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Reported Literacy Engagement among Low-Income Parents and their Children.

Olugemi Ojo
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Olufemi Ojo

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Review Committee
Dr. Patricia Anderson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Rebecca Curtis, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Alice Eichholz, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2020

Abstract

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by

Olufemi Ojo

MA, Walden University, 2012

BS, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Little is known about literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children, although it may affect children's language development and later school achievement. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine shared reading interactions among low-income parents and their children. The research questions addressed the lexical diversity of books read and the shared book reading experience of preschool children as reported by their low-income parents. The conceptual framework was based on the work of Hart and Risley, who proposed that the extent and value of literacy environment and collaboration during shared book reading are linked to the socioeconomic background of the parents. Ten parents who are clients of a subsidized childcare program formed the sample and generated data collected from reading logs and interviews. The text of a selection of books logged by parents was assessed for lexical diversity and transcripts of interviews were analyzed using open coding. The results of this study indicated that the participants recognized reading as a family activity and engaged their children in conversation about stories they read and new words encountered in the texts as regular aspects of their children's reading experience. Low-income parents in this study described shared book reading as a positive experience they and their children enjoyed. Lexical diversity was apparent in the books parents recorded in a 2-week reading log. This study increased understanding of the value low-income parents place on shared literacy engagement with their preschool children, and the high quality of the shared reading experience reported by these parents. Positive social change may result when educators support low-income families in literacy engagement improving their children's language development and later school acheivement.

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate this study to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON and GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, in whom I live, move and have my being.

I also dedicate this work to my husband, Olumide Olusanya for his immeasurable support, steadfast love, patience, and prayers all through the rocky doctoral journey. To my wonderful brother Mr. Tayo for all your support, you are an inspiration to me on a daily basis. To my children Samuel and Noah and my adorable sisters Omolara and Oyebimpe, I love you so much. For keeping me on track through this journey, the ginger I needed to advance on the path of realization.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The home environment is the first place in which the child learns language and literacy. According to Montag, Jones, and Smith (2015), young children learn language when others speak to them. Mascarenhas et al. (2017) defined the home literacy setting by the frequency of parent-preschooler shared reading, the length of time spent in shared picture book reading, the number of picture books in the home, the frequency parents and preschoolers engage in joint attention during picture book reading, and other variables, such as family literacy. During shared reading, parents introduce children to important literacy and thinking skills, including making meaning from written material, understanding abstract concepts, and connecting story elements in a logical way (Hindman, Skibble, & Foster, 2014).

When parents read picture books to children, they solve problems presented by the story, exchange ideas, and ask and answer questions, which are all skills needed to be successful in school generally and to achieve specifically in literacy-based academic tasks (van den Heuvel-Panhuizen, Elia, & Robitzsch, 2016). In addition, Malin, Cabrera, and Rowe (2014) stated that shared book reading provides children the chance to learn new words and reinforce existing ones. Therefore, the literacy environment parents create at home and shared book reading are key factors in children's language and literacy acquisition (Mascarenhas et al., 2017). An effective home-literacy environment encourages children's engagement with expressive and receptive language and with written texts through shared storybook reading (Myrtil, Justice, & Jiang, 2018). In this study, I examined shared reading in terms of parent-child interactions, access to quality

books, including the number of books they have at home and how often they use the library, the frequency of shared reading engagement at home, and lexical diversity of books read, as evidenced in a home reading log and parent interviews. Implications of this study for positive social change include increased understanding of literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. In Chapter 1, I include an introduction to the study and brief explanation of the study assumptions, background, conceptual framework, definitions, delimitations, limitations, nature of the study statement of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, scope, and information about the next chapter.

Background

Children who are exposed to shared reading in their early years tend to display more advanced language and literacy abilities than their age mates who only are read to at an older age (Gottfried, Schlackman, Eskeles, & Boutin-Martinez, 2015). Also, shared reading in children's early years encourages the development of literacy, which contributes to academic success (Hamilton, Hayiou-Thomas, Hulme, & Snowling, 2016). The quality of a home literacy environment is built on how many children's books are in the home, how often parents and children engage in shared reading (e.g. days per week, minutes per day), and the type of books read (Hutton, Huang, Phelan, DeWitt, & Ittenbach, 2018). Reading to children at home from an early age has been shown to enhance children's emergent literacy skills (Sim, Berthelsen, Walker Nicholson, & Field-Barnsley, 2013). According to Montag et al. (2015), shared storybook reading provides a unique context for language learning, and offers exposure to novel concepts and

vocabulary items rarely encountered in everyday conversation. In addition, the lexical diversity of books read to children is an important mechanism by which children develop receptive and expressive language, since literature tends to employ a greater variety of words than does everyday conversation (Gilkerson, Richards, & Topping, 2017; Weisleder & Fernald, 2014).

Lexical diversity refers to the number and uniqueness of vocabulary used in a specific text (Vera, Sotomayor, Belwell, Dominguez, & Jeldrez, 2016). According to Sloat, Letourneau, Joschko, Schryer, and Colpitts (2015), children need early exposure and frequent involvement in literacy activities, such as shared book reading, for language growth and emergent literacy. Thus, parents, caregivers, and family members determine the context for later literacy. In this study, I focused on the shared reading experience in the home of preschool age children from less privileged families. This study addresses a gap in the literature suggested by Wessling, Christmann, and Lachman (2017), who identified a need for more studies on the level of shared reading in low-income homes. Based on an analysis of research reports included in Google Scholar since 2015, 60 studies used WIC participants in relation to nutrition, breastfeeding, physical health, and immigrant status, but no study reported on shared reading among families that receive services from the WIC program. This study is important because it will help educators and policymakers understand shared reading engagement among families receiving services from WIC program. It will also add to existing knowledge in the field of early childhood on shared reading and enhance language development through early exposure to reading in low-income families.

