to explore political issues” (p. 178-179).

These ten recommendations illustrate how Auerbach’s (1989) socio-contextual model of family literacy could inform family literacy programs. A crucial component of Auerbach’s model is the close examination of existing family literacy behaviors and practices.

Compton-Lilly (2003) studied and described the various ways that parents from disadvantaged social groups value literacy and prepare their children to become readers. Compton-Lilly discovered that parents and caregivers held a variety of beliefs and discourses about the role of literacy within their lives and the lives of their children. Parents believed that literacy was crucial for success in our society and absolutely necessary in order to find a job. Parents described helping their children learn to read at home in a variety of ways including book reading and reading environmental print. While the students described by Compton-Lilly ranged in ability from low-achieving to high-achieving readers and writers, parents expressed both concern for and the importance of literacy in the lives of their children.

Compton-Lilly (2003) concluded that teachers and school personnel need to be more open-minded about what types of experiences make children ready to read in school. In most cases, early literacy skills most valued in schools have been historically privileged. Compton-Lilly argued that early literacy lessons taught by parents in diverse families may look different but are equally valid, and that teachers must recognize and build upon them.

DeTemple and Tabors (1994) also recognized the presence of a variety of literacy practices in the homes of diverse families. DeTemple and Tabors studied African-American mothers between the ages of 16 and 21 years working with children between the ages of 27 and 63 months. DeTemple and Tabors provided research participants with a trade book and observed their behavior when reading to their children. They identified four distinct styles of read-aloud behavior that emerged: straight readers, standard interactive readers, non-readers and recitation readers.

The standard interactive group comprised the largest participant subgroup (231 out of 290 participants). These mothers read the text, paused to ask questions, and encouraged the children to respond to the text and attend to both text and pictures. While DeTemple and Tabors (1994) acknowledged that the research took place under somewhat unnatural circumstances, they ultimately concluded that these mothers were actively teaching their children about reading and preparing them for future instruction.

Like De Temple and Tabors (1994), Raban and Nolan (2005) surveyed low SES parents living in a disadvantaged area near Victoria, Australia. Like Compton-Lilly (2003), Raban and Nolan identified multiple literacy-focused activities occurring in homes. Parents read to children from a young age, used resources at the local library, and reported that their children enjoyed books and writing activities. However, more than half of the parents surveyed felt ill-equipped to teach early literacy skills to their children. Specifically, they did not feel that enough information was made available to parents to aid in this process. These parents certainly recognized the importance of home literacy activities, and sought additional support. Raban and

Nolan suggested that the remedy for this problem would be best addressed by local libraries, as opposed to the school system.

Health (1983/2003), Auerbach (1989) and Compton-Lilly (2003) provided conceptual and descriptive accounts of literacy in families and contributed to a body of research that recognizes the existence of literacy practices in homes that have been assumed to have little to none (DeTemple & Tabors, 1994; Raban & Nolan, 2005). This research described families from a range of diverse backgrounds, including those of minority ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and those of low SES. The next section of literature in this review will capitalize on this wider conceptualization of diversity found in studies of white families.

Family literacy research with white families

Purcell-Gates (1995) cited the need for research with poor white families, stating that they were not victims of bias based on race, but based on culture and SES. Purcell-Gates followed a low-SES, Appalachian, non-reading mother (Jenny) and her son (Donny) who was beginning to attend school; both were “outsiders to literacy” (p. 181). Purcell-Gates analyzed Jenny’s experiences in school, noting that when Jenny first encountered school literacy instruction, her spoken language did not “match” that in school. When Jenny tried to draw parallels between her spoken words and printed words, there was no similarity. She did not learn to read, and dropped out of school by seventh grade. Donny, then, was growing up in a family home with no exposure to print materials and was at a disadvantage when compared to his peers. Purcell-Gates argued that the child from a home rich in print and literacy materials and habits would be successful in school, having fit into the dominant discourse on preparedness for

reading instruction. The child without these early home literacy experiences would fall behind, with their home practices unrecognized by schools.

Examining issues of low literacy achievement through a sociocultural lens implies that we also recognize the culture view of reality held by those in control of education, teaching and, ultimately, the children and their futures. Judgment of deficiency, dysfunction, and irresponsibility are all culturally relative stances. They are made by educators who cannot, or will not, step out of their ethnocentric world to attempt to see their students from another perspective. When one is a participating member of the sociocultural group in power, this may be an acceptable response to the failure of the schools. It is not a moral one, though, or an effective one, and serves only to perpetuate the situation. (p. 186-187)

In a recent chapter, Purcell-Gates (2002) further problematized the mainstream discourse on literacy instruction in schools noting that teachers were most effective with those children from homes where the dominant, school-like literacy was prioritized and practiced, typically, middle-class homes. These children were taught to “act like literates before they could read” (p. 125). These children grew up in homes where literacy was embedded in their cultural lives and were “the most active learners and the most successful readers” (p. 126). The children with different experiences, indeed, with different *words* like Donny and Jenny, did not have similar success in school. Their spoken language, home lives and literacy experiences went unrecognized by those in power. Purcell-Gates argued for the breakdown of the power differential between schools and poor families and for the recognition and validation of the spoken language used by members of all social classes.

Britsch and Meier's (1999) work supported the social aspects of literacy learning in their study of two different low-SES communities, an urban child development center where most families were African-American, and in a rural Head Start community where most families were white. The researchers found commonalities in the two settings, citing the importance of three themes for effective literacy instruction: a sense of ownership of the literacy learning process for both children and adults, literacy learning as an inclusive process, and the cognitive processes involved in children's literacy learning. Using a sociocultural framework, the researchers suggested that in order to strengthen early childhood programs, teachers should engage parents in shared story reading in the classroom, increase the availability of writing materials for children's exploration and to reconsider the idea of "readiness" as it applies to children entering kindergarten. They stated,

...teachers can use language to represent a personal stance in the world; a stance undergirded by a kind of power that children can share. The perspective that nourishes this interaction highlights individual and family ownership, and includes the individual in many groups... In this way literacy becomes more than simply encoding and decoding print on a page; it makes literacy into a "life world" where children matter (Polakow, 1993, p. 162). (p. 214)

Li (2009) brought forth the nature of the individual in her study of two poor, white families living in an urban area. Despite these two families sharing a demographic designation, Li distinguished the facets of each family's literacy practice. One family, the Sassanos, engaged in a high number of practical literacy acts on a daily basis (i.e, making grocery lists). The children were encouraged to read and write both in the school tasks, but also for entertainment.

The family visited the library and purchased books as gifts. The family owned a television and computer, which the children frequently used. Family time, where stories were shared and issues were discussed, was also a priority for the Sassanos. The other family, the Clayton's, were focused heavily on children's school work. While Pauline, the mother in the Clayton family, struggled with reading, she provided help to her children by calling other family members or adopting school reading discourse by encouraging her children to "sound it out" when they struggled with decoding a word. Pauline found ways to engage the children in literacy activities at home that she believed would help them in school, like copying text from an encyclopedia or allowing her eldest to visit the library with friends. Contrary to assumptions that working class parents did not encourage or engage their children in literacy activities, Li concluded that these working class white families valued and practiced literacy for a variety of reasons, but shared the common goal of school success for their children.

In addition to the work that has been done with poor white families, an even smaller body of research has looked at family literacy with white, middle-class families. In an important early study, Taylor (1983) conducted a definitive ethnography of the literate practices of white middle-class families. Over the course of three years, Taylor examined three dimensions of literate practices in the home: print materials physically present in the home, how parents transmitted literacy to children as social practice and how literacy served as a filter for the social organization of everyday life for each of her participant families. Taylor (1983) supported and evidenced the notion of literacy as social practice by documenting how each family used reading and writing as tools not only for communication, but also for carrying out the tasks of everyday life. In Taylor's study young children practiced early literacy skills as they engaged in note-

writing, used invented spellings, and continually developed oral language skills as they interacted with family, peers and community members.

In these families, parents were also engaged with the “practical” aspects of literacy; some read for enjoyment, others used reading material like newspapers to gather important information. Parents engaged in literate practices in different forms and for different functions. Taylor’s (1983) study illustrated that literacy was more than a discrete skill set. She demonstrated that reading and writing, as well as oral and listening practices, were intricately woven into the fabric of families’ everyday lives. Furthermore, each family practiced literacy differently and these practices were passed on to children.

As summarized in a previous section, Heath (1983/2003) included the middle-class “townspeople” in her ethnographic work. Heath’s townspeople were of European-American or African-American ethnicity. They were “mainstreamers” who “are strongly school-oriented, believing success in school, academically and socially, is a prerequisite for being successful as an adult. For them, school in an institution which helps instill values such as respectability, responsibility, and an acceptance of hard work” (p. 237). The townspeople are members of cultural group wherein regular schedules are kept, even for the youngest children. The orderly lifestyle led by the townspeople was also evident in their oral language practices; Heath noticed these families’ language patterns related to knowledge acquisition for children, rooted in the education experiences and goals of the parents.

Heath also noted the integrated use of written material in the lives of the townspeople. Both at home and at places of parental employment, these families’ lives depended heavily on use of written language. The children from these families, then, had many exposures to literacy

materials and behaviors before beginning school; they “come to act like literates before they can read” (p. 257). It was the children of the townspeople who were more well-prepared for success in school, as opposed to the children of Roadville or Trackton. The townspeople children had the advantage of having had a wealth of school-like literacy experiences at home.

In recent theoretical studies of white, middle-class families, Bialostok (1999, 2002, 2004) and Enz and Foley (2009) presented case studies of children growing up in highly-educated, middle-class families. Bialostok’s (2004) work presented Bea, a white middle-class university professor and mother of Corey, who was about to begin kindergarten. Bea’s response to interview questions regarding Corey’s reading ability and the role of literacy in his life revealed a number of insights explored by Bialostok. Bea related literacy to achievement and success having pursued a doctoral education herself. She also related the literacy to the notion of independence; that those members of society who were illiterate were dependent, socially, psychologically and economically. The idea of independence was complicated by Bialostok, drawing on Foucauldian notions of governance and self-governance. Bea’s discussion of Corey’s future independence, grounded in his being literate, was a safeguard from “risk,” the problems of the stigmatized illiterate. Indeed, as a consumer of literate material in many forms (oral/conversational, print/media, technological), Bea had been inculcated with the message that illiteracy led to failure in many aspects of life. Understandably, she sought to protect her son from the risk of failure and likened his ability to read to future success.

Whereas Bialostok (2004) analyzed a snapshot in the life of a white middle-class family, Enz and Foley (2009) presented a longitudinal case study of “Annie’s” development over the first five years of her life. Annie was the child of two educators with advanced degrees who was

frequently cared for by her maternal grandparents who also both held advanced degrees. Enz and Foley likened Annie's home literacy to environment to that documented by other researchers who studied middle-class families, including frequent literate acts by parents, a wealth of literacy materials in the home, an inherent focus on the development of oral language and the early encouragement and development of print literacy habits. Over time, Annie became familiar with a large number of literacy opportunities in her home, developing concepts about print beginning at the age of six months, gaining oral language and increasing vocabulary, learning the value of storybooks and eventually negotiating a preschool experience by using her increasingly sophisticated communication skills. Her exposure to media and use of the computer were viewed as aids in her literacy development process. In conclusion, the researchers drew upon sociocultural literacy, noting that Annie learned literacy behaviors at home in a way that reflected her parent's/family's behaviors. They acknowledged that middle-class families tended to use school-like forms of literacy in the home, but did not diminish the importance of the diverse literacies practiced by families from other backgrounds. Rather, they questioned how teachers can privilege the non-school-like literacies of children of minority background, as historically, those of white children have been.

These descriptive studies broadly presented family literacy as a social practice tied closely to cultural group membership and participation, and to individual family practices, priorities, needs and interests. These studies have displaced the singular, school-based definition of literacy by showing the many ways in which literacy is practiced in the homes of families with young children. It is within this framework that the next group of researchers described family literacy experiences grounded in families' home literacy practices.

Constructionist Programs: Building on families' existing literacy practices

Few studies of family literacy programs that built on the literacy strengths are present in the literature. The constructionist orientation to family literacy programs focuses on the recognition and identification of diverse family literacy practices as a critical foundation for growth in literacy. There are no widely-implemented programs (i.e., EvenStart) with a constructionist or sociocultural orientation; generally, the constructionist programs have been created to have local, community specific impact and relevance. As Compton-Lilly (2012) stated,

While qualitative researchers have worked to identify and validate the various literacy competencies that children bring to school, they have been less successful at crafting solutions to children's literacy challenges that can be easily replicated in classrooms.

Documenting literacy practices is always local and one classroom almost always includes children from many different backgrounds. (p. 28)

A few researchers (i.e., Brenner, Jayroe and Porche, 2003; Edwards, 1995, 1996; Elish-Piper, 1997; Gadsden, 1995; Jay & Rohl, 2005; Reyes & Torres, 2007) have explored and documented existing practices and then built family literacy programs around these practices, seeking to empower parents to share with each other and extend their knowledge of literate practices with young children.

Constructionist researchers have created family literacy programs where parental contribution was paramount. Gadsden (1995) defended the need for gathering information from parents about literacy practices in the home. She and her colleagues conducted the Parent-Child Learning Project (PCLP), a family literacy program built upon the diversity and strengths of

minority families; indeed, the objective of the study was to “understand how beliefs, practices, and uses of literacy are constructed and used within families and what the literacy needs are of low-income families” (p. 291). Parents of young children attended 16 workshops and engaged in discussions about the purposes for literacy in their lives, described their own home practices and raised questions about literacy. The research team conducted interviews with parents as well as home visits.

Gadsden (1995) concluded that the families in her study used literacy in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes. Parents and children engaged in literacy as a social practice, where communication for and about literacy opened up new ways of thinking. Parents also considered literacy practice to be empowering, enabling some parents access and interpret information about their child’s education. Indeed, parents also viewed literacy as a necessity to gain employment and function in a literate world. Finally, parents connected their literacy and educational experiences to race. Gadsden summarized parents’ accounts of inequitable school experiences for black and white children, in terms of access to resources and the physical condition of school buildings.

In conclusion, Gadsden urged family literacy researchers to build relationships with parents and to value their collaboration in program development. Arguing that family literacy programs are most relevant when parents’ individual strengths and concerns are addressed, Gadsden noted that researchers must think broadly about how to involve and engage parents in programs. Gadsden encouraged schools, administrators and other community institutions to adopt open-minded perspectives on families.

Edwards (1995) implemented a family literacy program built around home storybook reading in a rural area of Louisiana. Edwards stressed the importance of allowing parent participants to choose relevant and appropriately-leveled literature to share with their children. The goals of the program were to support parents in storybook reading with children, to give families the power to choose materials, and to link home practices with the kindergarten and first grade reading program. It is critical to note that *parents* prioritized the importance of linking home and school practices in this study, so Edwards built the family literacy program toward this goal. Upon the completion of her own facilitation of the program, Edwards arranged for four parent participants to continue to lead the group. Edwards recruited the parent leaders based upon their interest and participation in the program, their dedication to early literacy and their ability to listen and respond to constructive criticism.

Edwards (1996) also developed a parental involvement program that focused on kindergarten sharing time, a common oral language activity in many early childhood classrooms. Edwards contended that when children's discourse styles matched that of the teacher, sharing time became productive learning time. When the discourse styles were mismatched, children were shy, reserved, and unengaged in sharing time. Edwards worked with two kindergarten classroom teachers and their students and parents to create a sharing time curriculum with increased relevance, structure and objectives. Specifically, the teachers asked parents to help prepare children at home to talk about a topic in front of their classmates. The teachers organized themed take-home sharing time assignments that corresponded to children's areas of study in the classrooms. For instance, during a Valentine's Day unit, children took home materials to create a valentine to a relative or special friend. Then, during their sharing time, the

children described their process of choosing a recipient for their valentine and creating the valentine. While some parents reacted by asking why the simpler “bringing in a new toy” for sharing was no longer acceptable, Edwards found that the changes to sharing time increased students’ interest in the activity, helped parents to feel important and included in school and ultimately, changed the teachers’ attitudes about urban parents.

In the past, Mrs. Bowker and Mrs. Dozier (the classroom teachers in the study) assumed that low-income parents did not take the time to prepare children for their sharing time...

In the beginning, the teachers had made assumptions about low-income parents, but had not created a structure that would help these parents understand the school structures and practices” (p. 349).

Elish-Piper (1997) drew similar conclusions about teacher assumptions and low-income parents. Following her study of four low-income families who participated in a summer family literacy program, the researcher used data from the study (i.e., parent interviews, parent journals, field notes and literacy artifacts) to design a family literacy program. Elish-Piper’s work reiterated the findings of previous constructionist researchers: low-income families commonly assumed to lack the skill or interest in teaching their children about reading do, in fact, value and practice literacy in their homes. The four families studied by Elish-Piper used literacy for a variety of purposes at home. She identified three main themes: literacy was used to handle personal issues, became a source of competition between parent and child, and was used to show affection within the family.

The work of Edwards (1995, 1996), Gadsden (1995), and Elish-Piper (1997) laid the ground work for later constructionist family literacy programs that build on the strengths of families. The Promising Readers Program (Brenner, Jayroe & Boutwell, 2003) began in a Southern, rural, low income school in 2001. The researchers who developed this program worked under three constructionist assumptions: families are interested in helping children learn, families possess unique funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) that enable them to help children learn, and educators are responsible for helping families understand the type of literacy that access economic and political power. The Promising Readers Program was an after-school and summer program for children referred by teachers due to low achievement scores. The goal of the program was to support children's literacy achievement on many levels, so the program curriculum was adapted to participants and included a variety of learning activities for children as well as collaborative learning time for adults and children, and teacher-researchers and parents.

Brenner, Jayroe and Boutwell (2003) concluded that the Promising Readers Program validated their assumption about families being willing and able to help children learn. They found that parents provided invaluable support and insight into the functioning of the program, offering information, for instance, on which children might work best in groups, choosing relevant books and materials and how much time to spend on certain activities. Parents also learned new strategies to take home and practice with their own children, and felt an improved sense of belonging within the school and community.

Alongside these positive outcomes, Brenner, Jayroe and Boutwell (2003) reported challenges in working closely with families. As with other family literacy programs, family

members were required to commit a large amount of time to the program and there were frequent conflicts with job and parenting responsibilities. Some parents were inconsistently available or didn't return to the program after the first few sessions. The researchers also reported that there were cultural differences in managing children's behavior during the program, and the researchers felt compelled to address this issue in a "brainstorming" format so that parents could co-generate effective behavior management solutions. Lastly, the researchers found it difficult to gather home-based literacy practice information from parents. When asked about reading and writing in the home, parents provided such experiences as "buying phonics workbooks at Wal-Mart" or "practicing spelling words" (p. 281). They concluded that more time to observe households and families interacting at home, were necessary to gather richer and more authentic information about this important foundation for their family literacy program.

Drawing on the work of earlier researchers, Jay and Rohl (2005) utilized a formative experimental design in order to be able to adjust their family literacy program's goals, objectives and content according to the strengths and concerns of parent-participants. Jay and Rohl (2005) conducted their program with disadvantaged families of preschoolers in a low SES section of Perth, Australia. The program was not closely aligned with the school reading curriculum, and the focus was on creating an environment that supported parents' learning. The program focused on discussions about parent-generated topics including early literacy development, sharing books with children, modeling reading behavior, reading with children, television viewing, children's literature, and computer literacy.

A notable facet of this study was that the workshop topics were collaboratively selected by the researcher-facilitator and parents at the beginning of the study. Jay and Rohl (2005)

polled of parents at the beginning of the study. Initially, Jay and Rohl reported that parents were reluctant to take part in the planning of the workshop series, but ultimately parents found the sessions relevant and took increased ownership of their participation in the program. For instance, discussing appropriate use of media like television and computers was important to parents.

In order to fully include parents in the planning of the workshop sessions, Jay and Rohl (2005) spent significant time profiling each of the participating families. Parents were asked to collect data on literacy behaviors in their homes over a period of two weeks. They also kept journals about reading throughout the course of the project, and information mined from these journals was used to inform the content and format of subsequent program sessions. Jay and Rohl (2005) concluded that parents gained increased awareness as a result of the program, but they faced a number of important challenges as well. The researchers noted the stereotypical attitude of “tokenism” toward parent involvement in most schools and attributed parents’ initial reluctance in planning sessions to this notion. “Tokenism” referred to the superficial type of involvement expected by most schools and parents; for example, parents have been expected to take part in planning class parties, joining the class on field trips, or bringing in treats. The program designed by Jay and Rohl demanded more from parents.

Other factors that challenged the success of the program were the timing of workshops, work commitments, parents’ recollections of negative personal experiences with school, parental inability to read or understand communication from the school, cultural factors, and social issues such as not knowing other participants or a fear of an invasion of privacy. Parents made a significant time commitment to participating in this study. The researchers addressed some of

these challenges by creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere for parents that included frequent informal discussions, holding the workshops in a familiar and unthreatening physical location, keeping the group size small, sending reminders of sessions a few days ahead of time and audio-taping sessions for absent members of the group. Ultimately, Jay and Rohl revealed the challenges involved in bringing a group parents with young children together. They provided a model for future researchers and group facilitators in how these challenges might be resolved in a creative and sensitive manner, while implementing a locally-relevant program.

In a community-based programmatic study of Latino families, Reyes and Torres (2007) described how participating families resisted a traditional top-down (teacher-led) childcare curriculum, and the impact this resistance had on family literacy educators. Using the Friere's notion of culture circles (Friere, 1998 as cited in Reyes & Torres, 2007), and post-colonial theory, the researchers reflected upon a family literacy group wherein families' needs were not met by the use of a universalist curriculum on childcare and child development (the Relative-Care Curriculum). Reyes and Torres used a variety of measures including participant self-assessment, session videotaping and field notes to evaluate the program, but most importantly they observed the behaviors of the participating families. They found that participants expressed resistance to the universalist, top-down curriculum in both passive and active ways. In a candid example of this resistance, one participant who had 14 children of her own questioned the experience of the group leader by asking him how many children he himself had. In a largely theoretical discussion, Reyes and Torres complicate the notion of the universal curriculum and introduce the need for the "decolonizing family literacy educator." The decolonizing family literacy educator is one who would be responsive to the needs of the culture circle formed by the

participating families in each family literacy setting. This educator would facilitate a program relevant to the needs and experiences of each distinct group. Reyes and Torres did not deny the need for change in the field of childcare which the program was meant to instill. Rather, the researchers concluded that “change (in childcare practice) should come from the collective dialogues in a culture circle rather than from top-down colonizing practices” (p. 81).

In sum, constructionist family literacy programs have described the positive aspects of building upon the existing literacy practices of diverse families. Families who participated in these programs built relationships within their communities and their children’s schools. They also felt ownership of participation and information-sharing when topics for meeting sessions were selected together with researchers/facilitators. These studies also revealed the many challenges in working with parents of young children, including demands on parents’ time and in some cases, an initial discomfort with taking on planning roles for the direction of the group. These studies have also highlighted the need for family literacy curriculum to be rooted in the needs and interests of the participating group. These studies have initiated a dialogue wherein the colonizing literacy practices of the European American middle-class families are not meaningful to families of non-dominant group backgrounds.

Conclusions

This review of literature has included the work of sociocultural and constructionist family literacy researchers who have described the literacy practices of families of both non-dominant and dominant background, and who have designed family literacy programs around families’ existing practices. These researchers have first defended the need to identify literacy practices taking place in families, and then build programs based on these practices. These researchers

observed family practices open to the many possibilities within each household. Researchers then matched support and instruction to families' priorities, values, and skills. Ultimately, sociocultural and constructionist family literacy programs have been rooted in the lives of participating families, created a network of support for families, a forum for sharing information, and encouraged and nurtured family conversations about children's literacy development.

The constructionist epistemological foundation and sociocultural model provides the foundation for the current family literacy project. There is a need for researchers to address how this model can be applied, implemented and evaluated in local communities and with families from a wide variety of backgrounds. As Souto-Manning (2010) suggested, teachers and researchers must draw on families' expertise, build on family strengths, import family meaning-making, understand different cultural expectations and backgrounds, share ownership of knowledge with families and foster true dialogue with families. Conceptual work with the sociocultural model has provided a solid foundation for the exploration and validation of many different types of family literacy. The goal of the current research was to apply these ideas and engage with families in a workshop format designed to celebrate and support families as their children develop their own literate lives.

The current research challenges the widely accepted assumption that white, middle-class families practice school-like literacies with their young children family literacy researchers including Heath (1983/2003) and Purcell-Gates, (2002) have supported the idea that white, middle-class families prepare their children best for reading instruction in schools by providing a foundation for developing literacy at home that mimics school literacy. The current research explored the literacy practices of white, middle-class families in two spaces, at home and in a

community-based preschool book club. As I will discuss in the subsequent chapters, these families incorporated school-like practices, but also engaged in and *privileged* non-school literacy practices rooted in their unique goals and family priorities. While the children from these families will be well-prepared for school literacy instruction, they will also have had home literacy experiences embedded in the dimensions that made their respective families special and unique.

Chapter 2

A Theoretical Framework: Figured Worlds and Family Literacy

Sociocultural family literacy researchers have established a link between literacy and identity (i.e, Compton-Lilly, 2003) and literacy learning as social practice (Street, 1984). Sociocultural researchers have differentiated themselves from researchers who have designed programs for the purpose of increasing school-like literacy behaviors in the homes of families with young children. Objectivist models generally validate only literate practices that are assumed to correlate with literacy success in schools, positing that all children (and all families), regardless of contextual factors, cultural differences and socioeconomic conditions, should engage in school-like literacy. As a sociocultural researcher, I argue against a singular definition of literacy. In the current research, literacy is conceptualized as a flexible, interpretive tool used by individuals in unique ways and for unique purposes that are closely tied with individual identity. Capturing and describing these unique literacies was at the heart of my exploration with the families in the preschool book club.

How one assumes and develops literacy practices is tied closely to one's identity, including family upbringing, cultural group membership and participation, age, SES, and other factors. Holland et al. (1998) coined the term *figured world* to capture the complex nature of identity formation and illustrate how identity is tied to diverse and complex contextual factors. Holland et al. defined a figured world as

a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others. Each is a simplified world populated by a set

of agents ... who engage in a limited range of meaningful acts of changes of state as moved by a specific set of forces. These collective “as-if” worlds are sociohistoric, contrived interpretations or imaginations that mediate behavior and so, from the perspective of heuristic development, inform participants’ outlooks. (1998, p. 52)

The notion of figured worlds provided a lens for my investigations and discussions of families’ literate practices. With this theoretical lens, I was able to create a picture of literacy within each family. The picture included parents’ educational experiences, their childhood memories, and more current aspects like parenting philosophies, family goals and aspirations, and parents’ goals for their preschool child. The literate figured world of each family also included their reading and writing habits, uses for literacy, and what they believed about their child’s developing literacy. By using the framework of the figured world, I gained a holistic sense of the role literacy played in the lives of each family.

I also applied this perspective in my personal reflections and analysis of my role in the research. I took on the role of participant-observer; I realized the active role I played in the research process, as the interviewer and as a parent-facilitator for the preschool book club. By examining my own figured world, I also created a picture of my own involvement, as a former teacher, a parent of a preschool child and an educational researcher.

Through the lens of figured worlds, I gathered information on the literate identities of all the participating families, including my own. As a theory of identity formation, the notion of the figured world was a response to Holland et al.’s (1998) analyses of two predominant schools of anthropological thought: universalists who believe that the *natural self* transcends cultural

norms, and culturalists who believe that human behavior is prescribed and predicted by culture. Figured worlds reflect the culturalist perspective in that Holland et al. argued for the co-development of identity, culture and social positioning. Figured worlds provide the foundation for identity formation within three other closely related contexts: positionality, space of authorship, and world-making. Positionality refers to the limits applied to one's identity formation provided by the social and cultural context. Space of authorship refers to how one generates response within his or her world, which is socially and culturally limited, but not predetermined. Finally, world-making refers to the creation of novel figured worlds through acts of "improvisation;" the possibility for people to establish new discourses and artifacts in order to propagate new figured worlds.

Figured worlds provide the foundation for understanding identity as history-in-person. Holland et al. (1998) present the idea of history-in-person as a multifaceted conceptualization of identity. The affordances and limits of one's social group membership and participation as established by past generations are influential. Also influential in identity formation are the current norms established in one's social and cultural contexts. Individual and group histories across time and space are also important contextual influences. One's behaviors, use of artifacts as well as discourse, are windows into his or her figured worlds.

The notion of figured worlds has been applied to research in education. Graue (2005) applied figured worlds to preservice teacher development and expectations for working with parents. Graue recognized that preservice teacher candidates brought with them a lifetime of experiences with schools and families, from both participatory and systemic standpoints. Indeed, using the lens of the figured world, Graue's research demonstrated how the complex contexts of

teacher candidates' lived experiences as well as larger social and cultural influences shaped their views of working with students and students' families. Teacher candidates' experiences and understandings play out in their expectations for working with families and illustrate Holland et al.'s (1998) "history-in-person."

Rush and Fecho (2008) also applied figured worlds to preservice teacher education. In their analysis, the researchers examined the figured worlds that were fostered in two training programs for pre-professionals planning to work with children. These programs targeted future elementary educators and future speech pathologists. Between the two targeted groups, conceptualizations of children and families, as well as the roles of the "student in training" and the "professional" were highly differentiated. The contrast in understandings between these two groups of students was problematic to the researchers, who were engaged in training future professionals to work effectively with children. The construct of figured worlds helped Rush and Fecho recognize how their students' identities were influenced by social institutions (i.e., the field-specific policies and practices related to children and families enacted by education and speech pathology students), as well as insights into how individuals can improvise, or become agents in creating their own identities and shaping the futures of institutions. The elementary education and speech pathology students in this study examined and problematized the limits placed on them within their respective figured worlds, and began to confront these barriers.

Researchers can explore figured worlds by considering "artifacts." As Holland et al. (1998) notes, figured worlds are evoked and enacted is through the use of artifacts. Holland et al. explained that cultural artifacts are those "verbal, gestural and material productions - emerging from the situation...that may be taken up and, in later events perhaps, become

conventionalized or made into culture” (p. 17). Artifacts then, are those notions and practices that are understood by, used by and hold meaning for particular cultural groups. For instance, Hatt (2007) explored the figuring of smartness, as an artifact of the figured world of those who are educated, in urban high school students. She noticed that while these students distinguished book smarts from street smarts, they privileged street smarts. This privileging existed in contradiction with the goals and standards of the students’ school which focused on academic achievement. Hatt examined how these students negotiated these two understandings and definitions of what it meant to be “smart.” Hatt applied this differential to problematizing what she labeled as the achievement gap between urban marginalized and mainstream students. Indeed, in addressing the issue of urban students’ underachievement, Hatt identified a chasm between the types of smartness valued by schools and by students.

Research in education using Holland et al.’s (1998) figured worlds has addressed the institutionalized formation of identity, and the construction of artifacts in educational contexts. In the next section, I present four dimensions of figured worlds and briefly describe how figured world theory was applied to data interpretation and analysis in the current study.

1. Figured worlds acknowledge strengths.

Holland et al. (1998) are careful to present the construct of figured worlds as a means for social science researchers to recognize participant strengths. This lens on human identity is not to be used as a tool for privileging one culture over another, or for the purpose of locating cultural deficit. Rather, Holland et al., drawing on the works of Bourdieu, Bakhtin and Vygotsky,

proposed that the figured world provide a way of knowing about how members of cultural groups negotiate their identity and social positions.

In applying figured worlds to literacy studies, Bartlett and Holland (2002) drew upon Bourdieu's (1985) notion of *habitus*. *Habitus* refers to certain culturally-determined and culturally-limited behaviors that have become automatic; behaviors that are determined by past circumstances and interactions, and heavily influence future behavior. Building upon the idea of *habitus*, they proposed "to strengthen a practice theoretical approach to literacy studies by specifying the space of literacy practice, examining in particular the locally operant figures of literacy, identities-in-practice and artifacts" (Bartlett & Holland, 2002, p. 12). When applied to literacy studies, the figured world allows a researcher to recognize and acknowledge various aspects of an individual's literate life. Diverse contextual factors, including cultural group membership and participation, time, space, personal experiences and family history, contribute to the formation of an individual's figured world. These embedded ways-of-being inform understandings of literate development and the meaning of literacy in people's lives in an additive, rather than in a subtractive, or deficit-oriented way.

Indeed, Bartlett & Holland (2002) addressed the power differential among social groups who participated in a Brazilian ethnographic case study of adult literacy learners. The notion of figured world was applied to understand the embedded power structures ascribed to the "uneducated" in the adult literacy program. The "uneducated" not only possessed fewer years of formal schooling, but were also presumed to have inferior manners and social conduct by their "educated" counterparts. In this example, those with more educational capital imposed ideal standards for education and behavior upon those with less.

Figured worlds in their conceptual dimensions supply the contexts of meaning for actions, cultural reproductions, performances, disputes... Materially figured worlds are manifest in people's activities and practices... Figured worlds provide the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted. They also provide the loci in which people fashion senses of self - that is, develop identities. (2002, p. 60)

In using the notion of figured worlds to understand the position and behavior of the adult literacy students, Bartlett and Holland designated cultural and individual influences, including power, relevant to identity formation.

Like Barlett and Holland (2002), I used the idea of figured worlds to consider how families conceptualize literacy. By examining how families interpret and use literacy, I gained insight into their figured worlds. Interesting aspects of this narrative included how literacy was viewed by family members, the importance of and use for literate acts, and literacy-related goals for children. I did not use this information to locate deficits in family literacy practice and reinforce the traditional power differential between families and schools; rather, I used the information to gain an understanding of family practices based on what is relevant and meaningful to them.

2. Figured worlds are enacted and evidenced by artifacts and identities-in-practice.

“Figured worlds are invoked, animated, contested, and enacted through artifacts, activities, and identities in practice” (Bartlett & Holland, 2002, p. 12). This brief quotation summarizes the important role of artifacts in understanding figured worlds. Artifacts are

physical (i.e. poker chips in Alcoholics Anonymous) and/or linguistic (i.e. the gender-specific labels of “jock” or “flirt”) items that are loaded with culturally-determined meanings. Artifacts are created by assigning culturally-relevant meaning to ideas or objects and through the continued adoption of this meaning. The examination of artifacts reveals insights into cultural propagation and reproduction.

Artifacts are not only created by people; artifacts can evoke aspects of figured worlds.

Social constructivists or discourse theorists point to important aspects of figured worlds and the cultural artifacts that are associated with them. Although they have usually considered only privileged or hegemonic discourses, their points apply equally to all cultural artifacts - from hammers, poker chips, clothing and psychiatric diagnoses to advertisements and films. All these have a history of development in relation to particular tasks, undertaken by people in particular environments.(Holland et al.,1998, p. 62)

In Hatt’s (2007) interpretation, descriptions of the artifact of smartness lent insight into what is privileged knowledge within a group of urban high school students. These students possessed two conceptualizations of what it meant to be smart. On one hand, students privileged “street smarts” or those non-academic skills related to survival and success in urban culture. On the other hand, students associated “book smarts,” the school-privileged type of smartness focused on academic achievement, with the oppressive institutional structures in their lives, such as poverty and law enforcement. The artifact of smartness was constructed between the personal

experiences and within the social and cultural contexts of one group of urban high school students.

In the current research, the identification of artifacts aided my understanding of literacy use in families. Physical artifacts (for instance, those literacy-related items present in the home environment like books, children's writing or letter magnets) lent insight into a family's interest in and purpose for literate materials. Linguistic and paralinguistic artifacts, the manner in which literacy was spoken about and regarded by the family, revealed family definitions of, attitudes and dispositions toward literacy. I built an understanding of families' figured worlds of literacy based on a synthesis of relevant physical and linguistic artifacts.

3. Figured worlds are enacted and evidenced through narrative.

In their work within a Hindu community in Central Nepal, Holland et al. (1998) used narratives to identify pervasive cultural standards in the lives of women. For women in this community, the narrative of the life path of a "good woman" served as an ever-present source of comparison for the value of their own lives. Similarly, the following vignette describes an interaction I had with a school administrator in proposing my project take place at his school site. It illustrates how narratives embedded within figured world began to play out in the current research.

I prepared a short presentation to share with the principals of the schools that were potential sites for conducting this project. I was cognizant of the amount of time I spent with each of them, as the first day of school was rapidly approaching. The presentation, therefore, included only a brief summary of my orientation to this project. Briefly, I

stated that I am looking to explore unique and diverse literacy forms with families; that I am seeking to broaden the typical definition of literacy, beyond the singular school-based model. One principal in particular listened intently to my presentation and nodded occasionally in response to statements. When I paused, he said casually that the project sounded very interesting, and that he would be curious to see how he and his wife were doing in their efforts to teach their preschooler to read. I responded aloud that I was hoping to keep the group informal and open, but silently noted his implication that my role in the group would be to assess and evaluate families' efforts, potentially as well as his own.

This vignette illustrates the notion of narrative as it is used by Holland et al. (1998) and as it applies to this project. Cultural narratives about literacy surround children and families; narratives about children who are “ready” and whose parents “read to them at home.” The principal presented in this vignette, despite possessing a leadership role and knowledge in the field of education, was uncertain of the value and efficacy of his family’s home literacy activities. He expressed interest in having an “expert” validate his and his wife’s enactment of family literacy. Culturally-determined narratives of children who were made ready to read at home pervade the school environment. Within this narrative, a child who is “ready” will behave in particular ways in school, possess certain skills, and absorb and enact literacy knowledge as bestowed by the teacher. In turn, these children’s abilities will enable their teachers to assess the children’s readiness to read, and therefore infer the *quality* of the children’s home environments. The principal’s statement reflects the narrative of idealized “school-like” family literacy practices. It offers a narrow perception of children who are “ready,” and suggests how children

should be prepared at home. As a prominent member of one school community, this principal referred to the school-culture artifact of readiness, and enacted a pervasive school-culture narrative validating only those home literacy practices that would be recognized by school.

The school principal and the parents in this study possessed similar narratives about their roles and responsibilities in the literacy development of their child. As white, middle-class families, they were all avid consumers of information about how to introduce reading at home by sharing storybooks at bedtime, or by buying literacy-related toys and games. However, in contrast to previous studies including this population of families, the current research shows that not all families were limited to the kind of literacy present in this narrative. This study showed that some parents resist this narrative by making choices for their child's activities and education, and by privileging home literacy activities that are rooted in their own family priorities, and not those favored in schools.

4. The researcher possesses her own figured worlds.

A final significant aspect of applying Holland et al.'s (1998) notion of figured worlds is the recognition and analysis of my own figured world, as the researcher in this project. Holland et al. stressed the importance of studying the researcher's interpretations as they relate to encountered figured worlds in their anthropological work. All descriptions and observations of people and events pass through the lens of the researcher's interpretations and analyses before they can be communicated to others. Thus, researchers do not compile field work in a vacuum, immune to the influences of their own lived experiences.

No matter how scrupulous the attempts of individual researchers to be objective, social scientists, today as in the past, are studying what their field of study has helped to create. In this Foucauldian vision, unreflexive claims to “objectivity” are hollow at best; at worst they are a self-serving means by which science rhetorically claims authority. (1998, p. 24)

Holland et al. (1998) and Lather & Smithies (1997) have offered analyses of their qualitative data while simultaneously presenting analyses of their own interpretation. “Ethnographic accounts are now critically read for their portrayal of the relationship between anthropologist and subject, and many texts now include explicit sections that problematize these relationships” (Holland et al., 1998). Lather and Smithies presented their data interpretations simultaneously with her personal analysis in her work with women with AIDS. She provided not only her analysis of relevant themes brought forth by the women participating in an AIDS support group, but on the bottom half of each page of her book, she presented her ongoing reflexive self-analysis. While Lather and Smithies did not use the term “figured world,” she presents her position as a social science researcher and a white professional woman as relevant to her actions and interpretations as well as in her relationships with the women in her research study.

Just as Lather and Smithies (1997) engaged with her research participants in important and influential ways, I realized the complexities of my involvement with the families participating in this project. As I will detail in the section labelled “Participants” in chapter three, the families who invested their time in the preschool book club were all either friends or acquaintances of mine before the project began. Despite my efforts to recruit families from a local elementary school, the crucial importance of previous meaningful relationships came into

play. I could not inspire strangers to become interested in the project, despite my alliances with the school's teachers and principal. It became clear to me that the families who were going to participate with their children required a sense of familiarity and trust. Therefore, I was completely enmeshed with my research participants; playing not only the role of researcher, but also of neighbor, colleague, and friend.