Problem Statement

The problem, that was the focus of this study, is lack of knowledge regarding the lexical diversity and shared reading literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. This problem is of importance for children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds who have substantially smaller vocabularies than their more advantaged peers, thus compromising the development of comprehension skills and phonological awareness (Heath et al., 2014). Therefore, the literacy practices, such as shared reading and dialog during shared reading, that parents and children engage at home, may be even more significant for low-income preschool children than for preschool children from more advantaged families (Vernon-Feagans, Bratsch-Hines, & The Family Life Project Key Investigators, 2013). Despite the importance of shared reading, little is known about shared reading between low-income parents and their preschool children, particularly lexical diversity of books read and shared reading literacy engagement. According to Montag et al. (2015), a review of 100 picture books chosen from library lists and popularity on Amazon.com showed strong lexical diversity but did not identify what books were read by low-income parents to their children at home. This study addressed the reported literacy engagement among low-income families and their preschool children.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. In this study, I examined the reported shared reading experience among low-income parents and

their preschool children using the interpretative qualitative design. The interpretative qualitative approach is a research paradigm that provides a lens by which to understand shared reading in disadvantaged families, through interviews and reading logs kept by the participants. I intended to fulfill the study's purpose by first examining the lexical diversity of books parents report reading at home, how parents selected these books, how frequently they read with their preschool children, and the level of conversation that occurred during shared reading. I analyzed the books parents read, as determined from reading logs, and assessed those books' lexical diversity. I also determined how regularly parents and children engaged in shared reading. In interviews with the parents, I learned the context surrounding shared reading at home, how books were selected for reading, and the level of conversation parents engaged with their children during shared reading. In this way, I learned about the books read by parents at home with preschool children, especially about their lexical diversity and factors that contribute to book selection. Second, I learned about the context surrounding shared reading and the level of conversational engagement with children reported by parents. In this way, I hoped to increase understanding of literacy engagement between parents and their preschool children.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do low-income parents describe their shared book reading with their preschool children?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How is lexical diversity apparent in the books low-income parents record on a 2-week reading log as the content of shared reading with their preschool child?

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in the work of Hart and Risley (1995; 2003). Hart and Risley examined word frequency and what was being said within conversations with children. Hart and Risley found that the size of children's vocabulary can be increased by using novel words in parent-child conversations. This is due in part because development of receptive vocabulary is dependent upon rich use of language in the child's social interactions (Cabell, Justice, McGinty, Decoster, & Forston, 2015). In addition, levels of receptive vocabulary can be increased through shared reading (Malin et al., 2014) because book reading tends to employ a greater variety of words than everyday conversation (Weisleder & Fernald, 2014).

Hart and Risley (1995) discovered a significant difference in language experience in children raised in low-income households compared to children raised in financially advantaged households; they theorized that shared book reading and conversation may contribute to disadvantaged children's experience with rich language. The work of Hart and Risley, regarding vocabulary development through parent-child interactions, particularly in under-privileged families, supported the purpose of this study. This study examined the importance of shared book reading as a means for developing children's oral language and vocabulary abilities in low-income families. Hart and Risley supported home intervention approaches, such as shared reading, that would provide a quality early

experience for children from high-poverty settings. Pollard-Durodola, Gonzalez, Simmons, and Simmons (2015) agreed that shared reading supports children's development by addressing their spoken language and abstract knowledge needs.

The Nature of the Study

The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, in that the researcher builds concepts, hypotheses, and theories from data that are contextualized and emerge from engagement with research participants (Maxwell, 2013). In this qualitative study, I followed an interpretative qualitative design to explore the phenomenon of shared reading experienced among low-income parents and their preschool children. According to van Manen (2011), an interpretive design helps the researcher acquire a deep understanding of an experience. Other types of qualitative design, that use only interviews or document analysis, would not have contributed fully to understanding the quality of shared book reading as experienced by low-income parents and children.

Participants were chosen through purposive sampling from a subsidized childcare program serving low-income families in a city in the southeastern United States. Data were collected through reading logs kept by each of 10 participants over a 2-week period and interviews conducted with five of the same parents. I reviewed a random selection of books entered on participant reading logs, and the full text of the books transcribed into digital files. These digital files were subjected to an assessment of lexical diversity using Text Inspector® (https://textinspector.com). In addition, I analyzed parents' reports of when books were read to determine frequency of book reading and other shared reading patterns. Interview data were analyzed using open coding to determine patterns in books

selection for shared reading and the sorts of conversations parents engaged in with their children as part of the shared reading experience. Saldana (2016) characterized open coding as an interpretive act that summarizes or condenses data into small phrases. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews help to reconstruct events a researcher has never experienced. The interview portion of this study followed a responsive interviewing technique, which emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and respect for the interviewee, and supports participants' cooperation (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Definitions

Home literacy environment (HLE) is defined as the sum of exchanges among children, parents, and books that occur at home (Hamilton et al., 2016). HLE can be viewed as a three-way communication between children, parents, and book that take place in the home.

Lexical diversity is a measure of how many different words are used in a text (Johannson,1999). Past studies have linked lexical diversity and language settings with better language results.

Low-income individual can be defined as an individual whose family's assessable income for the previous year did not surpass 150% of the poverty level amount (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Shared reading is an activity in which adults read texts such as storybooks to children and repeatedly involve them in conversation about the book (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that parents who participated were truthful and accurate in their responses to the interview questions and their reading logs. This assumption was necessary because an interview-based study relies on the veracity of participants as the sole source of data. In addition, I assumed that parents who participated in this study could read, and that texts they read at home to their children were in English. This latter assumption was a reasonable one, given that parents responded to my flier, but parents' reading ability was something I could not know in advance and assumed was adequate for this study. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), assumptions are very simple but without them, there cannot be a research problem.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative study encompassed a determination of literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. The problem, that was the focus of this study, was chosen because I identified a lack of knowledge and research regarding the quality of literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. This study was delimited to parents of 10 children from low-income families, ages 3 to 5, who were clients of a subsidized childcare program available to low income families in a city in the southeastern United States. Parents of children from upper- and middle-class families were excluded, as were parents of children younger or older than the target age range and parents who resided elsewhere than the target city. Data were generated through individual interviews and reading logs

kept by parents for a period of 2 weeks. I provide in this report enough information about the study and the results to support transferability.

Limitations

According to Merriam (2009), issues that are outside the control of the researcher and may affect the study or the explanation of the results are limitations of a study. One limitation of this study was its small sample size. Because of constraints on population size inherent in the method of participant interviews, a small sample size was necessary. Creswell (2007) suggested that five to 25 participants are typical of a qualitative study based on interviews. In addition, I conducted interviews with participants in a single city in a single region of the United States, which created another limitation. Both small sample size and single location may limit the transferability of results to other settings and populations. As a former Head Start teacher, I had some experience with the literacy engagement among low income families and their children, which may have led to bias on my part. Therefore, I did not include, as participants, any parents with whom I had a prior personal or professional relationship, to avoid possible conflicts of interest or any biases. Also, I kept a journal to record my reflections. Despite these limitations, the results of this study may provide insight into low income parents' perspectives on literacy support at home, as indicated by shared reading practices with preschool children.