The complexities of these relationships, as well as aspects of my figured world, including experiences as a preschool and kindergarten teacher, a parent, and a resident of our shared community, were evident in the discursive artifacts I employed throughout the project. Most especially, I found it difficult to avoid using "teacher talk" or a school-like language during the book club gatherings. As I explore in more detail in chapter five, my field notes were reflective of this internal discourse. In organizing the groups' activities, I was more successful in abandoning the world of school to which I was so accustomed; I prioritized the input of the families in order to make the time spent at book club fun and meaningful. The task of negotiating the multiple roles of researcher/participant and teacher/parent was complex but necessary for the goal and design of this project.

For the current project, the figured worlds of the families, including my own, informed the function, content and value of our group meetings. As the group facilitator, I considered my understandings and perceptions of families with young children, my role as a mother of a preschool-aged child, what it meant to me to be literate and what it meant to be the "teacher." It was my challenge to facilitate this group while maintaining my position of participant-observer and to resist the expectation that I would assume the role of *expert*. It was my responsibility as

the researcher to interpret the figured worlds of my participating families, while grappling with the constraints of my own figured world.

To summarize, Barlett & Holland (2002) argued that “to counter the habitual traces of symbolic violence and foster students social identities as educated people, literacy programs must engage cultural notions of “the educated person” and elaborate figured worlds of education with compelling artifacts of its own” (2002, p. 19). Building on Bartlett and Holland’s assertion that effective programs must challenge traditional stereotypes about who is considered educated, the proposed group challenged the notion of who is or can be literate and how literacy is conceptualized and used by families. The families in this study were among the group that is typically assumed to engage in home literacy practices that are the most school-like. However, this research challenges this assumption, as I investigated the figured worlds of each family, and came to understand each family’s distinct goals and priorities.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

In order to describe the family literacy practices of four white, middle class families in two contexts, I used a set of nested case studies . To address my first two research questions, I built four individual case studies of families with preschool-aged children. Then, these individual cases were used to build the foundation for the larger shared context of the preschool book club. “A case study is expected to capture the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Qualitative researchers study cases not for the purpose generalizing conclusions to a whole population, but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of an individual case and its function in context. My goal for each case study was to explore each family’s literacy practices at home, to discuss with them the function of literacy in their lives and to apply this information to the group learning experience. During the home visit and interview with each family, I gathered multimodal information about literacy practices by observing the environment and talking with parents and children. I do not claim that these sessions resulted in comprehensive case studies for each family. Rather, I selected to focus on literacy and its role in the life of each family at a moment of preparation for participating in the book club. This narrow focus helped me establish a strong foundation for the book club gathering experience.

I studied each family case for their intrinsic, special characteristics (Stake, 2005b). As Dyson and Genishi (2005) described school-based case study by stating, “learners and teachers make sense of talk and text within physical settings and through social activities that are informed by the world beyond the visible one. Everyday teaching and learning are complex

social happenings, and understanding them as such is the grand purpose of qualitative case studies” (p.9). In the current nested case study, unique aspects of families’ figured worlds were tied to the role of literacy in their lives, and the preschool book club offered an opportunity to families to explore literacy practices in a supportive group learning environment. For the purpose of identifying and discussing each family’s literacy practices, I drew from three sources of information: a semi-structured interviews with parents and children, my observation and photographing of the home literacy environment, and to a lesser degree, my prior knowledge and relationship with each family. These three sources of information led me to recreate a picture of each family’s literate life, exploring parental figured worlds, and combining aspects of parental history, with current practices enacted with their children, and their goals and aspirations for their children’s futures.² I gathered detailed information about each family’s literacy practice and how these practices were enmeshed with other family priorities. In Chapter Four, I will explore the unique ways each of these families practiced literacy.

After the home visit sessions and interviews, I had the necessary family information to begin organizing the book club gatherings. I have framed the book club gatherings as a case in its own right, as a unique occurrence heavily influenced by context (Patton, 2002; Lotz-Sisitka & Raven, 2004, Stake, 2005a), including the specific families who participated, including my own. This nested case study addressed both the individual families as they engaged in literacy in their everyday lives and in the larger context of the co-created group learning environment.

² Much like Taylor (1983, 1997) found in her case work with families, the families presented here practiced literacy for reasons strongly tied to past, present and future. The interrelationship of these families’ figured worlds, as they include aspects of time, is explored further in the next three chapters.

Because I was most interested in the meaning of literacy in the lives of the families in this study, both in the context of their everyday lives and in the innovative context of the preschool book club, the book club was intended to be an open, welcoming space for families to share and explore various literacy practices. Each group session addressed family interests, built upon a previous gathering's activities. In this way, there was no place for a predetermined family literacy curriculum administered by the researcher/facilitator.

Participants

Six families committed to the interview sessions and to attend the book club gatherings. These families were invited to participate through my access of an existing network of friends and neighbors. I relied on this method of recruiting families after two failed attempts to recruit families with whom I had no previous connection at a local elementary early learning center and elementary school. In these initial recruitment attempts, I communicated with a team of preschool teachers to distribute information about the book club in a class newsletter. After I received no response from the newsletter invitations, one preschool teacher offered to talk to families about the book club during parent-teacher conferences and distribute my contact information. This effort did not result in any participating families. Finally, after discussing the project within my own network of friends and neighbors, five families of preschool-aged children (six including my own) were invited and agreed to participate in the project. I explore the significance of these existing connections and relationships to the project further in Chapters Four and Five.

Figure 1. Family Data³

Parents' Names	Children's Names and Ages	Primary connection with other group members
Jessica and Mitchell	Mari, 3	Anika's colleagues
Sharon and Kevin	Melissa, 4 and Gavin, 2.5	Anika's neighbors
Michelle and David	Carrie, 4 and Ava, 2.5	Sharon's friends from church
Kelly and Micah	Nellie, 4.5 and Melanie, 6 months	Mitchell's colleagues
Anika and Matt	Jonah, 4	Participant-Observer
Diana and Peter	Sarah, 4	Jessica's friends from work

Data Collection Procedures

I created and conducted a family literacy program with parents of preschool children focusing on the process of becoming literate. The topics of program meetings arose from the home visit/interview before the first group meeting. All of the preschool-aged children and their siblings were invited to attend, including my own, thus allowing participants to share, practice and engage in literacy on the spot. In order to reflect on each book club gathering and progress to the next gathering, I engaged in several data collection methods. These strategies reflected this project's nested design by being multimodal, qualitative in nature, and open to ongoing analysis and reflection. Toward the goal of triangulating data (Denzin, 1978; Mathison, 1988), I coded across data sets in order to locate evidence of pertinent themes that arise in home visits, interviews and group meetings (see Figures 4 and 5).

³ Diana and Peter verbally committed to participating in the project a number of times, but did not attend any of the book club gatherings. Therefore, I included them here to demonstrate their connection to the group, but did not include any additional information on this family.

In response to my first and second research questions, I collected data to describe the home literacy environment. This included visiting the family home, conducting semi-structured interviews with both parents and children, and collecting drawn, written and/or photographic artifacts. In response to my third research question, I developed a list of topics most relevant to participating families, conduct whole group and focal dyad recordings and examine home literacy journals maintained by families in order to evaluate the group meetings. Lastly, to reflect upon my own interpretations as the observer-participant, I kept a field journal of observations and reactions. The format of the field journal reflected the multiple foci I maintained in the time before, during and after the book club gatherings.

Figure 2. Purposes for Data

Purpose	Data Collected
To examine home literacy environment	Home visit and observation; photographic data of home environment, collection of relevant literacy-related artifacts from both parent and child participants
To examine parental attitudes toward literacy	Semi-Structured interview for Parent/ Caregiver, Focal Dyad Recordings
To examine child attitudes toward literacy	Semi-Structured interview for Preschool child, Focal Dyad Recordings, Artifact collection
To distill relevant family literacy topics for group discussion	Semi-Structured interview for Parent/ Caregiver, Semi-structured interview for Preschool Child, field journal
To analyze workshop content	Video and Audio recording of sessions, Focal Dyad Recordings, field journal
For an ongoing examination of parental reflections/documentation	Parent-Child Home Journal, artifact collection, field journal
To analyze researcher interpretations	Field journal

Preparation for data collection. Information about the study was distributed to families through causal conversation between friends at first. I encouraged potential participants to email or call me if they had questions about the calendar or purpose for gatherings. This step was particularly important to the study; other family literacy researchers (Jay & Rohl, 2005; Morrow & Young, 1997; Ullery, 1992) have described challenges in working with families due to busy schedules and unexpected commitments (i.e. illness, job commitments, travel). These researchers have also documented the substantial time commitment and dedication required of

parents in order to participate and facilitate a family literacy program. The existing connections between participating families helped the dissemination of information, and with helping families feel committed and invested in participation. I disclosed aspects of the group (i.e., the home visit component, the parental facilitation of literacy group topics, the flexibility of roles of participants including myself) to potential participants either in email responses or at the beginning of the interview. Parents signed the Informed Consent/Assent for Participation forms at the start of the interview. See Appendix A.

Field notes and photographing of home literacy environment. Once families agreed to participate and signed consent forms, I visited each family's home in order to document and discuss home literacy practices. During each visit, I took note of artifacts, evidence of literate practice in a wide variety of forms, including the presence of print materials like storybooks, as well as practical literacies, print materials used for purposes other than entertainment (Purcell-Gates, 1997), like the keeping of grocery lists and notes written by parents. I also looked for evidence of invented spelling, letter forms, name writing, done by the children. Compton-Lilly (2003) and Gadsden (1995) used the home observation/visit to gather information literacy, as well as to learn about other aspects of family life. Literate practices are not separate from the practical aspects of family life. Indeed, the diverse literate practices of families are embedded in many family activities. I used the home visit time to observe evidence of such practices, the physical artifacts of literacy that could be documented in a snapshot. For a selection of photos taken in the homes of participating families, refer to Appendix E.

Parent and child interviews. The interviews revealed discursive artifacts as the families spoke with me about literacy in their homes. Interviews with parents were semi-structured to

provide an opportunity for me to learn about each family's literacy practices, as well informally get to know them and they me. The interviews helped me understand each family's use of literacy in the home, how they value the importance of literacy, and many other salient characteristics of life within each family (Elish-Piper, 1997; Jay & Rohl, 2005). The interview with children was also open-ended, warm and conversational in nature. I asked children to show me the books in their house, to tell me about a book they like, to tell me what they like about reading, and about any writing, drawing or artwork they have done. In order to capture the information I wanted from children, I prepared the child interview based on previous work of educational researchers working with the preschool age group (House & Rule, 2005; Weigel, Martin & Bennett, 2005). The interview included a time for building rapport with children, and engaging them with toys and books to initiate conversation. Because I had relationships with a number of the children participating in the book clubs, I loosely followed the interview format. With the two children I had not previously met, I used the prompts in the child interview to encourage them to talk and play with me. For a list of interview questions, see Appendix B.

In addition to gathering data from the interview questions, the initial meeting provided the opportunity for me to collect valuable data about the goals each family has for participation in the group. This information was documented and provided the foundation for the activities of the first book club gathering. In keeping with the evolving and responsive model, each

subsequent gatherings' activities were informed by the families' preferences or suggestions elicited at the end of the previous gathering⁴.

These interviews and discussions outside of the gatherings helped me understand the lived experiences of participating families. My understanding of each family history contributed to the context-dependent nested case studies. Using both the interviews and the home observation time, I was able to (re)create for myself each family's story, and how literacy and literate practice fit into that story.

Video- & audio-recording of workshop sessions. I recorded the book club gatherings with both audio and video. These recordings allowed me to closely examine how parents related to their children regarding literacy in an out-of-home setting, as well as how parents relate to me and to each other (Jay & Rohl, 2005). The video recorder was stationary, on a tripod at the corner of the room where the book club met. Because the group was active and moved around the room, the video recordings yielded limited data about the groups' activities as a whole.

The audio-recording on the other hand provided plentiful data. I used audio-recording primarily to document how parents and children interacted during gathering activities such as storybook reading, exploring early writing activities, storytelling, for example, and other opportunities and ideas generated by the group. To address some of these issues, I decided to divide up recording time into whole group and focal dyad components. For the whole-group

⁴ While not initially planned for, an informal discussion was also conducted at the "book club reunion" which took place eight weeks after the conclusion of the book club gatherings. The reunion was held at a local playground and was attended by all five families who participated in the gatherings. It was an opportunity for the children to meet again and play, as well as for the adults to strengthen the connections they had made.

portions taking place at the beginning and end of the gatherings, one video/audio recording captured the sharing and discussion that took place. The middle portion of each group meeting involved parent/child dyads engaging in the literacy materials provided at the site, either brought in and shared by other parents or by myself. Each week a different parent/child dyad was be the focus of the audio-recording. This focal recording captured the interactions between parent/caregiver and child, as well as interactions between the focal dyad and other members of the group. To record the focal dyads, a digital recorder with a clip-on microphone was provided to the designated parent to wear at the beginning of the gathering. Typically, the parent placed the microphone on her/his collar and the recorder in her/his pocket. The recorder had a “hold” feature which prevented the possibility of mistakenly turning the recorder off during the gathering.

The focal dyad was recorded through the entire gathering, including during the beginning and ending few minutes of the gathering where all the families talked in a large group. The final portion of each gathering consisted of parting words, notes for the next meeting, and any other relevant issues or questions that arose within the group as a whole. The final portion of the group meeting provided critical collaborative opportunities to talk through possibilities for future group topics, the chance to make changes to topics to be addressed or to refine the group meetings. The whole group was be recorded for these final moments of each meeting. The information shared at the end of each group informed the plan for the next meeting. This process of ongoing analysis underscores the flexibility of the gathering’s activities.

Parent-child home journal. The home journal was provided for families at the first book club and collected at the final gathering. I asked parents to document important literate

events in the household and record these events in the home journal. I asked them to record the literacy-related activities in the house over a day-long period, and to collect children's artwork and/or writing samples in the journal (Elish-Piper, 1997). Children were invited to write or draw in the journal as they pleased. The act of journaling provided an opportunity for parents to model writing for their children as well.

The parent-child home journals were also to be a place for parents to record information about what types of books or stories in which their children are interested, areas of interest for future investigation or reading, or anecdotes about their child's overall development. I have kept journals like this about my son's development since his birth, originally because I wanted to record his favorite foods. They are valuable and irreplaceable documentations of his growth. I will certainly copy my participating families' journals, and return them to the families as keepsakes. For a selection of journal entries maintained by participating families, please refer to Appendix F.

Researcher field notes and reflective journal. Lastly, I maintained a reflective journal that was integrated with my field notes. Lather and Smithies (1997) provided a beautiful example of the personal journey of a researcher during a project's inception and follow-through. Through my position as a parent and early childhood educator, as well as an education researcher, the recording of my personal observations and reflections were important to how I interpreted this program. This reflexive piece of data contributed to my triangulated data set and provided relevant contextual information. Indeed, the nested case study approach requires specific attention to notion of context, and as the researcher-participant, I reflected on my responsibilities to co-generate data with the other families, as well as collect and eventually analyze data.

Group Content

The book club gatherings took place at a local neighborhood community center. The center provided a large, carpeted gathering space with tables, chairs, ample windows allowing plentiful natural light and an exit to a picnic area. The space included a kitchen area where snacks were prepared, and restroom and water fountain facilities for families to use.

Each preschool book club gathering's activities were informed by the input of participating families interests and priorities. I collected this information in the research interview process, as well as during naturally-occurring conversations with the families outside of the research project. For a summary of each groups activities, and how the ideas were generated, see Table 3.

Table 3. Group Activities⁵

Date of Gathering	Activities	Materials	Genesis
April 7, 2011	Introduction of participants, Hello Song, sharing of home materials, snack, outdoor play	Each family brought favorite books to share.	Parents and children were invited to bring a favorite book during the interview
April 14, 2011	Hello Song, letter-writing, snack, outdoor play	I provided various stationery, envelopes, writing and drawing implements, family addresses, stamps.	Before the first gathering, Jonah received a "letter" from Melissa in the mail and both children were very excited by the idea. We replicated the activity in book club.
April 28, 2011	Hello Song, books, puppets and illustrating, snack, outdoor play	I provided books and corresponding puppets, butcher paper and markers.	I saw puppets set up in a learning center in Nellie's preschool classroom.
May 4, 2011	Hello Song, parents reading to children, snack, outdoor play	At-Home Ideas for Reading List, library books	Sharon requested information about being "on the right track" with helping Melissa read at home.
May 12, 2011	Hello Song, parents reading to children, snack, outdoor play	At-Home Ideas for Reading List II, library books	Jessica asked at the end of the the May 4 gathering for more ideas like those that I provided.
May 19, 2011	Hello Song, Literacy Games, snack, outdoor play	Kelly provided Memory, Boggle, and Picture Sequence games. I provided phonics, picture-word matching and language games.	Kelly responded to my email asking for ideas by offering to bring Nellie's favorite literacy games from home to share at book club.

⁵ The activities for each gathering session were recorded in the researcher field notes.

In keeping with the responsive and evolving nature of the book club gatherings, the activities for each gathering were inspired by conversations with or requests from parents. As I will explore further in Chapter Five, it was not until gatherings four, five and six, that parents began to participate more fully in the planning of each gathering.

Data Analysis

In using Holland et al.'s (1998) notion of figured worlds to inform my understanding of family literacy, I examined family literacy as it is situated in one local community, as well as through my own perspective. The figured world is influenced by many contextual layers, including cultural, historical and participatory factors, all playing a role in the formation of individual identity. To get a sense of families' interpretations of and uses for literacy, I examined physical and discursive artifacts (i.e., patterns of language about literacy and reading) and contextual influences from a variety of data sources over time. My purpose for engaging multiple data collection strategies, including interviewing, audio and video recording, observation and anecdotal reflection, was to support my conclusions with triangulated data interpretations and analysis.

In addition to utilizing multiple collection methods to triangulate data, Denzin (1978), Graue and Walsh (1998) and Mathison (1988) have suggested that data may be triangulated across time and space. In agreement with the poststructural notion that all language is situated within a particular time, place and power dynamic, and thus is never identically repeated, data collection across space and time provided evidence of conclusions from a historicized perspective. I employed this notion of triangulation by gaining a sense of the role literacy has

played in the lives of participating parents, especially, and their experiences with literacy, learning to read, and overall school experiences.

Coding Procedures

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) describe inductive analysis as: analyzing multiple forms of data (e.g., texts, observations, interviews) to discover recurrent themes and thematic relations. Most forms of inductive analysis involve multiple and inter-related phases of coding or categorizing, along with various forms of preliminary analysis and cross-checking. Coding and analyzing data begin almost as soon as data collection begins, and the process continues throughout the final write up (p. 19).

In keeping with this description, I engaged in preliminary analysis, data coding and categorizing, at multiple time points during data collection. Data coding procedures were taken from Saldana's Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (2009). I applied five different first-cycle coding methods to the interviews, researcher field notes, book club audio-recordings and family journal data. Examples of the type and purpose for each type of coding is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Qualitative Data Coding Strategies

Type of Coding	Analytical Purpose	Applied to which data set
Structural Coding	To gain an overall sense of the data set as content relates to specific research questions	Interview, field notes, gathering recordings, journals
Process Coding	To gain a sense of participant actions in data ("-ing" codes)	Interview, gathering recordings
Descriptive Coding	To isolate topics from a passage of data (noun codes)	Interview, field notes, gathering recordings, journals
Provisional Coding	Use of a priori codes	Interview, field notes, gathering recordings, journals
Values Coding	To gain a sense of participant values, especially as they relate to figured worlds	Interview, field notes, gathering recordings, journals

A priori codes were extracted from three research questions before data were collected. In addition to the a priori codes, I generated a large number of grounded codes. These grounded codes emerged as I analyzed data and I grouped similar codes into relevant and recurrent themes. For coding samples from each data set, see Table 5. For a complete list, refer to Appendix C.