Significance

Both Wessling et al. (2017) and Mei-Ju and Jui-Ching (2015) suggested that more studies are needed on parents' investment in parent-child shared book reading, since shared reading increases children's vocabulary and emergent literacy skills. This research

fills a gap in the literature by exploring the books read by low income parents to their preschool children, including the lexical diversity of those books, and shared-reading practices of these parents, including frequency of reading. In this study, I identified key issues in home reading practices surrounding book selection, lexical diversity, reading frequency, and book-oriented conversation, that affect children's experience with rich vocabulary and their literacy development. Implications of this dissertation for positive social change include new insights for educators and policymakers on how parent-child shared book reading might be encouraged. This research adds to existing knowledge in the field of early childhood on shared reading between parents and children and may encourage shared book reading in low income families.

Summary

This section has provided a review of shared reading in low-income families, as it relates to the quality of literacy engagement and language development, and then outlined how this study was conducted. It included the assumptions, background of the study, conceptual framework, definitions of terms, introduction of the study, limitations, nature of the study, purpose statement, research questions, scope and delimitations, significance of the study, and the statement problem. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature review for this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that was the focus of this study was lack of knowledge regarding the lexical diversity and shared reading literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. Early start and constant participation in repetitive literacy activities, such as shared book reading and storytelling, lays a foundation for early learning and language growth in children's lives. The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low income parents and their preschool children, and to address the study problem of lack of knowledge regarding literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. Current literature suggests that quality literacy engagement between parents and preschool children supports vocabulary development and concept formation, especially in low-income families. In this chapter, I will discuss the literature review supporting the study, including the literature search strategy, conceptual framework, and my review of the key components: home literacy environment, low-income families home literacy environment, language development through shared reading, and shared reading and lexical diversity. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

I used Walden Library to search databases such as ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Sage, ScienceDirect, Thoreau, Wiley Online Library, Taylor and Francis Online, and ERIC; I also used Google Scholar and Google. The search terms included *early language problems*, *early literacy*, *home literacy environment*, *language development at home*, *language development through shared reading*, *lexical diversity*, *literacy among low-*

income families, *low-income shared reading*, *parent-child interactions*, *poor vocabulary*, *word-gap*, *rich vocabulary in children*, *shared reading*, and *word gap*. I focused on studies conducted in the United States and published in scholarly journals within the from 2015-2019. Broad search terms, such as *language development at home*, led me to more specific concepts, including *early catastrophe* and *lexical diversity.* Through an iterative process, in which search terms led to articles that suggested additional terms and additional articles, I canvassed the scholarly literature of articles published between January 2015 and September 2019, and achieved saturation in that ideas repeated themselves and no new ideas emerged by the end of my search.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework was the work of Hart and Risley (1995), who described a close relationship between variances in family environment and children's language development. Hart and Risley found that children who did not have rich verbal engagement early in life are likely to be late in cognitive and language skill development in kindergarten and elementary school. Hart and Risley believed that the quantity of speech exposure represents an accurate portrayal of the quality of children's early language experience, so that frequent, rich conversation is indicative of quality provided by parents to support children's language development. Both the quality and the quantity of early language interactions contribute significantly to children's later progress in school (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Young children learn how to put words into simple sentences, and they demonstrate an ability to follow some grammatical rules of the home language (Hart &

Risley, 1999). This process of vocabulary and grammar development occurs in back-and-forth discussions between the child and parents and discussions that contain several turns, with each turn building on what was said in the prior turn (Hart & Risley, 1999). However, Hart and Risley (1995) found an enormous difference among parent-child pairs in the quantity and value of early language experience, and that the quantity and quality of language interaction between parents and children remained stable over time. These habitual patterns of rich or poor linguistic communication between parents and their young children resulted in what Hart and Risley (1995) projected as a discrepancy of 30 million words heard by age 4 between children raised in the most language-rich home environments and children raised in homes that were less language-rich.

In addition, Hart and Risley (1995) found that by age 3, the oral vocabularies of children growing up in poor families were much smaller than vocabularies of children from more advantaged homes. They found that 3-year-old children whose families received government assistance had an average vocabulary of 525 words, compared to 749 words in vocabularies of 3-year-olds in white collar families, and 1116 words for children of professional families (Hart & Risley, 2003). By age 3, the average vocabularies of children in professional families were reported to be more than twice that of children in welfare families. Furthermore, Hart and Risley (1995) found that children from lower-income families with smaller vocabularies at age 3 had significantly lower academic achievement in the elementary grades than their more advantaged peers. However, the association of family income and early language quality is not a straight line. Hart and Risley (1995) found that although, in general, affluent and educated

families talked more with their children than did those from lower socioeconomic levels, some middle-class families talked with their children as much as professionals did, and parents in some wealthy families talked less with their children than those living in poverty.

Hart and Risley (2003) reported that 86% to 98% of the words used by the average 3-year-old child were words in their parents' vocabularies, meaning that very young children learn few words from other sources, such as preschool teachers or media. Language learning happens in the setting of social interactions (Roseberry, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2014). Therefore, children benefit from rich parental vocabularies for their own language development (Vallotton, Mastergeorge, Foster, Decker, & Ayoub, 2017). Moreover, Roseberry et al. (2014) found that children acquired new words during social opportunities based on their own responses through back and forth dialog. As Hart and Risley (1995) found, some parents use more and richer vocabularies and interact with their children more than do others, and these differences in the level of language exposure can lead to future discrepancies among children in vocabulary and linguistic development, irrespective of socioeconomic status. The learning environment and experiences parents provide for their children serve as a launching point for the literacy learning initiated during the early childhood years that persists throughout a child's lifetime (Jalongo, 2014).

Literature Review of Key Components

Literacy skills are nurtured through early parent-child connections, so that individual differences emerge in children's early literacy and social skill capabilities

when children start school, as identified by Hart and Risley (1995). Therefore, understanding the quality of literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children formed the purpose of this study. I will describe in this review home literacy environment, low income families home literacy environment, language development through shared reading, and shared reading and lexical diversity.

Home Literacy Environment

Linguistic and social experiences in early childhood are critical in fostering children's foundational brain development, cognitive functioning, language acquisition, and later academic skills (Romeo et al., 2018). As parent and child interact with each other through reading, they add to the progress of children's cognitive abilities (Ensor, Devine, Marks, & Hughes, 2014). The amount and frequency of language interactions with parents are critical to the development of language skills (Gilkerson et al., 2017). Also, Myrtil et al. (2019) suggested that the language ability of children is closely connected to the richness of the home literacy environment (HLE). Hamilton et al. (2016) defined the HLE as the sum of exchanges among children, parents, and books that occur at home. In addition, the HLE includes those literacy-related interactions, resources, and attitudes that children experience at home (Hamilton et al., 2016).