Table 5. Coding Samples

Data Excerpt	Code	Type of Code	Theme
Jessica Interview: “So, Daddy does bedtime. We all have a role, but he does the bulk of it. We sit on the couch reading all together and then we go into Mari’s room.”	Bedtime Routine	Descriptive, Structural	Family Home Literacy Practices
Jessica Journal: “Still reading 8-10 books per night. We’ve been trying very hard to cut out most/all tv and we no longer have the tv on during the day/night when Mari is awake.”	Limiting screen time	Process, Structural	Family Priorities
Sharon Interview: “I would like them to have a habit of scriptures every day. We do that as a family and I hope that becomes a habit for them individually.”	Scripture reading	Process	Expectations for Children

After coding the data sets, I engaged in codeweaving (Saldana, 2009) to explore further the interrelationships between themes that arose in the data. The codeweaving exercise yielded important topics for further exploration within and across family case studies and within and across book club gatherings. The notion of presence or absence of tension or conflict between home and perceived school literacy practices came up in each family case study. How these

tensions related to the figured worlds of parents and their expectations for their children is explored further in chapter four. Additionally, codeweaving led me to notice the importance of the passage of time across book club gatherings. With each session, relationships were fostered and supported, and there were increasing instances of parent ownership in the planning and activities for the gatherings. This relationship, too, is explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

Chapter 4

Family Case Studies

In this chapter, I will present four families who participated in the preschool book club. To gather data about each family, I visited each family at home for approximately one hour. During this hour, I interviewed the parents and conversed with the children. I also took photographs of literacy-related items they shared with me. The interview questions were few in number, open-ended and subject to the parent's interpretation. Structuring the interviews in this way allowed the parents to respond in an instinctual and natural manner, and any participation or response on my part was conversational and organic. Either before or after the interview, I invited the children to show me any books or other reading or writing materials. For some of the older children, these included library books or journal drawings/writings. For some of the younger children, they and their parents led me to refrigerator magnets in the shapes of letters or coloring books. I took photos of these materials during each visit, not only to keep as artifacts of home literacy processes and practices, but also to show the children images of their materials via the digital camera. The children enjoyed seeing their belongings on the small screen and this validated the importance and specialness of their reading possessions.

In general, these families shared important commonalities insofar as achievement in school and parenting style. In two of the four families, one parent, the father, holds a doctorate degree with the mothers possessing or pursuing master's degrees. In the other two families, both

parents held doctorate degrees. Parents in each family discussed with me their dedication to raising their children in a responsive and child-centered manner.

The eldest child in each of the first three families, as they are presented here, had not begun to attend a preschool program. Among these families, the eldest child had yet to enter formal school. These parents' understandings of the ways in which literacy is conceptualized and taught in schools were based largely in their own memories and experiences, in their figured worlds. In keeping with the construct of figured worlds, parents' social interactions with one another were also influential to their feelings about the future school experiences of their children. In contrast, Nellie, the eldest child in the final family presented in this chapter, had attended a half-day public preschool program for part of an academic year. This experience, combined with the educational background of her mother, served to highlight some of the differences in how all four families talked about and used literacy at home and in the preschool book club.

Parents in all four families had had unique school experiences as children, and these experiences heavily influenced their approaches to literacy at home. Families had a variety of interests and priorities related to reading and writing, and these did not always align with what they perceived to be the kind of reading and writing taught in schools. Parents' social constructions of reading instruction in schools, coupled with their own experiences learning to read as youngsters, were critical aspects of their figured worlds.

Parents' personal experiences with education played a crucial role in outlining expectations for their children's achievement. As Taylor (1983) wrote, "...the interplay of the

individual biographies and educative styles of the parents becomes the dominant factor in shaping the literate experiences of the children within the home” (p. 23). Because these were well-educated, middle-class families, I argue that each family was successful at “doing” school, negotiating school and home cultures, and the many areas of presumed overlap that exist between school and home expectations for this demographic group of families. However, despite their obvious school achievements, some parents also expressed suspicion and distrust of schools, and questioned the importance and validity of academic learning in preschool. These interpretations reflected figured worlds that emphasized high levels of education achievement as well as notable career goals, but were conspicuously wary of the methods used in and the value of preschool.

In the following sections, I will describe each family and begin to explore their home literacy practice through the lens of figured worlds. The first three cases present unique tensions between home and perceived school literacy practice. And, as I will explore in the final case, one parent’s view of and purposes for literacy were congruent with school literacies, as she was a licensed elementary school teacher.

Case Study 1: Reading is Natural

Mari’s family has three members: Jessica is mother to Mari, aged three at the time of the project, and wife to Mitchell. Both Jessica and Mitchell are tenured professors of biology at a small liberal arts college in the area. Mari is their only child, and they do not have the intention to have more children. Jessica and Mitchell met during their post-doctoral fellowship work in

New Brunswick, where they studied insect behavior and evolutionary biology. They feel very fortunate to work in the same department and for a school that has been understanding of and flexible around the issue of caring for a young child. Jessica was on sabbatical during the semester wherein the project took place, and was caring for Mari full time. Previously, while Jessica and Mitchell were both working full-time, Mari attended at-home day care run by two older ladies. She was the only child in attendance there. The family lives in a quiet subdivision neighborhood across the state line from the larger metropolitan area where the parents work. They expressed interest in having Mari attend the Waldorf private school in the city as a more child-centered alternative to traditional public schools. On the whole, Jessica's and Mitchell's parenting of Mari is very child-centered and they strive to allow her to grow and learn at her own pace. Reading and literacy activities in many forms were frequent occurrences in Mari's household, both as part of daily routines, and as spontaneous choices.

Jessica and Mitchell identified reading, stories and songs as the foundation for Mari's bedtime routine. This was primarily Mitchell's quality time with Mari, since he was working full time at the time of the interview. Each and every night before bed, Mitchell and Mari spent about an hour together, choosing and reading books, and sometimes telling stories and singing.

Singing was of particular importance to Mari's family. Both Jessica and Mitchell expressed the need for Mari to practice speaking, singing, and to grow her vocabulary. Mari's speech was very difficult for me to understand at the time of our interview, as well as throughout our group meetings. The other parents and children had trouble understanding her as well.

Jessica and Mitchell were aware that Mari's speech difficulties may impede her ability to learn to read, as well as her social abilities and making friends. While they certainly did not criticize or even speak negatively about Mari's speech in front of her to me, their concern about this aspect of her development was clear.

Jessica: I think with the reading were really focusing on just trying having her learn new words so just trying and seeing. We're saying words really clearly and showing her what those words are.

Anika: Yeah.

Jessica: ...trying to help her see if she can repeat what she wants to say, trying to help her increase her speech and vocabulary and not so much...well she's still learning letters. I don't really point them out to her.

Jessica: Sometimes she'll call me to read The 14 Bears... I put it away so it doesn't get destroyed. It's a long book. I have several books that I've kept from my childhood so there's a couple other older books that she really loves and she, you know, we do a few but Michael does what an hour or so of stories and singing.

Jessica referred to some of Mari's favorite books being hers from childhood, echoing Taylor's (1983) finding that in literate middle-class families, past and present were linked as "parents found that the stories they shared with their children were stories they had listened to when they were young" (p. 23). Mari appreciated how old and special her mother's books were and wanted to read them again and again. In fact, for the project's first group session, Mari wanted to share one of these older books belonging to her mother, but they decided against this

since the books were old and fragile. Jessica revealed that she is an avid reader; that she doesn't get to read as much as she would like, and that she often gets lost in books when she feels she should be taking care of other responsibilities. She shared a happy memory of being taught to read by her father using Dr. Seuss books and stated that she has loved to read all her life.

Jessica: So my dad was a professor and an industrial engineer at Purdue University and my mom was a nurse but she stayed home with us when we were small. (Mari interrupted. Jessica to Mari: Can I finish my story? We use it with daddy) and I didn't go to preschool as a kid so I started in kindergarten and I remember my dad actually taught me how to read with Dr. Seuss books and I remember when I started first grade. I started first grade and I was in the lowest reading group when I started and then by the end I was in the top reading group and I just never put down books. I really enjoyed reading books since then I've been a huge reader and then after after high school I went to Purdue University for my undergraduate degree in biology then I went to the University of Kentucky in Lexington for my PhD in biology and then that's where Michael and I met and then we did a postdoc together in Canada up in New Brunswick for three years.

In contrast, Mitchell did not communicate a childhood love of reading. In fact, he struggled with reading as a child and was diagnosed with dyslexia, but not until he was a young adult. Despite this obstacle, he went on to be quite successful in school and in an academic career. However, his childhood challenges with reading have led him to favor a "natural" process in Mari's becoming literate, as well as a suspicion of traditional schooling.

Mitchell: And that's my experience as well... but when I was growing up I wasn't diagnosed as being dyslexic until much later when I was an undergraduate in college so I was always drilled with these how come you don't recognize this and it was somewhat mild I guess, there's a continuum, I really resented that kind of drilling. It was so frustrating!

Anika: Yes!

Mitchell: I never enjoyed it so I think we're focusing more on the enjoyment and we don't see any problems with her recognizing shapes or letters or the orientation of different figures ever, so far everything seems to be just fine in that respect but the drilling was always something that was just a task for me and everyone else is just doing..."What's the matter? How come you don't study this?" and I would study it but I just wasn't processing in the same way but you know given the school system that I grew up in it wasn't until much later in life that I was diagnosed as dyslexic. With these experiences too I had more traditional ways like "try this shape and try this letter now just keep practicing with this letter... How come you don't recognize this? You just wrote it 10 times! With the practice of just seeing and hearing it she's going to get it. It's going to come.

In creating early literacy experiences for Mari, the figured worlds of Jessica and Mitchell come together. They simultaneously respond to Mari's interests and development while resisting some and accepting other aspects of their own personal literate pasts. As Taylor (1983) observed, "...parents' interpretations of the present were bound their recollections of the past. The conservation of past literate experiences was noted in the many implicit linkages between

the past and present...” (p. 22). Jessica and Mitchell were drawn to respond to and encourage those aspects of Mari’s development that come about organically and are self-initiated. They wanted Mari’s skills and interests to develop without their intervention; they do not see their role as one of teacher or expert. Rather, they are available to encourage and facilitate Mari’s natural growth and development.

Mitchell’s experience with dyslexia and being “forced” to read as a child also played a critical role in his and Jessica’s approach to Mari’s learning to read. Mitchell is absolutely resistant to the notion of Mari having an experience similar to his own. His understanding of how reading is taught in schools is one based his own past - having been forced to perform and drilled repeatedly with flashcards. In Mitchell’s figured world, he rejects the school-based narrative about learning to read. The drilling and public performance he found repugnant were salient memories of his time in school. He is determined to create opportunities for Mari that oppose his literate figured world, so that she may avoid the negative experiences and memories of early reading that he has.

Mitchell’s negative experiences with traditional schooling has also led the family to explore alternative options, namely, Waldorf education. In the Waldorf model, reading is not formally taught in school until age 8, or about the third grade. Jessica and Mitchell expressed interest in this approach, agreeing that children would be more successful with reading if they were taught later in school, when they were more ready. However, despite this positive aspect, Mitchell and Jessica concurrently stated that they would still read to Mari at home, and would

not wait to answer Mari's questions about reading until she was eight years old. In addition, they expressed concern that children who were not taught to read until that late age may have trouble catching up with their traditionally-taught peers. Mitchell stated that if this was the case with Mari, they would remove her from Waldorf school and place her somewhere else.

Throughout the interview, Mitchell and Jessica's insights into their own experiences, expectations for Mari, and their perceptions of literacy in schools revealed a number of tensions and conflicts. Clearly, both these parents were highly successful in school, with Jessica experiencing fewer challenges than Mitchell. However, Jessica expressed interest in a Waldorf education for Mari, one that, in her understanding would allow Mari's learning to take a natural course. Mitchell was very questioning of traditional school methods, having had negative experiences and resisting those same experiences for his daughter. Mitchell in fact stated his preferences for Mari's group experience in accordance with his beliefs about his learning. In considering Mari's age, skills and interests, he communicated to me what he wanted her to learn in the group, even before I asked.

Mitchell: I think as far as reading and trying to force her to do that I think we can find other ways of measuring her intelligence or her ability based on her vocabulary and having conversations with her so I don't think that it's important to force that at this point and she enjoys just sitting and looking at books naturally which is what we want her to do going through and experiencing it. If we feel like there's something that were told that she should be doing at this level like going to the doctor every six months where were

told she should be here or there are some of those things are more useful compared with her peer group that I think what's more important is that she just enjoys it and likes to read and it'll come the recognition the letters.

In a non-confrontational way, Mitchell responded to my questions about reading with complete resistance to his perception of school-based teaching of reading. He reiterated that he didn't want Mari "forced" into anything, and that her skills at age three should not be equated to measures of her intelligence. At this point in the interview, I wondered if he was associating me with a representative of Mari's future school teachers, someone who would champion the methods he was against, and impose some of these ideas in our preschool reading groups. At the time, I was not sensitive to this comparison, but in analyzing this section of the interview, I found the insinuation to be a possibility.

Jessica and Mitchell were focused on an education for Mari that respected and cultivated her naturally-developing skills and interests, a departure from what Mitchell especially believed to be prioritized in public schools. Jessica was sensitive to Mari's speech challenges and wanted her to have experiences with peers that would grow her vocabulary and build friendships to balance her hours spent with adults each day, at home and at day care. Mitchell echoed this concern, and was forthright about his desire for Mari to grow naturally into a love of reading, and not be drilled in the same way he was as a child. Jessica's and Mitchell's figured worlds around literacy and schooling played crucial roles in their expectations for Mari's becoming literate both at home and at school. While these parents were clearly successful in school, both

having pursued graduate educations and academic careers, they remained critical and questioning of traditional schooling. Jessica's and Mitchell's figured worlds, their lived experiences with learning to read and their socially constructed assumptions of traditional public school, were reflected in their approach to Mari's developing literacy.

Case Study 2: Reading is Religious

Sharon and Kevin are the parents of Melissa, age four and Gavin, age two and a half. The family is of the Mormon faith, and is highly prominent in their church with Kevin being a church elder and Sharon leading a number of charitable activities and women's groups. Kevin is a physician who works long hours at a teaching hospital. Sharon attended medical school and completed one year of an internal medicine residency program. Sharon has stayed home with her children full time since Melissa was born, and is completely invested in her children's lives. She has told me that she only wanted to be a mom, despite all her schooling, especially after she and Kevin experienced a tragic birth outcome in the past. Our families are next-door neighbors, so I interviewed Sharon with both her children and my oldest child playing in the background. Our conversation was informal, friendly and natural.

When I asked Sharon about important priorities for her family, she immediately responded with "church." Both Sharon and Kevin play important leadership roles in their church. Sharon organizes women's groups and Bible studies, she coordinates charitable activities like cooking for neighborhood or church families during times of need, like the birth of a baby or death of a close relative. She provides care for many of the young children of other

church families and even organized a church talent show in which many of the families performed for one another and then shared a pot-luck dinner. Kevin is a church elder, leading Sunday services on many occasions and teaching men's groups after services. This role requires hours of preparation and study of scripture.

Sharon shared with me that she and her family read scripture together on a daily basis. She aspires for her children to develop this habit and carry it into adulthood. I asked her if she uses a children's bible when reading to Melissa and Gavin, and she told me she does not. She uses an adult St. James bible and by doing this exposes the children to the "real texts."

Sharon: I would like them to have a habit of scriptures every day we do that as a family and I hope that becomes a habit for them individually and i keep a daily journal and I'd like for them to do that too and I would like them each to be involved each in something active each in something they enjoy.

Anika: Do you read a children's bible to them? Jonah has one that we really like.

Sharon: (smiles) No (pause) We use the real bible St. James I think. I want them to have the real words. I like for them to practice the real words.

Along with this, Sharon described many future goals for her children, both academic and non-academic. She and Kevin would like to see them develop healthy lifestyles. Kevin, who enjoys exercise and frequently jogs or bikes to work early in the morning, models this for his children. Sharon would also desire the children to develop proficiency in one or more musical

instruments as well as with a foreign language. Sharon keeps a daily journal and wanted journaling to become a daily routine for Melissa and Gavin as well. Sharon stressed the importance of maintaining positive relationships with her children and expressed her desire for them to have happy marriages and children in their adulthood.

Sharon: I also hope to have good relationship with my kids, and I realize that these are my goals, and if we have something that comes up that becomes a huge point of contention, we'll, you know, modify, we'll adjust.

Anika: Yeah, I try to remember that too, for as bad as I want to him to do this or that, he's got his own opinions about things.

Sharon: Yeah, it's easy to forget! (laughs) And I want to see who they are too, who they grow into. I want to give them these opportunities I'm kind of excited to see what they will be interested in.

In addition to the family's daily ritual of reading traditional biblical texts, Sharon is responsive to the interests and desires of her children. She encourages them to play creatively, especially outdoors, and provides opportunities for them to "be who they are."

Sharon expressed a detailed understanding of some of the early literacy skills that Melissa possessed. She recognized many ways in which her children engage in literacy and the different purposes literacy serves in their household. Like Jessica and Mitchell, Sharon has not taken the lead to teach Melissa these skills, but has responded to her natural interest in print, both

in books and in the environment. She has noticed Melissa's confusion about symbol representation, what is a letter and what is a number as well as the ways adults talk about letters and numbers. In this analytical memo, I list the aspects of early literacy that Sharon has observed in Melissa.

Sharon has described helping Melissa develop literacy skills in a variety of ways. She has accounted for early phonics, early writing, handedness, and practical literacies (letters, lists). Sharon is very perceptive of the variety of ways her kids engage in literacy development. Here she points out the skill of distinguishing letter and number symbols.
(Analytical Memo April 1, 2011)

In this accompanying interview excerpt, Sharon describes her observation of Melissa's understanding of symbol representation.

Sharon: The high chair we used to have for Gavin, it was an old second-hand one. It had the numbers on the side to adjust the height, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 on the side.

Anika: Oh sure.

Sharon: And letters on top of that, and she counted up to seven with the numbers, and I said, "Oh that's great" and she said, "Now do you want to see me count up to H?" So that's kind of confusing.

Anika: Oh but that's ok. I think that's totally normal! I had kindergarteners that couldn't tell the difference between letters and numbers.

Sharon: (laughs)

Anika: I mean it just depends on what they'd been exposed to, but they were ready and they'll figure it out... and what you talk about at home.

Sharon: She knows the alphabet song, and she knows some letters. We have some alphabet books that I wouldn't think would be interesting because they have no plot line, but she likes to look at those letters.

Sharon expressed questions and concerns about Melissa's learning to read particularly because in her experience so much of the material available to little girls is limited in subject matter. She would like to see Melissa develop interest in stories with subjects other than princesses. She has made a conscious effort to avoid books and toys about Disney princesses, but has found these materials to be almost unavoidable. When I asked her about her goals for participating in the preschool reading groups, she most clearly expressed interest in having Melissa be exposed to "other kinds of stories." In this excerpt from the first preschool book club meeting, Sharon shares this concern with Kelly and Jessica, also mothers of daughters.

Kelly: ...the princess books, princess, Dora, so you know despite my efforts to kind of...

Jessica: I know. (laughs)

Sharon: I have tried to keep them away from the princess stories because I don't think they are very well-written. So I put out four choices for her today and she said, "I don't want to take any of those books. I'll show you my favorite book" and she went

downstairs to the study and picked out this murder mystery that I have never read and it had a picture of a ferris wheel on the front and she said, “This is my favorite book. The ferris wheel book.” This novel! “Ok that’s fine you can pick a princess book; we will leave the murder mystery at home!” (Gathering 1, April 7, 2011)

In my interview with Sharon, she coupled her desire to broaden Melissa’s interests with a need to protect her from certain content, and guide her toward other, more appropriate and educational, content. This notion of safety was alluded to by Sharon in the previous excerpt. Sharon’s statement indicated the subtle message that princess books are safer than the adult murder mystery novel. While Sharon denied her familiarity with the unsafe novel, she was clear in her desire to avoid the text by leaving it home from book club, despite it being the book of Melissa’s choosing. While Sharon expressed her responsiveness to Melissa’s interests in other parts of the interview, Sharon’s struggles with safe and appropriate content for Melissa is evident in this excerpt from our interview as well.

Sharon: Hmm (pause) and I think one of the things that will be nice about being in a group setting is that she isn’t getting to call all the shots (laughs) so she may be able to look at stories that should would’t otherwise.

Anika: Sure.

Sharon: ‘Cuz pretty much right now the story has to pink or has to have something to do with princesses.

Anika: Sure.

Sharon: I've tried checking out books that have fish, or...

Anika: Not interested?

Sharon: No, or if it has anything the least bit dark or scary or she's not she gets scared.

Anika: Yeah.