The HLE is a major factor of preschoolers' language and literacy development (Puglisi, Hulme, Hamilton, & Snowling, 2017). This is because, during early childhood years, children look to parents or caregivers as demonstrators of the value of reading, and as persons who shape children's attitude toward reading (Yeo, Ong, & Ng, 2014). Also, research shows that HLE is the framework in which children first attain the language and

reading abilities that prepare them to make sense of, define, and take part in the world (Liebeskind, Piotrowski, Lapierre, & Linebarger, 2014). According to Lewis, Sandilos, Hammer, Sawyer, and Mendez (2017), book reading at home supports language development and verbal understanding in young children. Furthermore, Adamson, Kaiser, Tamis-LaMonda, Owen, and Dimitrova (2019) suggested that a child's HLE is crucial in the development of rich vocabulary, through new words introduced during shared reading and singing.

Boerma, Mol, and Jolles (2017) stated that children with a rich HLE generally show better reading comprehension than other children. A quality HLE can promote language acquisition in children and this is done by increasing a child's contact with early years language opportunity that is rich in both amount and richness through talking, interacting, and reading with parent (Zauche, Thul, Mahoney, & Stapel-Wax, 2015). Additionally, language experience is significant in helping and sustaining a child's brain development through child-parent interactions such as listening to stories read from books and seeing pictures with words (Weldon, 2014). Therefore, the HLE during the early years of life, does not dependent on SES, but is vital to language acquisition because enhancing children's HLE provides an opportunity for early intervention if discovered (Brito, 2017). Informal literacy practices such as shared book-reading in the home is more connected with the development of comprehensive oral language skills, like vocabulary knowledge, and with reading comprehension later in life (Hamilton, Hayiou-Thomas, Hulme, & Snowling, (2016) .Adults can model reading through parent-child shared book reading (Han & Neuharth-Prittett, 2014). Adult-child shared book

interaction establishes backgrounds for children to improve their language, particularly words not experienced in normal everyday life, and to gain new language, more compound syntactic building of language, and emergent literacy skills development (Sim et al., 2014).

Children's literacy development can be improved by extending and improving reading ability practices at home (Niklas & Schneider, 2015). The HLE is defined by such elements as the reading behavior of parents, parents' beliefs about reading, the frequency a child is read to, the number of books in the home, and the number of children's books in the home (Niklas & Schneider, 2015). For illustration, Yeo et al. (2014) found that parents' beliefs about reading have a significant effect on children's ability to learn and to read. Family beliefs about literacy, family literacy practices, and family involvement in children's learning are important processes for literacy development (Salinas, Pérez-Granados, Feldman, & Huffman, 2017). Moreover, parents who value the importance of literacy development and perceive that they have a key role to play in supporting their children's literacy development are more motivated to make an inviting home setting where children are continuously participating in literacy-related activities (Yeo et al., 2014).

Literacy resources at home, like the number of children's books at home, have been discovered to play a major role in children's home literacy development (van Bergen et al., 2017). Neuman and Moland (2016) found that the availability of children books in the home predicts reading achievement, with the average reading success varying between students from advantaged homes with more than 100 children's books

and those from disadvantaged homes with 10 or fewer children's books. According to Neuman and Moland (2016), the presence of books creates a literacy culture in households where books are many, valued, read, and relished, and this may have positive influence on children later in life. Moreover, the accessibility of more than a few books at home offers numerous opportunities for either father or mother to participate in literacy activities with their child, such as shared reading (Wagner-Tichnor, Garwood, Bartsch-Hines, & Vernon-Feagans, 2015). However, access to books and time to read them with children may be affected by family factors, especially in low-income households.

HLE in Low-Income Families

Approximately 15.5 million children in the United States (21%) live in disadvantaged homes (Brito, 2017). The poverty level among Black, Hispanic, and Native American children is twice that of their age mates from White or Asian families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). According to Romeo et al. (2018), language exposure among all children differs significantly as a result of family SES. Low SES is linked with brain deficits in very young children, including shortage of gray matter in the left perisylvian regions, which are associated with comprehension of language components of phonology, semantics, and syntax, and to the ability to produce language appropriately (Noble et al., 2015). Thus, the substantial variation in linguistic development associated with SES is due to differences in the level of language opportunity in individual families (Romeo et al, 2018), and can lead to neurological differences among children of different household incomes.

The quality of HLE is a key factor in improving the language and early literacy skills of young children from low-income homes (Sawyer, Cycyk, Sandilos, & Hammer, 2016). Most low-income families are naturally used to their day-to-day poor lifestyle and this make it difficult to provide quality HLE (van Kleeck, 2015). Moreover, low-income families have little understanding on improving their children's language development; understanding in terms of the length of literacy activities and the regularity of joint reading interactions (Sawyer et al., 2016).

Therefore, the language groundwork laid in the early years of life has a measurable effect on children's future success, but the foundation may not be the same for all children (Snell, Hindman, & Wasik, 2015). Brito (2017) reported that children from poor homes live in settings that often do not promote language development, pre-literacy, school readiness, and grade-level academic success. In addition, low-SES families may lack access to quality health care, safe housing, and nutritious food, shortage of all which may affect brain development and cognitive skills, including language development (Troyer & Borovsky, 2017).

Also, lack of money may affect language development because it may reduce availability of materials for promoting language in the home, such as books and toys, access to quality child care, and access to enrichment resources, like the zoo or the park (Pace, Luo, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2016). Therefore, SES has a strong association with language development (Brito, 2017). Ngwaru (2014) found that disadvantaged parents often do not value educational opportunities for their children, due to their economic situation and lack of access. Meanwhile, the opposite happens in the homes of

children from advantaged backgrounds, in which disposable income can buy books, educational toys and experiences, and even transportation to free resources like libraries and city parks, and in which parents may have time and energy to devote to their children (Lareau & Goyette, 2014).

The effect of family SES can be seen in the literacy activities engaged with preschool children by family members (Chansa-Kabal, 2017). For example, Fernald, Marchman, and Weisleder (2013) disclosed that by 24 months of age, English-learning children from poor-SES Caucasian families were already 6 months behind their privileged peers in language knowledge. Parental participation with the child regularly is a better determinant of child's developing language skill than the family SES (Weisleder et al., 2015). Since the HLE tends to take an important role in children's early linguistic development (Niklas, Cohrssen, & Tayler, 2016), it is important that assessment of a child's HLE includes how adults promote children' language development. Children whose parents involve them in language and pre-literacy early in their lives display more advanced language and reading abilities than children who are read to at big age. (Gottfried et al., 2015).

Children from disadvantaged homes have limited exposure to books and other reading materials when compared with their more economically stable age-mates (Neuman & Moland, 2016). Privileged children often have access to resources such as books, well-educated parents, and low levels of stress, while children from poor homes have less access to resources and experience greater levels of stress (Votruba-Drzal, Miller, & Coley, 2016). For example, Lareau and Goyette (2014) found that enough

books are available for purchase in privileged neighborhoods at least 13 books for every child in the neighborhood; however, in less affluent neighborhoods, books available for purchase can be one book per child. Troyer and Borovsky (2017) found that children from lower-SES families are exposed to a smaller number of words and lesser language input from both verbal and written language when compared with children from affluent backgrounds. Schwab and Lew-Williams (2016) found that children from lower-SES families are slower in language growth when compared to their age mates from privileged families, and these variations continue into the school years. Additionally, there is limited published data about frequency of read aloud opportunities in low-income families (Wieschолek, Hilkenmeire, & Greiner, & Buhl, 2017). In summary, home-based language interactions promote language development, and one of such interactions is shared reading (Milburn, Girolametto, Weitzman, & Greenberg, 2014).

Language Development Through Shared Reading

Most parents begin reading to their children right after birth (Montag et al., 2015). This early exposure of children to print materials at home is dependent upon children's access to books, which Myrtil et al. (2019) defined as the number of books available for children within the household and the age at which children are first read to by their caregivers. Access to books is essential to children's language growth and literacy skills (Myrtil et al., 2019). For example, Delgado and Stoll (2015) found that Hispanic children who had experience with reading a greater number of books at home scored higher in literacy than those who did not. Because exposure to books plays a significant role in language growth, families are often advised to read to their children in the early years

(Niklas, Cohrssen, & Tayler, 2017). Shared book reading can be defined as process of reading aloud while involving children in the dialog (Milburn et al., 2014). Malin et al. (2014) found that reading aloud at home gives children the opportunity to gain new vocabulary and develop understanding of words already in their current vocabulary.

Children acquire new words from shared book reading activities, particularly during collaborative shared picture reading (Gilkerson et al., 2017). Also, when same story is read frequently, this can provide children with multiple exposures to new words, so those words become familiar and part of their vocabulary (Flack, Horst, & Field, 2018). Duursma (2014) noted that parent-child shared book reading is a simple and informal way of improving children's language exposure and gets them ready for school. According to Xie, Chan, Ji, and Chan (2018), family shared book reading in the early years is a determining factor of children' brain development and future academic accomplishment. According to The Children's Reading Foundation (2012), when parents engage with their children in a minimum 20 minutes of shared book reading, five times a week, these children are more likely to be successful and financially independent when they are adults. Children gain content-specific words during shared book reading, which increases concept knowledge (Neuman, Kaefer, & Pinkham, 2018). Based on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2013), 26% of children who participate in shared book reading more than three times a week at home recognize all letters of the alphabet. In addition, these children also count to 20.

Puglisi et al. (2017) found evidence that children acquire and develop rich vocabulary during incidental conversations, such as what occurs during shared reading at

home. Duursma (2014) stated that although shared reading is vital, the discussion that occurs between adult and child during shared reading is also very significant. A parent and child picture book reading include focusing, joint participation and verbal classification. Thus, word learning in early years begins as a result of strongly joined social interactions between a child and an adult (Yu, Suanda, & Smith, 2018). Shared reading engagement at home creates joint attention between the parent and the child. Joint attention promotes interest in literacy activities (Lukie, Skwarchuk, LeFevre, & Sowinski, 2014).

While participating in shared reading, children gain relevant learning skills such as how to briefly explain the story, discuss mental ideas, and connect different elements of the story rationally (Hindman et al., 2014). Also, reading picture books to children gives them the chance to involve in problem-solving tasks like predicting what will happen next, share opinions about the characters' actions, formulate questions, and think about different answers (van den Heuvel-Panhuizen et al., 2016). Shared reading also promotes scientific comprehension and math skills, because many children's books include mathematics concepts like counting, comparison, and application of logic (Davidse, De Jong, & Bus, 2014).

According to Gilkerson et al. (2017), adults' reading to and with their children promotes language interaction, which can lead to better child language ability. The value of shared reading interaction is linked with children' expressive and receptive language attainment (Bojczyka, Davis, & Rana, 2016). When parents read to children and discuss the story, they develop language and thinking skills and skill in paying attention

(Golinkoff, Hoff, Rowe, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2018). They also develop skill in listening and in early print concepts (Mendelsohn et al., 2018). In sum, shared reading creates a positive parent-child relationship with books and stories and encourages a love for language and reading (Duursma (2014). Massaro (2017) found that getting children involved during shared reading is vital because the words in picture books tend to be less familiar and more evocative than those learned in child-directed speech.

The process of shared book reading involves an adult using oral and non-oral prompts and asking questions about the text that, in turn, cause the children to repeat interesting words and phrases, ask questions, and respond to adult questions (Han & Neutharth-Pritchett, 2014). As adults read books with children, they simplify, explain, predict, and inquire about the book; this helps children to participate in the reading experience and become connected with the story (Aram, Fine, & Ziv, 2013). According to Montag et al. (2015) one benefit of children's literacy development offered by shared reading is the lexical diversity of the text that parents read to children at home. In other word, books with pictures are a rich source of new words (Strouse, Nyhout, & Ganea, 2018).

Shared Reading and Lexical Diversity

Language levels have been recognized to be reliable indicators of total language ability in children (O'Toole et al, 2017). According to Weisleder and Fernald (2014), conversation, such as that directed to the child through adult-child interactions and through adult-child shared reading, is the main mechanism on which early language acquisition relies. Early development of language skill allows a child to connect with

others and to understand concepts, so that enhancements in expressive and receptive vocabulary are key to children's school success (Zauche et al., 2016). However, vocabulary development is dependent on social communication, and for low SES children, conversation may not be enough, since parents' time spent in discussion with their children may not be enough (Hart & Risley, 1995).

Shared reading of children's picture books may provide a rich vocabulary supplement, since literature is more lexically diverse than everyday speech (Montag et al., 2015). According to Johansson (1999), lexical diversity refers to the sum of unique words in a text passage, and that lexical diversity is significantly greater in written discourse than in spoken discourse. Early exposure to picture books may have more positive impact on children than ordinary conversation at home because literature presents unique grammatical constructions uncommon in everyday speech (Cameron-Faulkner & Noble, 2013), and employs vocabulary not heard in everyday language (Nyhout & O'Neill, 2014). Mesmer (2016) found that words in picture books constitute a catalyst for language learning. The lexical diversity of text in picture books can serve as a vital foundation of vocabulary building in early years (Montag et al., 2015).