Sharon: But it's different in a group setting... maybe she feels safer or she how she feels about speaking out...

Anika: Maybe if the other children are looking at different books she might be more interested...

Sharon: Yeah, yes, exactly.

This excerpt indicates the conflict Sharon feels between responding to Melissa's interests and "who she is," while maintaining the need to make sure she is safe. There is a desire on Sharon's part to allow Melissa to explore the world of books beyond princesses, but to also protect her from content that does not meet with her approval. Sharon's sentiment is echoed by Michelle, the mother in the other family of Mormon faith who participated in the study.

Sharon expressed her desire for her children to grow into literacy habits naturally, with the exceptions of family scripture reading and unsafe book choices, where she intervened. This indicates that both Sharon and Kevin are especially responsive to the tradition and discipline of religious and church practices. Sharon is willing and able to be child-centered in many aspects

including school and learning to read to a degree, but is not willing to be flexible around including church and bible reading in daily life.

This sense of tradition played out in another way during our interview, and further in our preschool reading groups (which I explore in Chapter Five). Like Mari's family, Sharon and Kevin were personally successful in school, having both pursued medical degrees. Their sense of tradition was also expressed by the family's routine of reading the bible together each day. Sharon expressed some willingness to break with traditional parent-child dichotomy and follow the leads of both Melissa and Gavin when it comes to their development and interests. Sharon expressed that she wanted Melissa to be exposed to different types of stories, and to having an "enriching, enjoyable time" at the reading groups. However, she did not respond to my invitation to contribute to planning activities for our preschool reading group sessions. This indicated that she envisioned herself as a passive participant who would attend the groups, but not necessarily take any ownership in them. In addition, when I asked her again about her ideas or goals for the group, she listened to my question, but did not offer a meaningful response.

Anika: So what would be your goals for participating in our group?

Sharon: (pause)

Anika: Would you have any specific ideas, or just spend some time....?

Sharon: Well, um, I was thinking that Melissa loves to read stories so I was thinking that it would just be an enjoyable enriching time for her...

Anika: Yeah.

Sharon: To be introduced to new stories and...(pause)

Anika: I know I haven't given you guys a lot of information about what it's going to be because actually I'm trying to get some of that from the parents in the group, and not to say "this is what we're doing" but also to see what's interesting to the children in the group.

Sharon: Oh.

Anika: And to see, I mean, we're only meeting six times, so it's not going to be too in depth, sort of like this long term, but I hope that if I get an idea from the parents of what everybody is interested in we can kind of build from there.

Sharon: Hmm.

Anika: So that's what I'm working on in the interviews.

Sharon: Hmm.

Anika: I'd like to write about the need for teachers to be more receptive to parents, especially at this young age, when they're little.

Sharon: Yeah.

Anika: Yeah.

A few weeks after our interview, around the third week of our group meetings, Sharon requested that I put together a “tips sheet” for parents with ideas of how to teach reading at home. I resisted this request initially because my goal was to honor parent leadership for our group meetings, however I came to understand this request as a transitional type of leadership on Sharon’s part. She did not offer activities or ideas as I had invited her to do, but she did make her interest and need known to me by requesting the tips sheet. Therefore, I did create a list of ideas for our next meeting. I believe that my providing the list served to reinforce the “expert-novice” school tradition that I was trying to break down with the groups. My action was a response to the request of the participating parent, not an attempt to announce my expertise. For a reproduction of this list, refer to Appendix D.

Sharon, Kevin, Melissa and Gavin are a family who preserve the traditions prioritized by their Mormon faith. They engage in daily scripture reading and value skills that require discipline and practice, such as learning musical instruments and foreign language. In addition to preserving and valuing these traditions, Sharon expressed a high level of child-centeredness in her parenting and home teaching of Melissa and Gavin. She is highly perceptive of the early literacy skills that Melissa demonstrates naturally, without Sharon asking Melissa to perform. She understands the variety of modalities that literacy serves in their household, and encourages Melissa to practice learning to read at moments where there is interest on the part of the child. She does not impose teaching upon her children, except when it comes to reading the bible. Sharon’s sense of tradition and the teacher-student dichotomy played out in a complex way during the group meetings. While she felt empowered to request information from me, she did

not take on any leadership role, nor bring books or activity ideas to our group. Sharon's flexible, child-centered orientation was tempered by her sense of tradition, protectiveness of her children, and her fulfillment of the novice/student role during our preschool reading groups.

Case Study 3: Reading is Protective

Michelle and David are parents to two daughters, Carrie, age four and Ava, age two. Michelle was pregnant with their third child, a boy, at the time of the interview. Michelle joined our group at the invitation of Sharon. The two families belong to the same church, and are both of the Mormon faith. Michelle and David are not as prominent a family in the church as Sharon's family, but they do attend services every weekend and they participate in other church-based activities. David is a medical resident training at one of the local teaching hospitals, completing a program in family medicine. Michelle stays home with her two daughters, and will continue to do so after the birth of her baby. She attended college and graduate school before starting a family with David. She is a fluent speaker of Arabic, having studied the language in college, and living in the Middle East for a number of years. Upon her return to the United States, she served as a translator for the federal government. The family relocated to the community where they currently reside after living for a number of years in the Washington D.C. area, where David attended medical school and Michelle worked outside the home. Michelle was the only mother who participated in the project who I didn't know at all before beginning. I spent some time just chatting with her about living in Virginia before starting with any interview questions.

During our interview in Michelle's home, Carrie and Ava showed me various reading materials they borrowed from the library. The girls shared some of these materials, and some were just Carrie's or just Ava's. The books they showed me were fictional picture books, and even though Carrie is a relatively shy child, she was excited to tell me about the "witch book" she was reading with her mom. I took a number of photographs of their piles of library books, and the girls were excited to view the photos on the camera. Michelle described frequent visits to the library, once or twice each week. In fact, visiting the library was as much embedded in the family's routines as was reading before bedtime. Michelle stated that both girls love books and choose to look at books at various times throughout the day. In fact, on a recent long drive to visit family in Utah, the girls did not bring a portable DVD player, as I had assumed. They checked out a large number of books, and these, apparently entertained the girls on the long drive, along with some dolls and coloring books.

Michelle: Tell her some things you like. What do you like to do? I can't even hear you.

Ava: I like to go to grandma's!

Anika: Do they live far away?

Ava: Yeah.

Anika: Do you have to ride on the airplane?

Michelle: No, we drove actually.

Anika: Wow, that's a long drive. What did you do in the car?

Michelle: What did you do in the car when we drove? Did you read your books? You played with your dolls and colored... drew in your coloring books, played... They were really good actually, I got tired of driving.

Anika: Of course!

Michelle: They were fine.

In addition to reading, Michelle expressed that her family valued traveling as well as exercise and fitness. Michelle's figured world as a speaker of Arabic and having lived in Syria was communicated in her aspirations for her children. She expressed a desire to take her children back to Syria some day, and when I asked her about the conflict there, she recalled Syria as a peaceful and beautiful place and she would not be concerned for her or her family's safety there.

Michelle's husband David also engaged his girls in activities important to him. While he was not present for the interview, Michelle described him as an avid runner who favors "natural" footwear for running. He either runs barefoot or in a "hurrache"-style woven shoe. He has participated in a number of competitive runs in this style of shoe, and received many comments from his fellow runners. David takes his girls barefoot running a number of times each week when the weather is warm enough. The girls told me just a little bit about this activity, which they clearly enjoyed very much. Even Ava, at age two and a half, had been running distances of up to two miles at the time of the interview.

Michelle and David create opportunities for their daughters to engage in reading and exercise, but do not allow other activities common in many families. Throughout the interview, Michelle made it clear to me that she does not allow her girls to have “screen time.” The family does not watch much TV, and when visiting the library, they are not allowed to use the computers. She stressed that Carrie and Ava spend a lot of time playing outside, and that she and David strictly limit the girls’ exposure to media.

Michelle: They always want to go on the computer. Our last library had toys in the children’s section. They loved to go there. It was really fun. Here, they are starting to get more, but there’s just one puzzle. We didn’t come to library to play on the computer...

Here, Michelle compared the value of using the library computer to playing with toys at the library. While neither activity directly involved books, Michelle favored her girls playing with toys. She was clearly opposed to Carrie and Ava using the computer, even for educational purposes. Michelle considered watching television and using computers to be inferior activities, and forbid them in order to promote a healthier lifestyle in her daughters. To Michelle, reading is part of the goal of living a healthy lifestyle.

Michelle has privileged reading books, playing outdoors and with toys over the technology-centered activities which many other children enjoy. Because Michelle and Sharon are members of the same church, she shared aspects of Sharon’s sense of tradition. In Michelle’s figured world as a parent, she made no room for media (television or computers) in the lives of

her daughters. Instead, she filled their days with the traditional childhood activities she deemed more beneficial like playing outside and reading or playing with books.

Because Carrie and Ada are so accustomed to reading books at home, using the library and talking about books and stories with their parents, Michelle expressed a lack of confidence in the academic value of the preschool year for Carrie. Michelle replied that she was going let Carrie go so she could “make friends,” but coupled this statement with her certainty that Carrie would not acquire any new knowledge in preschool.

Michelle: For them to be happy confident people, of course, education’s important to us, I’m not too worried about them not wanting to do that, but you never know. I don’t know. I just mostly want them to ... like we watch very little tv. I just, like, really want them to not need something to entertain them all the time. They spend a lot of time outside playing. They’ve been going outside in the 50 degree weather “it’s warm enough to play in the sandbox” which is nice. We have a backyard. You can watch. I don’t know what other aspirations we have...

Anika: And you had said what you think they will achieve at school?

Michelle: I think so .. (to Ava) Silly you can’t paint me... as far as school? Older school? Younger?

Anika: Both, either...

Michelle: Carrie just misses the deadline for kindergarten, I think she's ready for kindergarten. I'm sure she's not gonna learn anything in the preschool. I'm letting her go because she really wants to go for social...

Here, Michelle referred again to her family's strictly limited screen time, favoring instead playing outdoors. She also privileged the academic aspects of school over the social. She separated the preschool experience into two parts - the social, "making friends" part, and the academic part. While she realized the potential for Carrie to develop friendships in preschool, she did not include this social component in her idea of "learning." Michelle was confident that Carrie already possessed the academic skills that would be taught in preschool⁶.

Considering Michelle's (and David's) personal success in school, her lack of confidence in the value of Carrie's preschool education revealed a tension between the educational role of home and her perceived understanding of the purpose of preschool. Michelle and David both constructed figured worlds in which they were able to attain career and personal goals (such as international travel) because of their success in school. Michelle's experience studying Arabic in graduate school and living abroad provided the foundation for one of her top family priorities: returning to Syria someday with her children. Michelle designed a home environment with high educational value, including frequent visits to the library, encouraging the girls to choose books, and opportunities for creative outdoor play. Because Carrie is Michelle's eldest child and had

⁶ In a conversation with Michelle a year after our interview, I learned that Carrie completed preschool, is skipping kindergarten and moving directly onto first grade for the upcoming school year. After completing the mandatory district testing, the school determined that Carrie was academically prepared to attend first grade, in large part due to her advanced reading ability.

not had personal experience with preschool, Michelle may hold misconceptions about what is taught in preschool and therefore devalue the experience on the whole, thinking she was learning more at home than she ever would in school. I was surprised to hear Michelle describe a lack of faith in Carrie's early schooling - that she was not eager to have her daughter begin her education in the system in which Michelle herself had been so successful.

Michelle also implied within this statement that learning to make friends is of lesser value and did not count as learning anything new in preschool. As a former preschool teacher, I would argue that the social skill development taking place during the earliest school years is as important as the academic content knowledge students may acquire. In addition to making friends, preschool students learn to function in a group, to care for and respect group materials and learn routines to help the all students learn and develop during their time in school. As a parent (and not a teacher), Michelle's statement implies that she views non-academic school skills, like building friendships, as less important than academic ones.

Michelle and David provided a home environment for Carrie and Ava focused on learning and healthy habits. Michelle was uncertain this same environment would be equalled in school. Reading books in their household provided a healthy alternative activity to watching television or playing on the the computer. Michelle communicated that she has all but eliminated "screen time" for Carrie and Ava. Through her figured world, Michelle enacted a cultural narrative in

which exposing children to television and computers is unhealthy and unsafe.⁷ These parents have placed a high value on living a healthy lifestyle, and reading is part of that lifestyle, where television and computers are not. Despite Michelle and David's personal successes in school, having both achieved high levels of education, Michelle remained skeptical of the educational value of Carrie's future in preschool, declaring that she would not learn anything new there.

Case Study Four: Reading for Success

In this final family case study, I will present Kelly and her family. As a licensed teacher, Kelly has constructed a figured world, as both a parent and former teacher, that is very different from those of the mothers in the three previous cases. Kelly was far more accepting of the preschool environment and comfortable with her daughter attending preschool. In addition, as I will explore in Chapter Five, Kelly's leadership role in the preschool book club was indicative of her training as a teacher and her awareness of my goals for the group.

Kelly is the wife of Micah and the mother of Nellie, aged four, and Melanie aged six months. She is a licensed elementary school special education teacher in the process of earning her Master's in Education. At the time of the project, she was not working outside the home, opting to raise her two daughters full time. Her husband, Micah, is a professor of religious studies and philosophy at a local liberal arts college. He has been on the faculty for two years, and is heavily involved in all aspects of his department, teaching both undergraduate and

⁷ Michelle enacted a white, middle-class cultural narrative about the purpose of and value of media experiences for children. In families of diverse backgrounds, the role of media is seen differently. One African-American Chicago grandmother watches television and plays video games with her grandsons to protect them from the influence of street gangs. See: <http://www.npr.org/2012/07/28/157454927/gang-violence-smoulders-on-hot-chicago-streets>

graduate courses, and conducting research. Micah and Kelly met in college and moved together from Iowa to Georgia where Micah attended graduate school and where Nellie was born. They returned to the Midwest when Micah was offered his current faculty position. Careers in education were common to both sides of the family; both Micah's and Kelly's mothers were music teachers. Many of the tensions and questions about early reading and early school present for the other families in the study were not issues for Kelly's family. Not only had Kelly had career experience in education, but a small amount of personal experience with her own child in public preschool as well.

Nellie was the oldest child in our group and she had attended a public four-year old preschool program for part of the year at the time of the project. Because Nellie was already attending school part-time and because Kelly was a teacher, the literate environment in their home closely resembled a typical school setting. Kelly recognized and supported Nellie's developing skills, and Nellie's school work was nurtured at home. Kelly engaged Nellie in daily routines like reading before bed, but also encouraged her to write letters to friends, and to copy text from her favorite books into her journal. Kelly played literacy games at home with Nellie, like Boggle, and used vocabulary about books and reading as Nellie asked questions.

Kelly: Well, we um, our family likes to do lots of things together, um, we try to kind of be intentional about our times spent together as far as doing things, just household things together like even cooking, like Nellie helped with the muffins today. We try to do lots of reading together, we play games. We've been doing a lot of game nights lately, because

Nellie is really into games... She's loved books and, you know, writing and words and all that stuff from very young, um, you know, we've read to her from day one basically and that's just been something she loves to do.

Kelly spoke about Nellie's relationship with books and reading from her infancy. Kelly has made literacy a priority for Nellie, and has built literacy activities into daily routines and tasks. Kelly and Micah use a child-centered approach in parenting Nellie by responding and reacting to her interests, like playing games during family time. Even at these times, literacy is embedded in the family's activities, evident by their choice of a game like Boggle, that focuses on building words with letters.

Nellie's literacy practices at home were also evident by the physical artifacts captured in photographs (see Appendix F). Nellie and Kelly created portable literacy, a metal lunch box that Nellie remembered to take along routinely, on even short car rides, filled with books that fit inside. She also kept a journal at home, where Kelly would transcribe the stories that Nellie told. In one lengthy entry, Nellie dictated a story about a magical bicycle that could talk. Kelly's efforts in writing Nellie's oral storytelling demonstrate her interest and investment in cultivating Nellie's developing literacy skills. With this teacher-like act, Kelly modeled the written recording of Nellie's created story in a lined notebook, linking spoken language and written text for Nellie.

Kelly's aspirations for Nellie and Melanie included educational goals, similar to the other families, and were also focused on building relationships, happiness and personal fulfillment. In

keeping with a child-centered approach, Kelly did not express a desire for her daughters to embody any stereotype for success, rather, that they find “what fits them.”

Anika: What do you think the girls will achieve at school?

Kelly: As far as maybe how far they go, our hope is that they’ll choose to maybe further their schooling after high school, um, that’s kind of been a trend in our family. Both of our families, so you know we hope for that, but I guess we’ll kind of see what fits them... You know, I really don’t feel like I have a thought in my head that they need to be doctors or scholars, that’s not really how I think, but again, just hoping that they, you know, school, the academic piece, but then it’s about figuring out how to get along with others, it’s so much about that.

Kelly expressed the desire for her daughters to be happy, and that happiness is tied to relationships with others. Kelly realized the relationship between positive school experiences and building social skills and friendships. Kelly’s interview indicated that she favored her daughters’ developing a balance of happiness and academic success; that she recognized both the roles of school and family in finding this balance.

Kelly: The biggest thing is that we want them to be happy and so we, you know, we get stuck talking sometimes to friends who are so hung up on wanting their kids to be super smart, you know, the educational experience needs to be perfect. And obviously we want that too. We want it to be a good educational experience, but I kind of just keep coming back to the fact that I want them to be happy and have good positive experiences for them

and wanting them to be socially, um, to do well just socially and that they can get along with others and be empathetic, and just yeah, happy people.

Kelly placed a high value on her daughters' future relationships, and acknowledged the importance of the immediate family relationship. When I asked her about her and Micah's family priorities, she replied that they are "intentional about spending time together as a family," even with routine and daily activities like cooking meals together.

Kelly also identified building relationships as one of her goals for participating in the preschool book club. She wanted Nellie to have the opportunity to meet new children and to have additional experiences learning and working in a group of children, outside her preschool classroom.

Kelly was confident in providing a home literacy environment for Nellie that was closely aligned with Nellie's experiences in preschool. Kelly was comfortable with the complimentary roles that home and school play in the life of her young daughter. Kelly acknowledged that in order for her daughters to be happy people, they must have meaningful relationships with others. She is intentional about creating family relationships that will enable her girls to build future friendships at school and beyond. Kelly's figured world included her family background having a mother who was a teacher, her personal success in school and career as an educator. Kelly expressed far fewer tensions and questions about Nellie's literate development because literate development and the culture of schooling were embedded within her figured world.

Conclusions

I have presented four families who shared important similarities in parenting strategies and background. These families had parents possessing high levels of education; in each family, at least one parent held a doctorate. These families were of white, middle class background, and each had the flexibility and financial stability to have one parent home with their preschool-aged child for the majority of the day. These parents were child-centered in their approach, by allowing their child to naturally develop an interest in reading.

Families in this demographic are often assumed to prepare their children for school and for reading in ways that directly correspond with school goals and expectations (Heath, 1983/2003; Auerbach, 1989). Generally speaking, the families in this study met with that assumption because they engaged in the act of reading on a daily basis. The families in this study demonstrated a personal attention to reading and prioritizing their child's learning to read.

However, these families had various and diverse reasons for valuing literacy, and these reasons were not always tied to school or school achievement. The figured worlds constructed by the mothers and by Mitchell, father of Mari, were reflective of their own family upbringings and experiences in school as children as well as into adulthood. For instance, Jessica had loving and happy memories of her father teaching her to read at home, and did not experience the pressures that Mitchell had in the early years of school. Indeed, Mitchell had negative experiences in school, feeling that he had been "forced" to read and to "perform" Whereas Jessica described reading for pleasure, and "getting lost" in books. Both he and Jessica created

an environment for Mari that allowed her to develop literacy at her own pace. Mari's lengthy nightly routine revolved around literacy, including speech and vocabulary aspects. Her parents described a pleasant bedtime routine including stories and singing; it was clearly an enjoyable time of day for both Mari and her parents. Sharon and Michelle described the prevalence of literate behaviors in their homes, but Sharon first and foremost built her children's developing literacy into a the religious act of daily scripture reading. Sharon practiced literacy within her religion of Mormonism by journaling and by sharing bible reading and recitation with Kevin, Melissa and Gavin. Sharon wanted to pass these daily practices onto her children. Michelle saw a protective benefit to reading; her daughters' time was filled with traditional childhood activities like playing outside and with books and toys. When her daughters were reading, there was no room in their lives for television or computers, activities of which Michelle disapproved. Only the literacy practices of Kelly's family were closely tied to school-like literacy. The manner in which Kelly supported Nellie's developing interest in reading and writing at home mimicked the early literacy activities in Nellie's preschool. All the parents in this study privileged literacy practices that corresponded with their unique family priorities.