Montag et al. (2015) found that picture books provide superior lexical diversity compared to parent-children discussions that occur outside of shared reading. Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti, and Kaderavek (2013) discovered that the rate of picture book reading could positively and significantly affect young children's receptive vocabulary development, as a result of exposure to the literary language and through parent-child dialogue around the text. In addition, the diversity of words that children

encounter in shared reading grows with their age (Barbosa, Nicoladis, & Keith, 2016). Treviño, Varela, Romo, and Nunez (2015) found that lexical diversity in books determines children's emergent literacy, word acknowledgement abilities, receptive vocabulary, and emergent writing skills. According to Montag and MacDonald (2015), the richness of lexical diversity in books exposes young children to grammatical constructions that occur rarely in everyday interactions because literacy language such as that used in picture books differs qualitatively to spoken language. As Weisleder and Fernald (2014) noted, the lexical diversity offered in children's picture books is connected to rapid vocabulary growth and predicts future language gains.

According to Montag and MacDonald (2015), the lexical diversity offered through shared reading provides a needed supplement to regular adult talk especially in the less-privileged families. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds may benefit more from picture books than children from privileged backgrounds since the words in picture books are greater and more diverse than that found in child-engaged speech (Massaro, 2017). In this way, children from low-income families are introduced to new words in context of joint attention with a significant adult, and so they add these words and the meanings to their vocabularies (Snell et al., 2015). According to Strouse et al. (2018), shared book reading offers an exceptional opportunity for children to cope with cognitively demanding and complex ideas and prepare children for the sorts of academic demands in elementary school that are particularly challenging for children from disadvantaged homes. Strouse et al. (2018) found that during shared reading children learn to generalize the information they receive and then apply it to everyday

experiences. According to Neuman, Kaefer, and Pinkham (2016), children need lexical knowledge to learn how to read. The increased diversity of words relative to everyday speech is the advantage picture books contribute to a child's HLE (Weisleder & Fernald, 2014).

Summary

The quality of language acquisition in children varies in families due to the SES, with children from privileged families performing better in language activities than children of disadvantaged parents (Brito, 2017). These variances in the home literacy atmosphere may be ameliorated by the availability of literacy materials and by parent-child shared reading. However, children in low SES households may have less access to books, less exposure to rich language, and less experience with shared reading than more privileged children. In this study, I examined the reported literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children in one community in the northeastern United States. In Chapter 3, I will describe the study methodology, setting, participants, data collection, and analysis I used to increase understanding of shared reading in low-income families.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low income parents and their preschool children. I chose a basic interpretative qualitative approach for this study because it provided a lens through which to understand shared reading in disadvantaged families, through interviews and reading logs kept by the participants. I fulfilled the study's purpose by first examining the lexical diversity of books parents report reading at home, how parents selected these books, how frequently they read with their preschool children, and the level of conversation that occurred during shared reading. Participants chosen through purposive sampling of a families enrolled in subsidized childcare program shared their experiences in individual interviews and kept a log of books read with their preschool child. This chapter includes the research question, and the rationale for conducting qualitative study, role of researcher, methodology, ethical procedures, and data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

This study addressed these questions**:**

RQ 1: How do low-income parents describe their shared book reading with their preschool children?

RQ 2: How is lexical diversity apparent in the books low-income parents record on a two-week reading log as the content of shared reading with their preschool child? To respond to these questions, I followed a basic interpretative qualitative approach.

According to Myers (2009), an interpretative design is appropriate in a study in which the purpose is to provide an in-depth understanding of the topic of interest, which

in the current study is shared reading engagement, as participants describe their thoughts and experiences. I sought to understand shared reading engagement among low-income parents and their children by gathering information through interviews and reading logs, then interpret these data to make meaning and draw conclusions. The research questions guided me in understanding literacy engagement in low-income families, through examining the lexical diversity of books parents report reading at home, and by hearing what parents report prompts them in selecting these books, the frequency of shared book reading with their preschool children, and the level of discussion that occurs during shared reading. According to Lopez and Willis (2004), interpretive researchers generally try to discover knowledge that shows how particular experiences affect people in their normal settings. Exploring low income parents' experiences of shared reading with their child through an interpretive lens allowed me to comprehend the cultural embeddedness of home literacy experience and how this experience was developed and expressed by families that experienced it, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

Observation, an alternative qualitative method, might have interfered with the shared reading experiences and might not have provided a clear understanding of the phenomenon of shared reading as it happens in ordinary home situations. In addition, a quantitative design, such as a survey, might have permitted me to gather data from more parents than a qualitative design, but would not have captured the experiences of shared reading as well as an approach that drew on parents' own words. Other studies had used a survey approach, but no study had yet examined the phenomenon of shared reading in

low-income families in context (van Bergen, van Zuijen, Bishop, & de Jong, 2016; van Bysterveldt, Gillon, & Foster-Cohen, 2010).

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was as an observer because I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data, but did not provide data as the participants did. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the role of the researcher is a vital consideration in qualitative research. My professional role in the field of early childhood positioned me as an insider in this study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), because my experience with disadvantaged families began as a pre-K teacher in a Head Start program. This is where I developed firsthand knowledge about literacy challenges that young children from low SES backgrounds face. This teaching role was the start of my personal and professional pursuit to better understand parental participation in the growth of language skills in the early years. As an insider in this field, I had knowledge of the phenomenon, which may have led to bias on my part.

Creswell (2012) indicated that ethical issues in qualitative research can happen before conducting the study, at the beginning, during data collection, in data analysis, and in publishing a study. According to Smith and Noble (2017), reducing bias is a key thought when designing and undertaking a research. I excluded, as participants, any parents with whom I had a prior personal or professional relationship to avoid possible conflicts of interest or pre-existing bias. I did not have any role in the program from which participants were drawn, and no supervisory or power differential with any parents who participated, or with the program itself. I kept a journal to record my reflections. I

maintained a continuous process of reflection after each interview by keeping of memos of my thought process. I was sensitive to my own emotions as well as those of the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Methodology

In the paragraphs that follow, I discuss my logic for participant selection and instrumentation. I also detail the sampling procedures, data collection, and data analysis methods. In addition, issues of trustworthiness and ethical concerns will be discussed.

Participant Selection Logic

The population that was the focus of this study was low-income parents of preschool children. Ten low income parents were invited from families enrolled in a subsidized childcare program serving one city in the southeastern United States. These participants were selected through convenience sampling. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), convenience sampling is a nonrandom sampling method in which study participants meet certain practical measures dictated by the purpose of the study, such as availability, geographical location, and the willingness to volunteer. Convenience sampling takes minimal time, can be easy to implement, and can identify a target population that is readily available (Etikan et al., 2016). In this study the convenience sample was delimited by income and ages of children and included participants from low income childcare programs that were subsidized by the federal government. Convenience sampling was effective for this study because of the small number of people needed to create thick, rich data sufficient to fulfill the study's purpose. Convenience sampling was

used to collect information from participants because they were a homogenous population which enhanced the validity of findings obtained from the conclusion.

The criteria for the selection of 10 participants included parents of low-income who have children 3 through 5 years old and who could speak and read in English. The income criterion was embedded in the study purpose because family income has been found to be a factor in children's language and literacy development. The criterion of child age supported the activity of shared reading that was the focal activity of the study because at three years old, children can listen to a book read to them, while younger children may not, and age 5 is the upper limit of eligibility for low income programs. Finally, the criterion of parent literacy in English ensured that I as an English-speaking researcher was able to analyze the text of books parents read to children, and also ensured that sufficient quantity and variety of books were available to parents, through bookstores and public libraries, to enable shared reading. The criteria of low-income and child age are supported by eligibility for subsidized low-income programs because family income must meet the federal government low-income guidelines and the family must include children under the age of 5. The criterion of parent literacy in English was supported by the fact that the flier I posted to invite participants was written in English. As parents contacted me to volunteer to participate, I confirmed that at least one of their children was at least 3 years old, fulfilling the final criterion.

Creswell (2007) suggested that five to 25 participants are typical of a qualitative study based on interviews. Therefore, my target number of 10 participants provided me with sufficient interview data from which to draw conclusions about shared reading, but

not so many that the process would be overwhelmed by interview transcription and analysis, and a large number of reading logs to review. To identify participants, I visited a center offering a subsidized childcare program and requested from the director permission to invite parents to be part of my study. Upon receiving permission, I posted a flier at the program office to recruit volunteers. As interested persons volunteered to take part in the study, I provided them with an informed consent form to sign, and a reading log form (Appendix A), and set a day and time for the interview with each participant, following procedures described below.

I expected that saturation of data to be reached after obtaining evidence of the phenomenon of shared reading from 10 participants. Saturation was indicated when no new information was forthcoming, as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016). I found it unnecessary to include additional parents in the sample to reach saturation, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Charmaz (2006) suggested that a small study with "diffident claims" (p.114) may achieve saturation faster with a small number of participants than with a large population.

Instrumentation

A reading log was used to provide data on the extent and quality of shared reading experiences. The reading log (Appendix A) presented 14 numbered boxes, one for each day of the intended two-week log period. Each box prompted the parent to write in the name of the book that was read, the author's name, how much the parent and child talked about the book, how long they read together, and whether the parent enjoyed the reading session. Each box also presented the opportunity to indicate if on any given day no book

was read. The title of the book and the name of the author helped me located books chosen for linguistic analysis. The level of conversation and the length of time reading indicated if reading the book inspired parent-child conversations, as will the indication of enjoyment the parent felt in reading the book. I created the reading log to help in answering RQ 1 and to answer RQ 2.

For the interview portion of data collection, I created an interview protocol (Appendix B) that included five main questions with 10 possible follow-up questions. The first two main questions asked the parent to describe a recent shared reading event, and to describe books for children available in the home. These questions helped me answered RQ1. Interview questions three and four asked about how the parent handled words encountered in shared reading that are unfamiliar to the child, and what the parent noticed, if anything, during the reading log activity. These questions helped me answered RQ2. A final interview question solicited from the parent any unasked-for information that the parent might want to add. These questions were reviewed by a scholar who is an authority on children's literature and the process of reading aloud with children; she determined these interview questions were suitable to provide data in answer to the research questions.

I also was an instrument for data collection, because I designed the interview questions and I conducted the interviews and decided what data were relevant. I took steps to control the effect of my personal perspective, so that the outcome was as unbiased as possible. During the interviews, I did not express my personal feelings or opinions and was open to whatever parents shared with me. I kept a reflective journal

during the data collection process and continued that through my process of data analysis and interpretation, as a way of recording my thoughts. The keeping of a reflective journal was important, as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Following approval by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval #12-11-19-0263812), I visited a childcare center in the target city that offered a subsidized program serving low-income families and requested from the director permissions to invite the parents to be part of my study. Once I was granted permissions, I posted a flier where it could be seen by parents, and I also attended one of the classes at the childcare center to inform families about the study. I distributed the fliers to those who attended the class. The flier had my name and contact information so that I could be reached by interested participants. As each interested person contacted me with an offer to participate, the directors put informed consent forms and the reading log form (Appendix A) in the backpacks of the children whose parents showed interest. Parents returned signed consent forms to me before they began participating in the reading log portion of the study. I was also in touch with the childcare directors during the time parents were using the logs to encourage them to complete it and to resolve any questions. I also set-up a mutually convenient public place with each participant, at which to conduct the interview, and arranged an interview date about 3 weeks in the future, so participants were able to complete the reading log prior to the interview.

Two days before each interview, I reminded participants of the interview date, time, and location by sending them an SMS or text message. I also reminded participants

to bring their reading log with them to the interview. If a participant needed to reschedule the interview, I negotiated that with them via SMS or text. The interview occurred at a public community location, such as a public library conference room, as agreed by the participant. I began each interview by accepting the completed reading log. I wrote an identity code on the log (Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on), so I could later link it to the interview, as needed. If a participant said they completed the reading log but did not bring it with them, I gave them a stamped envelope addressed to me and asked that they mail the log to me. I coded the envelope as indicated above, so I could link up a mailed log with the appropriate participant. If a participant said they did not complete the reading log, I asked them if they intended to do that, reminding them that they could indicate on the log days when they did not read with their children at all. They indicated they did not intend to complete the log, l accepted that judgment with a simple, "okay." I then reviewed the consent form with the participant and collected the signed consent form they brought with them or asked them to sign the consent form prior to beginning the interview. I reminded the participants that I would audio record the conversation and might also take written notes.