Indeed, the family literacy practices described here were not grounded solely in an expectation for children's success in school. Even Sharon and Michelle, who valued traditional styles of play for their children, were not limited by school-like home literacy practices. Despite each of the parents in this study having reached high levels of academic achievement themselves, parents embodied and described tensions between perceived school methods and school-based models of literacy. Jessica and Mitchell were interested in pursuing alternatives to public school

for Mari. At the time of the interview, they were researching Waldorf education, a method wherein children are not formally taught to read in school until age eight. This method appealed to Mitchell especially because he wanted Mari to develop interest and literacy skills naturally. Furthermore, Michelle saw little value in the academic aspects of Carrie's preschool experience, but was allowing her to attend preschool so she could make friends. She did not acknowledge the possibility that Carrie's preschool teachers could challenge Carrie or progress her reading skills.

Parents' aspirations for their children were bound by notions of their own pasts and propelled by dreams for their futures (Taylor, 1983). Each of the parents expressed their desire for their children to have personal fulfillment and happy relationships. While none of the parents cited academic achievement as a clearly defined goal they held for their children, it was almost assumed or taken for granted that these children would succeed at school. As Kelly stated, Nellie's school achievement would only be one part of her life's achievements. Family relationships and friendships, developing empathy, and doing what makes Nellie happy were equally important goals that Kelly had for Nellie. Within each of these parents' figured worlds, there was the recognition that self-satisfaction was the ultimate goal, and that becoming literate within a positive school experience was a partial means to that end.

Through the interviews, I learned that each of these families, despite their superficial similarities, had distinct interests, priorities and literacy practices. In the next chapter, I will explore how each family contributed to the creation of the preschool book club gatherings. My

hope was for each family to share some of themselves in the gatherings and for parents to assume leadership and facilitation of the gatherings. While this did not occur to the extent I intended, I argue that the gatherings' evolving nature allowed for partial deconstruction of the traditional teacher-student relationship, and that meaningful relationships between families and the exchange of family resources and information were important outcomes of the book club experience.

Chapter 5

The Preschool Book Club

Following the family interviews and home visits, the second dimension to this study was the shared family literacy experience of the preschool book club. My goal for the preschool book club was to co-create a group learning experience with these families, one that was inspired by and supportive of their existing literacy practices. The preschool book club was intended to offer a space for sharing family literacy practices between families as well.

The conversation and work of one parent-child dyad at each preschool book club gathering was audio recorded and analyzed. Field notes and researcher reflections were recorded during and after each gathering. These data were used to build the case study of the book club, which I will frame in this chapter as a unique context for sharing family literacy practices.

Existing family literacy practices were at the core of the preschool book club. This responsive and adaptive approach allowed me to tailor each gathering's content to the immediate needs and interests of parents and children. My purpose as the researcher, facilitator and a participant was to be open to the ideas, concerns and solutions proposed by the participating families. Each gathering's activities were, to various degrees, grounded in the home literacies of each family. I engaged in continual and ongoing analysis of and reflection upon each gathering in order to prepare for the following one.

In analyzing the gatherings, I observed the importance of challenging the traditional roles embedded in the figured worlds of parents as well as the roles operating within my own figured

world. Our group met six times for approximately one and a half hours each time. We met for four consecutive weeks, missed one week over the Easter holiday, and then had two more consecutive meetings. Even within this limited time-space, I observed subtle changes in the participation and behavior of the children, and the sharing and leadership taken on by parents. (Re)negotiation of significant roles and relationships occurred across the six gatherings. Once gatherings began taking place, connections and relationships adult-to-adult, child-to-child and adult-to-child arose as important dimensions of project foundation, which provided comfortable, enjoyable and meaningful experiences for families. Over time, parents began to exhibit leadership and took increased ownership for the groups. Children became more accustomed to our routines and were more attentive to the activities.

My initial expectation for parents was that they would share their home literacy practices and priorities during the gatherings. However, for this group of highly-educated parents to situate themselves as the leaders would have required a complete reversal of the teacher-student dichotomy to which they were accustomed. Indeed, because these parents were all successful in school, the idea of taking complete ownership of our group was foreign, especially at first. Additionally, for parents to take ownership required me to relinquish it. This notion challenged my figured world, including years of teaching young children and conferencing with their parents. Overall, six meetings was not sufficient to engage the families fully in taking responsibility for the gatherings.

In the next sections, I define the space that was cooperatively created by the families in the study. Then, I explore three important influences on the creation and function of the preschool book club: building connections and relationships, changes over time and the

researcher's role in the project. Initially, existing networks of families were important for parents to agree to join the book club. Parents engaged in building social relationships with one another as soon as the gatherings began. Additionally, the passage of time played an important function for families. Across our six gatherings, children became more attentive and participatory, and parents felt increasingly comfortable with taking on leadership within the group. Lastly, I will explore how the evolving nature of the gatherings challenged the existing roles embedded in the figured worlds of all the parents in the group, including myself.

Defining the gathering space

The innovation of the book club gatherings provided the opportunity to create a new space for parents to explore literacy with their preschool children. The book club experience became a hybrid of home- and school-like components, and within each gathering, parents enacted aspects of their figured worlds that were grounded in their conceptualizations of both environments.

There were three key aspects of the book club gathering that mimicked a home environment. Parents and children were not separated from each other at any time, and families were already connected to one another. That is to say, they came to book club anticipating the comfort of knowing at least one other family there. Some of children had previously formed friendships, and parents shared social connections, much like in a residential neighborhood. Parents and children attended book club together. There was no time when the parents were not available to support their children, either in literacy or social activities during the gatherings. Younger siblings were also invited to attend the gatherings, so families participated together.

Finally, the families engaged in some “basic needs” activities on an as-needed basis, including eating snacks, drinking beverages, and changing diapers.

These home-like aspects of the gatherings were hybridized with elements of a school setting. For instance, when families were invited to participate and during the interview, I told them about the purpose for the gatherings being centered around literacy development, a perceived academic focus. As the researcher, a subtle dynamic was established wherein I naturally assumed the role of the “teacher” and the parents (and sometimes children) assumed the role of “student.” While one of the goals of the project was to problematize this dynamic, parents relied on their understandings and memories, their figured worlds of school, in order to participate in the gatherings, especially during the first few gatherings. I also relied on my experience as a teacher of preschool children when I began planning for the first gathering, bringing my own figured world into play as well.

The final aspect of the home-school hybrid space book club experience dealt with the physical location. The gatherings took place in a neutral location, a neighborhood community center. Our room was multi-purpose, used for such diverse activities as adult fitness classes and as a polling place. It had neither definite home- nor school-like characteristics, with one wall of large windows, durable carpet, plastic tables and chairs, and a small kitchenette. This space was open to interpretation, and was well-suited for the gatherings.

The book club’s hybrid physical and metaphysical space offered families the opportunity to engage in and share literacy-related activities. Parents and children made connections and friendships, and built social capital. The book club experience allowed participants to begin to

deconstruct traditional teacher and student roles, and by doing so, generate an avenue to increased parent leadership and influence on their child's schooling.

Building Connections and Relationships

The process of recruitment of families for participation in this project was reflective of the importance of relationships. Initially, I planned to invite families who either spoke English as a Second Language or qualified for Head Start programs. To that end, I held a number of meetings with Head Start teachers and school personnel in a more diverse local neighborhood. I provided fliers with information about the gatherings, and I explained the purpose and components of the study to these teachers. The teachers graciously distributed my fliers at two points in time: once in students' take home folders in January, and once to parents during face-to-face conferences. No families contacted me with questions or interest in participation following these efforts.

One teacher had mentioned to me as I discussed this problem with her that I was a stranger to families in that school. Indeed, my family and I were new to the area, and had not made connections with local schools. With that in mind, I considered those families with whom I did have growing connections: new neighbors and friends. Of the five families invited to participate, one was my neighbor, one was a friend of this neighbor, two were colleagues of mine, and one was a friend of a colleague.

Anika: You kind of got recruited on the fly.

Michelle: Um. (laughing)

Anika: Well, Sharon knows a lot more people in town than I do, since we've just been here just about as long as you guys.

Michelle: She knows a lot of people and she's in a lot of groups.

Anika: It was hard for me to get people interested, so I just said I was going to ask people I already know.

Michelle: Yeah.

Anika: And Sharon said, "Do you need a family or two more?" And I said that would be great, and then there's that one family who still hasn't come. I mean, the invitation is open, she can come anytime, but I think they must be busy. Her husband teaches at [local university] and she teaches theater at [local liberal arts college] so ...

This excerpt illustrates the importance of existing networks between participating families.

Admittedly, these families self-selected to participate in the book club. They were motivated to join, at least in part, by knowing at least one other participating family. Attendance at the gatherings was near perfect, and families invested time and effort into the journals I asked them to keep. Clearly, the importance of existing and meaningful relationships was crucial for the existence and productivity of the family gatherings.

Once we got started, each book club gathering was loosely organized around four activities: greeting/singing, literacy activities, snack and outdoor play time. Parents and their children were free to engage with the provided literacy materials in any way they chose. There were no restrictions placed on them in terms of how or when to work with books, writing materials or other materials brought to gatherings. Especially at the beginning and end of the gatherings, parents and children chatted with one another and continued to make connections and

build relationships. Immediately at the beginning of the first gathering, Sharon engaged Jessica in a conversation about their mutual acquaintances.

Sharon: So Jessica how do you know Anika?

Jessica: We both work at [liberal arts college.]

Sharon: In the same department?

Jessica: No, I'm in science, biology (Inaudible)

Sharon: Do you know Elliot Johnson?

Jessica: Yes, I do actually! His office is right next to mine!

Sharon: Oh ok. We all go to the same church.

Jessica: His office is right next to mine.

Sharon: Oh, how nice.

This style of conversation between parents was very common in the first three book club gatherings as the parents realized their connections, and then scaffolded their children in building friendships with each other, encouraging sharing of materials. Here, Melissa, Jonah and Mari get to know one another at the first gathering by letting the other play with the items they brought from home.

Sharon: Can you tell them what you brought? Use your voice and tell them what you brought.

Melissa: Princess book.

Sharon: Do you want to share with Jonah? Let's share with Jonah.

Melissa: (Counting) 16, 17, 18, 19....

Anika: Let's let Melissa choose because this is her special book.

Sharon: Melissa, which princess would you like to share with Mari? Which princess would you like to share with Mari? Which princess would you like to share with Jonah?
Jessica: I want this one.

Sharon: Ooooo. Ok. (Laughs) Look at that. Snow White's getting a ride.

Anika: Would you like to share some of your space book?

Jessica: Yeah.

Anika: I'll hold it like this so everyone can see. (Reads from text)

Jessica: See girls are going into space! Like Melissa and Mari!

Sharon: (Laughs)

Jessica : (Reading to Mari, Melissa and Jonah – "Little Blue Truck")

Sharon: Gavin guy should we show them your book? This has a dog on almost every page. Gavin is feeling a little possessive about his book right now.

Anika: That's ok, that's alright. Melissa, did you bring a book?

Sharon: Which princess do you want to read about? (Pause) Do you see that spaceship? Wow.

Anika: Jo, do you want to show everyone about the other book you brought?

Jonah: It's a construction book.

Jessica: Wow, thanks. Look, Mari.

Sharon: She carefully picked out the animals. And the princesses.

Anika: Is it ok if Mari looks at one more?

Sharon: You are doing a good job at sharing! You are doing a great job sharing! (Pause)
(Reads truck book to Gavin –book with helping and teamwork theme).

Sharon: (Laughs)

Anika: Time to put the toys away!

Sharon: Ok, you can do it by yourself – Oh thank you Mari. Let's give this back to

Jonah.

At the end of each group session, parents engaged in more connection-building talk, frequently about area schools, or the neighborhood parks. All but one of the families lived within a mile radius, and had seen one another at the neighborhood playground. Existing friendships were solidified and new friendships were generated. In these field notes and reflections from the second gathering, I connected with Michelle, and I overheard other parents discussing preschools.

I chatted with Michelle for a while, since I know her the least. We talked about our husbands' jobs, and the neighborhood park. She told me about her family's travels over the Easter holiday (Field notes, April 14, 2011).

On the playground, Jessica and Kelly were talking about preschools in the area. Jessica told Kelly about the Waldorf school and the mom-tot program she is currently enrolled in with Mari. Kelly shared her experiences with Nellie's preschool, a public four-year-old kindergarten program (Field notes, May 4, 2011).

These instances of families connecting themselves and building social capital were critical to the creation and function of the gatherings. Especially in the beginning, these relationships between adults and children fostered investment in and enjoyment of the group experience.

Examining these conversations through another lens, they illustrate parents' figured worlds as they enacted the role of the "student" in the gathering space. At the start of the gatherings, parents relied on their figured worlds to understand their role there. Parents' actions and conversations mimicked that of a typical student, at the first meeting of a new class as she

glances around the classroom and gravitates toward her friends. Despite my asking for parent leadership in the pre-gathering interviews, parents took time to renegotiate their roles. As parents became accustomed to the setting, they were more willing to “risk” taking on leadership in the group, and to share some of the home practices with one another. Change and growth over our seven week experience was also important to the children’s experiences.

Family participation changed over time

While adults spent time at the gatherings making connections and building social relationships with each other, the children cultivated new friendships as well. Over time, the children became better at working and sharing with each other. I observed that while the children didn’t know one another before the project started, they were all friendly at the end.

Jonah worked with Nellie on writing a butterfly story on the butcher paper. They got along well for quite a while, both illustrating pictures that went with their story. Nellie and Jonah clashed over their story when Jonah told Nellie that after the eggs were laid, the butterfly died. Nellie wanted to write about a butterfly family in which the generations were represented and there were happy parents and children. Kelly and I tried to help by explaining that Nellie was making up a story and Jonah was talking about what happened in science. Jonah ended up making his own butcher paper story about butterflies, and he dictated it to me. We didn’t finish it but it was definitely non-fiction!
(Field Notes, April 28, 2011)

Friends Jonah and Nellie were negotiating roles in their shared work, and for a number of minutes cooperated well together. Her mother and I interjected when the two children began to go down different paths, helping the children experience working together and separately.

The passage of time also fostered increased participation from the children as they became used to the routine or schedule of the gatherings. Each gathering began with a Hello Song⁸ that asks the children to choose a large motor movement. During the first three sessions, only the oldest children, Jonah, Nellie and Carrie participated in the song. By May 12, all the children were participating, as my field notes reflected.

To my surprise, ALL of the children sang the Hello song today. Even Gavin and Ava, the youngest children chose to jump and run during the song. Carrie did not want to go first today even after I invited her, but she did participate once we got going (Field notes May 12, 2011).

The children's attentiveness to the literacy activities improved over time as well. Since we met in a large group room at a local community center, the children were tempted to run around and it took time to settle them into singing or reading. By final two weeks of gatherings, the children knew we would sing and read first, and then have a snack and play outside. The children were more engaged in the experiences as they became accustomed to one another and to the routine of the gatherings.

Changes over time in parent leadership

⁸ The lyrics to the Hello Song are included in Appendix H.

All of the participating parents had been successful in their educational endeavors. Among the careers represented in our group were physician, linguist, teacher, and college professor. These parents had accumulated many years of schooling, including post-graduate and professional training. Having had so much personal experience in school, the notion of the distinct roles of “teacher” and “student” were firmly embedded in the figured worlds of these parents. In a traditional sense, the “teacher” is the expert, the possessor of knowledge, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to impart her or his knowledge upon the student. The “student” is the novice, the *tabula rasa*, requiring the expertise of the teacher and have knowledge bestowed upon him/her.

With the preschool book club gatherings, these traditional roles were challenged. I asked the parents to offer their home literacy practices to the group. I invited them to bring materials, books, toys, and ideas from home, items of high interest to their children, and to talk about them with the other families. During the family interviews, I inquired about each family’s goals for participating in our group, what they hoped to get out of it. Many responses were vague, mentioning perhaps only the opportunities for the children be social or to read new stories. For instance, I asked Sharon for her ideas for our gatherings, and her response was minimal. Despite my prompts during the interview, Sharon was reluctant to offer some of her family’s practices to share with the group. The interview took place before we began our gatherings, so Sharon’s reluctance in the interview could be attributed to a number of factors. She didn’t know who else was going to be participating in the group, or how receptive others might be to her family’s activities. Especially since so much of Sharon’s home literacy practice with her children

revolved around reading religious texts, may have felt cautious sharing these ideas at the risk of making others uneasy.

Over time, Sharon became slightly more comfortable with the group and its members, and eventually played a key role in creating a gathering experience for the group. In my field notes from April 28 and May 4, I summarized a conversation between Sharon and I in which she offers a cautious leadership suggestion in the form of a request for information.

Sharon approached me in the back yard and asked me about book club. She said she is learning a lot about the nuances of how children learn to read in our group. She gave the example that I mentioned how early readers rely on picture cues to decode/read words and make sense of text. She said she never realized this and that she wanted me to share more things like that with the group. Then we talked about how they talk to Melissa about books and ask her questions after reading because she is interested. I replied that she is doing this naturally and that it is helpful and supportive. (Field Notes, April 28, 2011).

Per Sharon's request I created a handout with one side having a reading list from our session on mail and letter writing. The other side had early reading and emergent reading strategies for before, during and after reading storybooks. While these suggestions are very school-like, I created the handout at the request of a parent who was interested in if whether her conversations about reading with her daughter were "on the right track." (Field Notes, May 4, 2011)

These excerpts bring up a number of pertinent issues about how roles were negotiated by all adult members of the group. First, it is important to note that this conversation took place outside of the gathering, during casual conversation between Sharon and me. This is notable because she was not making the request in the presence of others or open to their reactions to her request. Second, Sharon made this request about half way through the gathering sessions. She had had time to become familiar with the experience of the gatherings, and also to hear my repeated requests for parent input at the end of each session.

The third and perhaps most relevant point from this conversation shows how Sharon mediated her position as both a student and a leader. With this request, Sharon began to take some ownership in the gatherings. She started to challenge her notion of the roles of teacher and learner. She realized what information would be helpful for her and her daughter, and she found a time in which she was comfortable asking for it.

This conversation illustrates that Sharon was not yet comfortable with a complete departure from the roles of teacher and student so firmly grounded in her figured world. With her request, she privileged the information I could provide as a perceived “expert” on teaching young children to read. While the participating families were consistently invited to share their home practices with the group, Sharon’s and my conversation highlights a sort of middle ground where a parent could negotiate their figured world’s limitations of the “student” role and express a need or interest.

Families cultivated existing and new roles and relationships during the gathering times. As parents became increasingly comfortable with one another with each group meeting, they

became more amenable to taking ownership of the gatherings materials and activity plans. As Jay and Rohl (2005) established, it can be difficult for parents to break away from the traditional teacher-student construct residual from their schooling experiences. I observed that all the participating parents, including myself, were challenged by the notion of deconstructing the “teacher-student” dichotomy.

Redefining the role of the researcher to serve families

The backyard conversation with Sharon had additional implications for how I continually renegotiated my role and revised my own figured world throughout the group process as well. One of my original goals for the gatherings was for parents to generate the content. I wanted to offer families the opportunity to participate series of gatherings entirely based on their own interests and ideas. I did not anticipate that my own figured world would contribute as one of the limitations to this ideal. When Sharon asked me for my expertise and to share that with the group, I was resistant because that idea challenged my goal of having parents share their home practices. Upon further reflection, I realized I needed to accommodate her request and subsequently, that it was indeed a form of intermediary leadership. In analyzing my field notes, I found that my reflections and observations were filled with teacher- and school-like discourse. Despite my conscious efforts to deconstruct my role as the “teacher” in the gatherings, I was unable to avoid using language indicative of this position. The following examples from my field notes reflect my use of teacher discourse after three separate gatherings.

“I wanted to make sure everyone felt comfortable.” (April 7, 2011)

“I have decided to teach the group a “hello” song which includes dance, movements and the children’s names” (April 7, 2011)

“I invited them to record dictated letters, create drawings and then help the children address the envelopes. My goal was for each child to receive a letter in the mail this week.” (April 14, 2011)

“After the hello song, I explained that the stories I brought had characters that could be acted out by the puppets.” (April 28, 2011)

In these examples, I unwittingly directed group activities and gave instructions for how to engage with materials. I wanted to avoid using this type of language in the gatherings, but responded to an initial lack of direction from parents by relying on my figured world and fulfilling the role of leader. By the sixth gathering, my field notes reflected a tapering off of my use of teacher language, as families engaged in activities more independently and children were familiar with our routines. Additionally, I had adopted an alternative strategy for requesting ideas from parents.

By the fifth group meeting, I had formalized a process for eliciting parent leadership: I began to use e-mail. I realized that asking parents for ideas at the end of each gathering in person was ineffective, as they attempted to help clean up our space, gather personal belongings and of course, their respective children. The end of gathering proved to be a somewhat chaotic time, with children playing outside and some families departing earlier than others due to scheduling conflicts. The use of email with this group of families proved to be a more appropriate method for sharing ideas and information.

Kelly responded to my email before the last gathering, offering to bring some of Nellie's favorite literacy-related games to share with the group. She included youth versions of Boggle and Memory, magnetic letters and picture sequencing card games. Kelly's materials reflected her training as a teacher of young children. I contributed as well by bringing additional games including Mystery Garden, one which requires spoken language and logic.

In keeping with the typical routines of the gathering, after singing our Hello Song, many of the children opted to read books with their parent or another parent. For about half of this session, parents were quietly reading aloud to children, and the room had a pleasant "hum." (field notes, May 12, 2011) Mari, Carrie and Ava were the first to choose games, followed by Jonah and Nellie. I invited Melissa to play Mystery Garden with me, and she accepted.

I figured the game would interest Melissa since it had fairy tale pictures. The groups were engaged in games and the room was peaceful while everyone was working. It helped that Gavin had a snack to work on. He was less active and even laid down by Kelly, Nellie, Jonah and me at one point. The room was quiet and I felt like I wasn't really needed to help or monitor in any way for a while in the middle of this group. The children and parents were enjoying the materials and games. I didn't interrupt or even move from my spot with Jonah until I wanted to offer everyone snack before we went to play outside. (field notes, May 12, 2011)

This description of the activity portion in the final gathering depicts many aspects that changed over time since the beginning of the project. The families were used to the routines of

our sessions and engaged independently without guidance from me. Young Gavin had become comfortable with other members of the book club and did not commence running around the room as he had in the past. He joined a group other than his family. The groups playing games together were not necessarily made up of members of the same family. Both children and parents were comfortable working and talking with others outside their families. A number of the goals I had in mind for this project were met within this final group gathering.

All the parents in this study, including myself, negotiated their roles over our six meetings and re-situated themselves outside the traditional “teacher-student” relationship. In the beginning, the idea of the parents providing the ideas, activities and materials for our groups seemed foreign and uncomfortable. Parents and children were first getting to know one another, and the space was not familiar. Over time, parents became more willing to ask me for information, and then eventually to share personal items with the group. Although it was necessary to accommodate family schedules in the late spring, it was unfortunate that our six sessions had ended just as the group was reaching this point.

The value of choosing and employing a flexible and responsive model with this project was for me, as the researcher-participant, to be able to continually reflect upon the interests and needs of the families in this group. There was flexibility for me to change aspects of the gatherings in order to make the time more relevant and meaningful for families. I welcomed and encouraged the contributions of families, as well as to the ebb and flow of their contributions over time. However, utilizing a responsive model involved challenges as well. Parents were reluctant to take on leadership roles right away, and because we only held six gatherings, there was insufficient time to allow parent leadership to develop. With limited time I had only begun

to renegotiate my own leadership role, and to become sensitive to my reliance on teacher-like discourse.

Chapter 6

Integrated Conclusions, Limitations and Broad Implications

In this final chapter, I contextualize the case studies of four, white, middle-class families and their home literacy practices, along with the experiences they shared in the preschool book club. I discuss the limitations of the study, especially in regard to time as a key factor in the development of the book club. Finally, I situate this research within the broader context of the field of family literacy, and present implications for future research.

This study of family literacy followed five families with preschool-aged children, including my own, as we identified and discussed home literacy practices, and then participated in a book club-style series of gatherings designed to foster sharing of those practices. With this study, I explored the types of and purposes for literacy in families, and created a new space where families of preschool children explored literacy together. Using the theoretical lens of Holland et al.'s (1998) figured worlds, I argued that the families in this study, though they all had academically high-achieving parents, had some similar but many distinct dimensions of their figured worlds. Family literacy practices were bound by parents' figured worlds and these boundaries were both enacted and questioned in the book club gatherings.

The group of families in this study shared important demographic characteristics. All of the families were of white, middle-class background and had married parents living together with their children. In four of five families, their oldest child was entering preschool, so these families had no direct experience with elementary schools as parents. Kelly's family had more experience with formal schooling, with Nellie, the eldest child having attended a part-time preschool program for a portion of the academic year. Each of these families described a child-

centered approach to raising children, following their child's interests and responding and reacting to their questions. The final and most important shared family characteristic was parental education level; in each family, at least one of the parents possessed a doctorate degree.

Despite these important similarities, the families practiced literacy in a variety of ways, and were not necessarily focused on preparing children for learning to read in school. Family literacy practices were ingratiated into other family priorities. Literacy practices played important roles, for instance, in Sharon's religious life. She placed great importance on her children, Melissa and Gavin, developing a habit of daily scripture reading. Michelle privileged reading over other common children's activities like watching television and playing computer games. Reading held a protective benefit for her daughters as Michelle shielded them from what she regarded to be the unhealthy dangers of television watching and physical inactivity. For Jessica's family, reading was a naturally enjoyable activity for every member of the household, and Mari participated in family literacy at her own pace and developmental level. The only family whose literacy practices were school-like were those of Kelly's family. Kelly's family's practices closely resembled those in an early elementary classroom, because Kelly had been a third grade teacher. This group of families, despite their academic achievements and successes within the dominant school model, generally practiced literacy at home in non-school-like ways.

The book club gatherings served as a home-school hybrid space. It provided an opportunity for families to engage in and share literacy practices. The evolving nature of the gatherings' activities and organization opened the door for the parents, myself included, to explore the traditional teacher-student relationship. As I relinquished aspects of my leadership

role, parents were increasingly invited and encouraged to take on planning and sharing ideas with the group.

It wasn't until the final gathering that a parent took on a central role in planning the group's activities. Kelly was that parent; she offered the suggestion to bring literacy games to the group, and she brought many of her's and Nellie's favorites from home. While this is precisely the way I envisioned parents leading the groups, it is notable that Kelly was the first parent willing to contribute in this way. Because she was a teacher, she had knowledge of and experience with developing readers. In Kelly's figured world, she was confident and comfortable sharing her home literacy practices and materials with the group because these same practices were validated and replicated in schools. Kelly knew these children would encounter literacy games like her's when they started school. While the other participating parents may have felt that sharing their home practices was too personal in a group setting after only a few gatherings, Kelly was facile at integrating her family's activities.

All of the other families separated the literacy practices they described to me in the home interview setting, and those practices they shared in the gatherings. During the gatherings, parents practiced school-like reading skills with their children. For instance when reading aloud, parents would question children about letter names and sounds, story recall, and word identification. Even Jessica and Mitchell, who were so opposed to practicing skills such as these without the expressed interest of Mari, adopted school-like literacy practices in the group setting.

When Mitchell attended the gathering with Mari, the children were using puppets and making up stories. Mitchell had Mari drawing her recollections of the story of Peter

Rabbit in a more structured way, and encouraged her to not engage in free play. This is ironic because in his interview, he had stressed his desire to follow her inclinations. He seemed to be more concerned with her behavior in the group setting, like following directions, listening and sharing with the other children. Did Mari initiate this??? (Field notes, April 13, 2011)

Mitchell responded especially to the home-school hybrid environment created in the preschool book club. Despite his expressed reluctance to have Mari engage in school-like tasks before she was developmentally ready, he prompted her repeatedly to follow directions and to focus on a single activity for a period of time at book club. Mitchell's lived experiences with dyslexia as a school-aged child combined with his long academic career played into his expectations for Mari at book club. He wanted her to participate and be successful with the book club's activities. Mari worked with her father until they were both satisfied with what she had drawn; she did not lose interest or desire to play more freely with the other children. Despite Mitchell's opposing certain school-like expectations for his daughter, with his guidance she was appropriately engaged and challenged.

Jessica and Mitchell enacted home literacy at home and school literacy at the gatherings by demonstrating their adaptability to both settings; at home, Jessica and Mitchell stressed their responsiveness to Mari's initiatives, using literacy as part of a bedtime routine and including singing and vocabulary. While participating in book club gatherings, they practiced more school-like pre-literacy skills with Mari (i.e., recalling story events and characters when prompted). While she and Mitchell were quite skeptical of reading instruction in public schools

based on Mitchell's experience as a child, they were comfortable with engaging Mari themselves in a number of school-like reading activities at book club.

As Mitchell guided Mari's activities at book club, Michelle preferred to read aloud to her daughters during the gatherings, even when there were other activities offered. She and her daughters were frequently lap-reading together well after the rest of the group had moved onto having snack or playing outside in the picnic area. Michelle administered the gatherings' activities to her daughters as much as she could. Her two daughters rarely played away from her or each other. This manner of participation had protective overtones, as did the information she shared in her interview. Michelle preferred that Carrie and Ava engaged in activities under her supervision. It was clear that her preference was to have the girls close by, working and playing in manners of which she approved.

In contrast, Michelle's church friend Sharon and her children were quite willing to engage in the various activities of our book clubs. Sharon stated in her interview that she looked forward to having Melissa exposed to other literature topics beyond princesses. Despite the family's focus on religious reading at home, Sharon did not mention to the other mothers during her recording or in recorded conversations with other mothers, bringing bible verses or Melissa or Gavin's scriptures they were reading at home. She did not allow her family's home literacy practices into the public book club gathering. Sharon's family, to the greatest extent, built a clear separation between private, home literacy practices and the public practices shared in the gatherings.

The families in this study, with the exception of Kelly, kept their home practices at home, and despite my invitation, did not expose these practices in the gatherings. In this way, these families exercised their right to be different and unique from one another, with each family's home literacy practice inseparable from other family priorities. All the families in the study, were teaching their children about reading in two worlds: the world at home, and the world at school. Families described unique home literacies that were not school-like. They have shown that they are capable of successfully negotiating both home and school literate environments, seamlessly crossing from one literate setting to another, and teaching their children to do the same. It is this population of families, the white middle-class, who are assumed to be the most capable of preparing their young children for entering school. Within this assumption, school and home literacy practices would look much the same. The current research has complicated this assumption. Parents developed home literacy practices with their children that were unique to each family's figured world, past parental experience, and parents' future goals for their children. Sharon's family, who were Mormon, for instance, practiced daily scripture reading yet Melissa will attend public school where there will be no place for religious texts. However despite these divergent priorities, Sharon is preparing her children for both literate worlds, at home and at school. Like Sharon's, the families in this study demonstrated their ability to maintain their literate traditions at home, and to simultaneously integrate new or different school-like literacy practices.

Limitations of the current research

The current research documents the ways in which the literacy practices of white, middle-class families both align with and depart from parents' perceptions of school-based literacy.

While the white, middle-class population is understudied, a strengths-based family literacy experience, like the one described here, would be relevant with families of diverse backgrounds. Compton-Lilly (2003, 2007) illustrated the diverse ways in which African American families practice literacy. Especially important in her research, Compton-Lilly described the existing practices in these families, and not the lack of literacy in the homes of lower SES urban African American children. My research was meant to take this strengths-based perspective in a programmatic direction. Future research would examine how families of minority background design and contribute to the book club gatherings, the nature of the home-school hybrid space, how families would interact one another and with the researcher (in the role of teacher, facilitator, or participant-observer) and how parental leadership roles would be negotiated and enacted.

After considerations of the study population, a second limitation of the current research has to do with *time*. Over the six book club gatherings described here, a subtle changes were noted in the involvement of the parents and my role as the participant-observer. The parents in the study became increasingly comfortable with departing from the student or novice role, to which they were accustomed in a school setting, and asking questions and offering ideas for activities. Proving even more stubborn was my internal discourse as the group's initiator. My field notes revealed an embedded discourse in which I was the organizer of these groups, and their function and relevance was ultimately my responsibility. Despite my preparation and willingness to give up my leadership role, my figured world as a former teacher and as the researcher gave me a dominant voice in my field notes and recordings. In future research, with the advantage of additional time and gatherings, I would expect changes within the parents and

within the leader (be it myself or another) to progress and flourish. An appropriate goal would be to achieve a balance between members of the group, where parents were comfortable with sharing their home practices with one another. A sense of equality should develop, wherein the traditional roles of the “expert” and “novice” would dissolve, and group members would share in the ownership of the group learning experience.

This idyllic description is a departure from current school culture. Holland et al. (1998) presents the notion of “improvisation” as a mechanism for change first within the figured worlds of individuals, and ultimately for change in group culture. In this brief six week experience, there was some evidence of improvisation as parents, including myself, experimented with aspects of alternative roles: parents became leaders in their child’s educational experience in the gatherings, and myself, the “teacher” responding to parents instead of initiating every activity. Departing from traditional roles required comfort in the group (a comfort based in existing meaningful connections and friendships) and time to develop familiarity with the gathering “space.” In future research, as families co-create the gathering experience, additional time would allow for improvisations to occur and for parents to become the true leaders of the gatherings, perhaps even sharing those private practices in a public space (i.e., religious literacy practices).

I would be remiss if I did not mention the additional possibility of children taking on leadership roles in future book club gatherings as well. As Jessica and Mitchell so aptly described their devotion to Mari’s naturally developing interests, the gatherings could become a space for adults and children to renegotiate their traditional child/parent roles. For instance, In the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, teachers are experts at listening to children’s conversations and observing their play. The teachers then build curricular experiences

and learning projects, around these interests. In this reversal of the traditional roles, students lead teachers on the quest for knowledge. This possibility presents a third layer to the advantage of having more time than six weeks to engage a group of families in the preschool book club gatherings.

Contextualizing the research

The white, middle-class families presented here engaged in two literate worlds, that at home, and that in the more school-like setting of the book club gatherings, despite my efforts to disrupt this dichotomy. They demonstrated that even if their home literacy practice was not representative of a school model, they were facile at negotiating both literate environments, and were teaching their children to be readers in both worlds as well. These families demonstrated that even white, middle-class families with high levels of education built literacy practices around their own family priorities, and that these didn't always involve the institution of school or academic success.

Jessica, Mitchell and Michelle both spoke of their skepticism of learning to read in school, stating that it could be inappropriate, "forced" on children or that the school's approach would not be challenging enough. These mothers' statements illustrate tensions between families and their perceptions of their child's future school experience. The current research has begun to open the door to understanding how parents must question their traditional role as the "subordinate" in order to have an increasingly important voice in the education of their child. In addition, as the participant-observer in this study, my experience demonstrated the great challenge that is posed by schools giving increasing welcome to parents' input. Families like those who participated in this study have already become facile at becoming readers in both the

home and school environments. Perhaps those families who cannot as easily negotiate the worlds of reading at home and at school are those who would benefit most from school culture becoming more welcoming and open to the contributions of all families.

The current research also has implications for classroom teachers. It has been assumed that white, middle-class families bring young children to school who already possess a set of school-like pre-reading skills. However, the current research shows that this may not always be the case, for among white, educated families there are notable differences. The teacher who gives his or her special attention to only those students who appear to lack basic early reading skills, perhaps especially those from poor or minority backgrounds, may not be engaging those children who are assumed to possess these skills before entering the classroom. It is the teacher's responsibility to make learning relevant to all the children in her or his classroom, and to engage students' families. How then, should a classroom teacher begin to do this, when each family, even those who were previously assumed to be the same on a preparedness level, may not, indeed, be the same? To further complicate the task of working with diverse families, this research illustrates that even white, middle-class families may not be preparing their youngsters for school in the ways that schools assume or expect.

In an even broader sense, the current research raises questions about barriers to mutually respectful home-school relationships. On a small scale, this project has demonstrated that families possess complex figured worlds integrating parents' pasts, aspects of current relationships and community, and future goals for children. Within these figured worlds are embedded notions of the roles schools and families have played in the education of children. In this limited population of white, middle-class families, parents were initially uncomfortable with

the idea of displacing themselves from the role of “student” in the book club. The renegotiation of this role required familiarity and comfort to develop over time. Even through this limited lens, the difficulty in deconstructing power structures between families and schools is clear. In this project, the book club gathering space, as well as the interviews that preceded the creation of this space, illustrated a possible avenue for broadening communication and relationships between schools and families. As representatives of “families,” the families here experimented with expressing their unique interests and home practices. They had the opportunity to co-create a meaningful, group educational experience for their children. As a representative of “teachers and schools,” I attempted a departure from my figured world as an educator to welcome the leadership of parents, and to give up my culturally- and institutionally-assigned role as “expert.” As an act of improvisation (Holland et al., 1998), the relationships and roles explored here implicate the need for schools and families to test the boundaries imposed by traditional school culture and to institute change in family-school relationships for the benefit of all students.

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Appendix A
Approved Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Family Literacy Groups for Preschoolers and their Parents/ Caregivers

Principal Investigator: Catherine Compton-Lilly (phone: (608) 890-0909) (email: comptonlilly@wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Anika E. Paaren-Sdano (phone: (608) 796-3289)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about how young children learn to read. In this study, the role of a child's home and family is important to how children learn about reading. We would like to gather families and children together to talk about reading during preschool book groups to take place at Hamilton School this winter.

You have been asked to participate because you have a preschool-aged child who attends Hamilton school. You may wish to participate in this study's book groups because you value reading and would like to meet other Hamilton families who are interested in reading.

The purpose of the research is to gather information about how different families use reading and teach their children about reading. Another purpose is for families to share their ideas about reading with each other. A third purpose is for families whose children attend Hamilton School to meet one another.

This study will include families from the Hamilton School community who are interested in reading, their child's reading, and who would like to meet other similar families in the community.

Members of this study's book group will be asked to have the group leader over to their homes for a short visit to talk about reading at home. The book groups will take place at Hamilton School at a time convenient for all the members of the group.

You will be audio and video taped during your participation in this research. The group leader, Anika, and the University supervisor for this study, Catherine Compton-Lilly, will be able to view recordings of our book group meetings and interviews. The tapes will be kept for one year, until March 2012, before they are destroyed.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

FWA00005399

Protocol: SE-2010-0689 Approved: 12/8/2010 Expires: 11/8/2011

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to have the researcher, Anika, over to your house for a short visit of approximately 1 hour to talk about how your family reads. During this visit, Anika will ask to take photos of literacy materials in your home, and to collect pieces of writing or artwork you or your children have made.

You will also be asked to attend and participate in 8 one-hour preschool book group meetings along with your preschool-aged child. You will also be asked to keep a journal about the reading activities you engage in with your child at home. After the groups are over, there will be a final interview with parents and children together to last about 1 hour.

Your participation will last approximately 1 hour per session and will require 8 sessions in addition to the home visit and interviews. Your participation will require 10 hours in total.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

We anticipate that some participants may be uncomfortable with being audio and video recorded. We will protect your privacy by separating your name from any sensitive or personal information you may share. As a mandated reporter, the researcher is required to report any instances of suspected child abuse or neglect witnessed during the home visit.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. You and your preschooler may benefit by making time for reading with each other. You may learn about the ways other families use reading and about how reading can be informative and fun. You may make helpful connections with other families in the Hamilton school community.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be presentations and publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published. If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Catherine Compton-Lilly at (608) 890-0909. You may also call the student researcher, Anika E. Paaren-Sdano at (608) 796-3289.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

FWA00005399

Protocol: SE-2010-0689 Approved: 12/8/2010 Expires: 11/8/2011

If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on any services or treatment you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. Your signature also indicates you give permission for your child to participate in the study. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Parent/Caregiver Participant: _____
(Please Print)

Signature

Date

Name of Child Participant: _____
(Please Print)

Parent/Caregiver Signature

Date

_____ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

FWA00005399

Protocol: SE-2010-0689 Approved: 12/8/2010 Expires: 11/8/2011

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview for parents and children

Parent Interview:

1. Would you like to tell me about your family?
2. Can you tell me about your educational experiences?
3. Would you like to tell me about your expectations for your children?
 - a. What do you think they will achieve at school?
 - b. What do you want for them in life?
4. What are your goals for participating in our group?

Child Interview

The following semi-structured interview was completed with preschool-aged participants. This interview format was adapted from a previous study using semi-structured data collection procedures with children in this age group (House & Rule, 2005; Weigel, Martin & Bennett, 2005).

I completed the parent interview before the child interview, with both present, to establish rapport with both family members. Both interviews were audio-recorded.

First, I engaged the child with materials I brought: a small, plastic doll (one boy and one girl), an small ball and and a small book. I set the doll out for the child to see and explore first, and then explained the following scenario:

“I have brought with me this little [girl/boy] and two of her/his favorite toys. Here s/he is! Would you like to play with her/him? What do you think her/his name is?”

(I allowed the child time to respond and to be comfortable talking to me.)

“Well, s/he really likes to play with these things.”

(I set out the ball and the book.)

“Do you know what kinds of toys these are? Which one do you think s/he should choose today?”

(I gave the child time to choose the ball or the book.)

“Can you tell me about why you chose the [ball/book]? Can you show me how s/he uses it?”

(If the child chose the ball, I transitioned after a few minutes by offering the book. If the child chose the book, I moved onto the next prompt.)

“Do you like to look at books like [doll’s name]?”

“How do you play with books?”

“Can you show me some books in your house?”

(If the child doesn’t respond, I will ask about other reading or writing materials or to show me what s/he reads at home. When we found an item to talk about I moved onto the next prompt.)

“Can you show me what you do with this book?”

“What do you like about this book?”

“Would you like to show me some other things that you read?”

(I allowed the child to share any other materials with me, and I asked similar questions about each material.)

“Can you show me where we put these books away?”

(I finished by thanking the child for sharing her/his ideas with me and thanking the parent/caregiver for having me in their home. Lastly, I established the next time of contact for the family, based on the agreed-upon time for the book club gathering. I then answered any remaining questions they had, and then said good-bye.)

Appendix C

Coding Samples

Data Excerpt	Code	Type of Code	Theme
<p>Jessica Interview: “So, Daddy does bedtime. We all have a role, but he does the bulk of it. We sit on the couch reading all together and then we go into Mari’s room.”</p>	<p>Bedtime Routine</p>	<p>Descriptive, Structural</p>	<p>Family Home Literacy Practices</p>
<p>Jessica Journal: “Still reading 8-10 books per night. We’ve been trying very hard to cut out most/all tv and we no longer have the tv on during the day/night when Mari is awake.”</p>	<p>Limiting screen time</p>	<p>Process, Structural</p>	<p>Family Priorities</p>
<p>Sharon Interview: “I would like them to have a habit of scriptures every day. We do that as a family and I hope that becomes a habit for them individually.”</p>	<p>Scripture reading</p>	<p>Process</p>	<p>Expectations for Children</p>

Data Excerpt	Code	Type of Code	Theme
<p>Sharon Journal: “While Melissa was writing her letters, I offered to help her write words in them. She consented and and so I spelled a word for her - love. To my amazement, she wrote each letter I spoke. I didn’t know she could write those letters and had thought I’d need to help her.”</p>	Letter knowledge	Descriptive	Parent perceptions of child literacy development
<p>Mitchell Interview: “I wasn’t diagnosed as being dyslexic until much later when I was an undergraduate in college.”</p>	Challenges with learning to read	Values	Parents’ school experiences
<p>Jessica Interview: “I remember my dad actually taught me how to read with Dr. Seuss books...and I just never put books down.”</p>	Loving to read from an early age	Values	Parents’ school experiences
<p>Michelle Interview: “I’m letting (Carrie) go because she really wants to go for social... I’m not worried about her not liking it. She is very social.”</p>	Making friends	Process	Parent expectations for Preschool

Data Excerpt	Code	Type of Code	Theme
Kelly Interview: “...wanting them to find what makes them happy... and proud of who they are.”	Parent allows child to be who they are	Descriptive	Child-Centered
Mitchell Interview: “I was always drilled with these “how come you don’t recognize this... I really resented that kind of drilling. It was so frustrating!”	School is stressful	Descriptive	Tensions between home and school
Michelle Interview: “I’m sure she’s not gonna learn anything new in the preschool.”	Knowledge/skill Acquisition in preschool	Descriptive	Tensions between home and school
Michelle Journal: “Carrie and Ava are participating in the library program 1000 B4 4K.”	Library use	Provisional/A priori, Structural	Family Home Literacy Practices
Field Notes: “Jonah worked with Nellie on writing a butterfly story... Since Jonah was engaged, I tried to engage Gavin with a turtle puppet.”	Inter-family use of literacy materials	Provisional/A priori, Structural	Book Club Activities

Data Excerpt	Code	Type of Code	Theme
Gathering 1: "Sharon: How do you know Anika? Jessica: We work together. Sharon: Oh, Do you know Ephraim Johnson? Jessica: His office is right next to mine!"	Adult-to-adult	Descriptive	Relationships
Researcher Journal: "This group was less organized...maybe because I had specific activities in mind."	Teacher discourse	Descriptive	Participant-Observers Role

Appendix D

I distributed the following “tips sheets” to families at Sharon’s and Jessica’s requests.

<p style="text-align: center;">Early Reading Strategies I</p> <p>Before reading:</p> <p>Take a “picture walk” and make predictions.</p> <p>A picture walk is a strategy for introducing a new book to a young reader. In this strategy, take a look at the pictures in the book page by page <i>without</i> reading any of the text. Ask your reader if he or she knows any of the vocabulary shown in the pictures (i.e., names of animals, vehicles, etc.) and talk about what might be happening in the pictures.</p> <p>Make predictions about the story based on the pictures. Ask your reader, “What do you think is going to happen in this story?” or “Uh-oh, it looks like Peter gets stuck here. Do you think he will get out? How?”</p> <p>These strategies prepare your reader to tackle new words in the text (based on his or her predictions) as she or he becomes better at decoding (sounding it out).</p> <p>During reading:</p> <p>Make connections.</p> <p>Making connections between the book you are currently reading and other experiences your reader has had will help them make meaning from (comprehend) what they read. You can model this strategy and have your reader make connections. Here are three types of connections:</p> <p>Text-to-text: “This pond book reminds me of that library book we read last night, when the mother duck was looking for her ducklings at the pond!”</p> <p>Text-to-self: “This book about the zoo reminds me of the time we went to the zoo! Do you remember that? Which animal was your favorite?”</p> <p>Text-to-world: “This book about ice cream reminds me of the ice cream shop around the corner from our house!”</p> <p>*the first “text” refers to the book you are currently reading</p> <p>After reading:</p> <p>Retelling the story.</p> <p>Ask your child to tell you what happened in the story, his or her favorite part of the story, or to choose a favorite picture. This works particularly well with funny stories or fictional stories with a number of distinct events. Talk to your reader about why he or she chose that part as a favorite, or ask guiding questions to help them remember what happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story.</p> <p>This strategy helps with building a reader’s “sense of story” or knowledge about how stories are constructed and how events in stories are sequenced.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Book Club Book List: Mail and Writing Letters</p> <p>Armentrout, David & Patricia. <u>The Post Office</u>, (non-fiction with photos)</p> <p>Grindley, Sally. <u>The Giant Postman</u>, (early reader)</p> <p>Kenney, Karen. <u>Mail Carriers at Work</u>, (non-fiction with illustration)</p> <p>Knudsen, Shannon. <u>Postal Workers</u>, (non-fiction with photos)</p> <p>Lobel, Arnold. <u>Frog and Toad are Friends</u>, (fiction with dialogue)</p> <p>Owen, Ann. <u>Delivering Your Mail</u>, (information fiction with illustration - simple)</p> <p>Poydar, Nancy. <u>Mailbox Magic</u>, (fiction)</p> <p>Siracusa, Catherine. <u>No Mail for Mitchell</u>, (early reader)</p> <p>Steffensmeier, Alexander. <u>Millie waits for the Mail</u>, (fiction)</p> <p>Taback, Simms. <u>I Miss You Every Day</u>, (fiction - award winner)</p> <p>Wales, Dirk. <u>A Lucky Dog</u>, (Historical, non-fiction)</p> <p>Wells, Rosemary & Tom. <u>The House in the Mail</u>, (fiction)</p> <p>Whitehead, Jenny. <u>Lunch Box Mail and other Poems</u>, (children’s poetry)</p>
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Early Reading Strategies II

Before reading:

Read author and illustrator. Have you read this author before? Do you remember other stories with pictures by this illustrator?

Ask your reader to turn the pages, how to hold the book and to point to where you should begin reading on a page.

During reading:

Ask about letter identifications. “Do you see any letters you know on this page?” or “Do you see any A’s on this page?” Start with letters in your child’s name.

Watch out for letters that appear different in printed text than in developing handwriting, i.e. lower case “a” or “t”

‘d’ ‘t’ or ‘a’ ‘t’

Point out picture cues. For instance, if there is a sheep in the picture, show your reader which word says “sheep” on the page.

After reading:

Ask your reader to tell you what happened at the beginning, middle and end of the story.

Or to simplify, ask what happened at the end and work backwards with guiding questions. “How did this story end? Right, Cinderella married the prince. And before that do you remember where she went? Right, to the ball! And do you remember who helped Cinderella get ready for the ball? Right, her fairy god mother! What else do remember from this story? Remember, it’s ok to look at the pictures for guidance – that is what they’re there for!

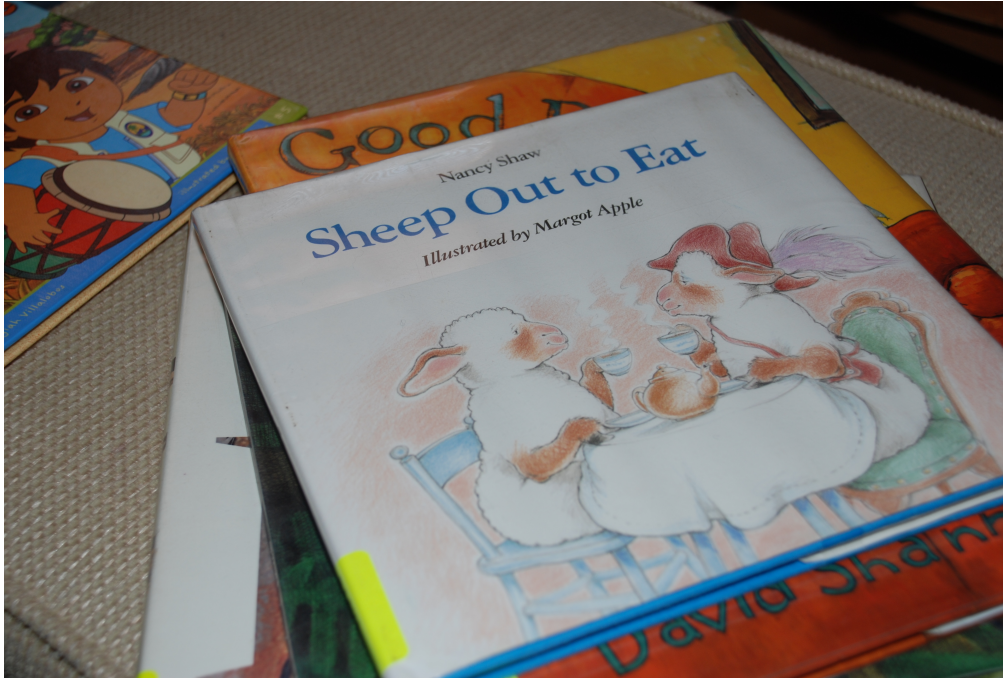
Appendix E

The following represent a sample of the photos taken at families' homes.



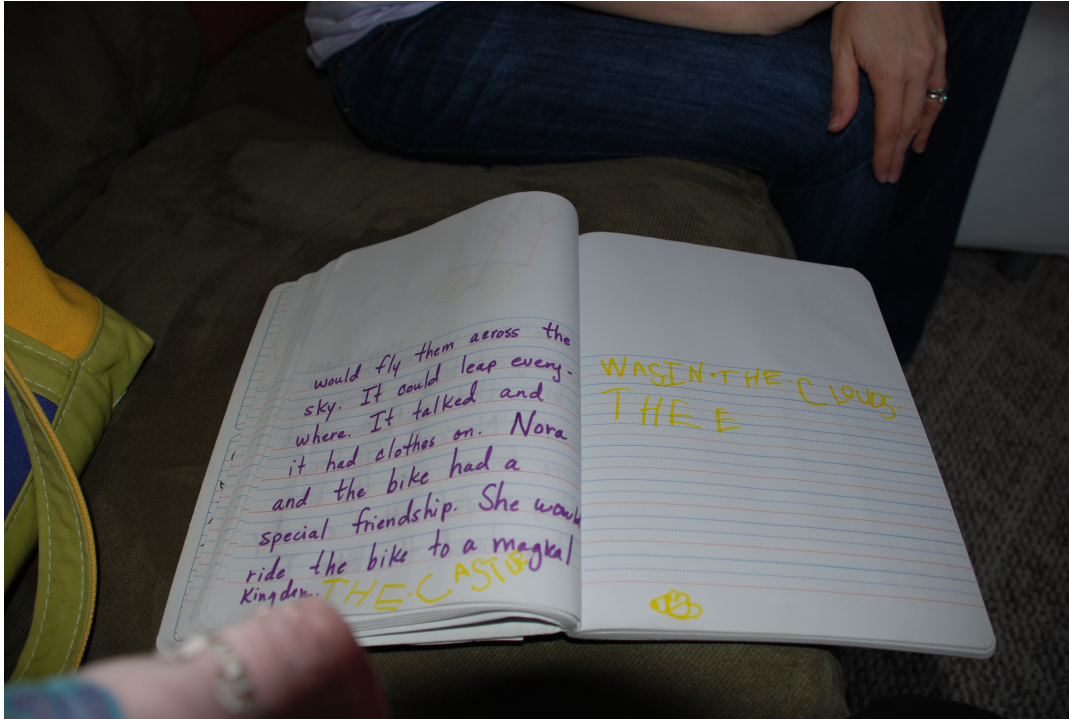
These photos were taken in Mari's bedroom and kitchen.





This photo was taken by Carrie of her latest collection of books borrowed from the public library. I took the photo below when Nellie showed me her games.





These photos from Nellie's house display her journal and a lunchbox of books she brought on trips in the car.



Appendix F

Included here are the note which accompanied the journals I provided for each family and a sample of journal entries written by parents and children.

Dear Families,

I have provided you with this journal as a space to record your literacy activities at home. When you can, I ask that you write any description of your and/or your child's activities over the course of our six weeks together.

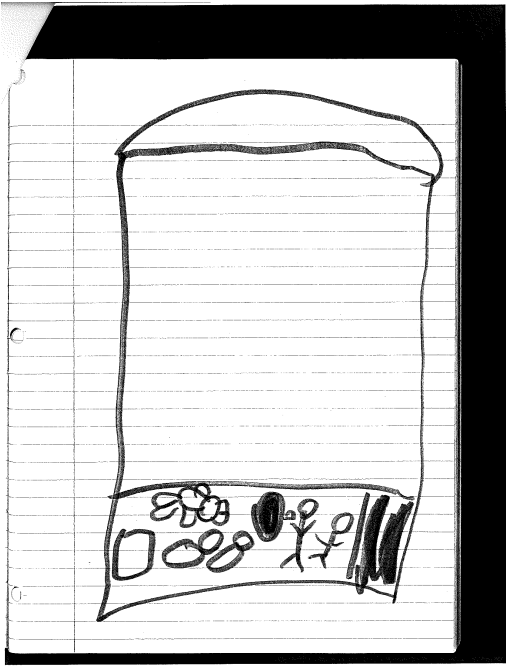
Your entries will be welcomed and appreciated no matter the length or content.

Please welcome your child to write or draw in the journal as well.

Please include the date on each entry.

I will ask you to bring them back on our last meeting in May. I will return these journals to you shortly thereafter, in case you'd like to keep any of the information you record, or the creations of your children.

Thank you again for participating in our Club!



S ON THE BED
CAT IS IN

THE TREE IS
DOWN IS OFF THE
BED.
MAYE IS ONLY
THE BED. MOM IS
OFF THE BED.

April 10, 2011
 as a sunny and warm day
 like summer, only it was
 . We had been gone all
 when we got home, the cl
 started rolling in and we could tell
 a storm would soon be here. We h
 just walked in the door when we
 heard the tornado warning siren go
 off! We gathered some food, flashlights,
 stuffed animals and blankets and headed
 downstairs. We snuggled on the bed. As
 we started to read a book, we heard
 the plink, plink, plunk of big hail
 coming down on our house! It didn't
 last long and we were safe!

KBB
 School-
 like
 parent
 transcript
 child
 dictated
 story

Wednesday April 13, cont -
 The theme of library books this week was ducks and chickens (pre-Easter theme) and then we talked about poetry the whole day (including looking for ducks as we drove, about the dash). We are still reading about 8-10 books at night before bedtime.

Monday April 18
 We've been reading with [redacted] every afternoon and evening (usually about 30-45 minutes per session) - when we read to her, we have started asking her the first & last letters of certain words - for example, one of her favorite library books is about "hats" and she spells out "H-A-T" throughout the book. We're surprised by how many letters she is remembering across different books.

for Thursday April 20, 2011
 forgot to mention earlier that [redacted] got a card from [redacted] for [redacted] let book club activity - loved that activity - Mya was very excited to read and discuss his letter!

Monday
 PPL
 8-10
 11:45-12:15
 1:45-2:15

PPL
 letters
 names
 in individual
 paragraphs
 not whole
 words

April 8, 2011
 We read quite a few books today while waiting at the hospital for a DR's appointment. [redacted] is tired of listening to Minnie's and would rather listen to other books on CD that we brought home from library.

May 1, 2011
 [redacted] has also completed 300 books the library "1000 Books B4K" Proj. She listens to all the same books [redacted] does. She has a good attention span for a 2yr old. She knows a lot of her letters but gets a little bored and some of the lowercase letters. She likes to point out letters she knows in the books we read together.

May 18, 2011
 [redacted] is also on #425 for the library reading program. We checked out "The Mitten" from the library. It came with a CD to listen along with. It is currently [redacted] favorite book and has almost 50 pages in it. She listens to the whole thing several times a day. Both girls enjoy listening to

MR
 library to
 the
 theme

library
 use
 PPL
 library

Appendix G

Included here is a sample of the field notes format I used to reflect my role as participant-observer.

Field Notes Template

Time	Observations	Co-Facilitator Notes	Parent-Participant Notes
#3 4-28-11 3:10pm	I laid out the puppets for the children to see and asked them to choose materials, like books, puppets, butcher paper + markers.	Characters puppets - prince + princess, clown, policeman, teacher. The people sets were brown + pink. If the children chose they could use the puppet to act out stories, or they could dictate/illustrate original stories using butcher paper and markers. <u>The stories</u> to have at least 1 character similar to a puppet - Froggy Franklin, Amelia Bedelia, etc.	Gonah worked with [redacted] on writing a butterfly story on butcher paper. I walked around to pass out supplies + invite children to choose a book or a puppet. My a choice Peter Rabbit. Since Gonah was long aged, I tried to engage [redacted] with teacher the teacher puppet. He seemed a little shy so I wanted it at him + played hole + took. I made sure he knew it wouldn't touch him. He smiled + interacted + better. He has limited verbal skills at this point.
3:20	[redacted] worked with her dad on Peter Rabbit. [redacted] + [redacted] on the butterfly + [redacted] + [redacted] or Amelia Bedelia.	[redacted] provided very interested to have at least 1 character similar to a puppet - Froggy Franklin, Amelia Bedelia, etc. [redacted] chose the prince puppet for [redacted] to get away.	

(17)

Appendix H

Lyrics to Hello Song used in preschool book club as they were distributed to parents and children.

Hello Song

“Hello, Hello
 Let’s sing together
 Hello, Hello
 Let’s sing hello
 Hello, Hello
 Let’s sing together
 Sing together
 Let’s sing Hello”

“ _____(motion)_____ to _____(name)_____
 _____(motion)_____ together
 _____(motion)_____ to _____(name)_____
 _____(motion)_____ hello
 _____(motion)_____ to _____(name)_____
 _____(motion)_____ together
 _____(motion)_____ together
 Let’s _____(motion)_____ hello”