Each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes, following the protocol described in Appendix B. Once the interviews were completed, I exited the participants by thanking them for their time and giving them $10 grocery card for their participation. I also informed them that a copy of their interview transcript would be sent to them for review. I also let them know that I was available for questions or resolving any concerns. After each interview, I downloaded the digital recording and saved it to a password-

protected personal computer and to a flash drive. I transcribed the recordings using an app called Otter and applied the same identity code to the transcription and to my handwritten notes that I applied to each participant's reading log. The transcriptions, my handwritten notes, reading logs, and the recorder containing the back-up audio files were stored in a secured cabinet in my home. Once all the interviews were completed and reading logs received, I began the data analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

I created the reading log (Appendix A) to help in answering RQ 1 and to answer RQ 2. For the interview portion of data collection, I created an interview protocol (Appendix B) that included five main questions with 10 possible follow-up questions. The first two main questions asked the parent to describe a recent shared reading event, and to describe books for children available in the home. These questions helped me answered RQ1. Interview questions 3 and 4 asked about how the parent handled words encountered in shared reading that were unfamiliar to the child, and what the parent noticed, if anything, during the reading log activity. These questions helped me answered RQ2. A final interview question solicited from the parent any unasked-for information that the parent might want to add.

Interview data were analyzed by me. The first step was to create documents, coding data, and a password to restrict accessibility by anyone other than myself. I stored the electronic files under the codename of each parent (Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on). Their responses were transcribed and stored in a word processing format in order to make each a text-based file. The next step was to import the files that I intended to

analyze. As I read the interview transcripts, participants' voices, common words, and phrases were italicized or highlighted. I used an open coding method because it was appropriate for interview transcripts, field notes, and journals (Saldana,2016). I broke down the data into discrete parts, closely examined each participant's transcript, and compared the transcripts for similarities and differences (Strauss, & Corbin, 2015). I transcribed the responses to open-ended questions using Microsoft Word and coded them to be categorized into themes. The analysis started with open coding of the data and the interview responses were organized to determine patterns which were too difficult to distinguish by reading alone. I also added new codes with each interview and made modifications to the coded interviews to mirror the developing codes. I used numbers to determine how many times a participant responded with the exact response. This method of coding allowed me to reflect deeply on the data as I did line-by-line coding. As the analysis progressed, I kept creating more themes from codes.

Once reading logs were collected, I selected two books from each reading log by entering all book titles in a numbered column of an Excel spreadsheet and using a random number generator to identify two titles to review. I could not access these books at my local public library because libraries were closed due to the pandemic, so I bought the books from Amazon.com. If I could not locate a book through Amazon.com, I did select another book from the same parent's list through the same random selection method. No book selected at random for analysis was written in a language other than English, therefore there was no need to substitute another book from the same parent's list. In this way, I collected 20 children's picture books for analysis. There were 10

returned reading logs from the parents in which parents and their children read some books more than once. All the parents had an average of more than 7 days of reading with their preschoolers on the logs. I randomly selected available books from the logs returned by parents, to achieve the target number of 20 books.

Once the books were selected, I copied the exact text of each book into a Word file. Most picture books are about 32 pages long and include between 500 and 600 words (Sambuchino, 2016). If a chosen book contained more than 32 pages or more than 600 words of text, I copied the first 600 words only. These digital files were subjected to an assessment of lexical diversity, using Text Inspector® (https://textinspector.com). I copied and pasted the text or first 600 words of each book, then ran the program to analyze the text. Text Inspector analyzed the words in each book and measured the vocabularies or unusual words. Finally, Text Inspector returned a summary of each text's lexical diversity.

Discrepant data are data that may appear contradictory to what has been established in other portions of the study. According to Tsai et al. (2016), in qualitative studies discrepant data most often appear in longitudinal research, when statements made by a participant at one time are contradicted by the same participant at a later time. Such a situation requires the researcher to review their transcripts and notes, to eliminate researcher error as a possible source of the contradiction (Tsai et al., 2016). Because interview data collected in this study were limited to a single conversation with each participant, in which conflicting statements could be clarified on the spot, discrepant data were not evident in the analysis of study data. In addition, errors in transcription of data

on lexical diversity of text from Text Inspector into my word processing file did not cause discrepant values, a possibility to which I was alert and corrected as it occurred.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility is defined as the sureness that can be placed in the truth of the research outcomes (Macnee & McCabe, 2008). Credibility was maintained by triangulation, achieved by using 10 participants who are defined only by enrolling their children in a low-income government subsidized childcare and by using analysis of reading logs to supplement interview data. Triangulation includes the use of diverse methods in confirming data evidence (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In this study, data included interviews and resulting transcripts, reading logs, and the text of selected titles from reading logs, which together provided evidence of the quality of literacy engagement.

Transferability determines if results from a study can be generalized to other groups and settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is my responsibility as a researcher to support transferability by giving a thorough explanation of the data and the framework. Based on my reporting, readers will be able to determine if the results from this study, conducted with the sample and setting I described, can be applied to their own setting and population. Transferability in a qualitative study is ultimately determined by the reader (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), so providing sufficient information about the study and the results is essential is supporting transferability.

Dependability was supported by being careful at each step of the study. I used reflexivity to reduce the effect of my personal opinions and biases, by keeping a journal throughout the process. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), a reflective journal

provides a way to record thoughts and aids in noticing research bias before it can affect data collection or results. I kept a reflective journal throughout the process of data collection and analysis to increase dependability of the results.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) confirmability ensures that a study is supported by its data collection. To support confirmability in my study, I took care in transcription of interviews to preserve their completeness and accuracy, and I took care to accept participants and selected books for analysis without bias. In addition, I made use of an audit trail by giving a detailed analysis of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data. I wrote down my thoughts about coding, provided a reason for merging codes together, and explained the meaning of themes. In these ways, I provided confirmability to my study and ensure its trustworthiness.

Ethical Procedures

I received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before I invited parents to be participants in this study (approval #12-11-19-0263812). I informed the participants about the nature of the study and explained the processes and procedures. I took care to protect participants' privacy by keeping the information provided and data collected confidential. I made sure that the participants signed the informed consent form, so they would understand the study and their role in it prior to agreeing to participate in the study. Signed informed agreement forms were kept in a locked cabinet in my home office.

The computer that was used for collecting and analyzing data was kept secured by a password. All participant identity information such as names were left out from the

study. A statement was read to the participants that informed them of their right to take part or decline, and to withdraw from the study at any time. Upon the completion of the interviews, data were transcribed, and participants were given the opportunity to confirm accuracy of the transcription, as recommended by Creswell (2012).

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the research phenomenon, design, research questions, interview questions, population, geographic location, and the informed consent form, and ethical considerations. It also included issues of trustworthiness of the study and the design collection. A qualitative method was suitable for this research study because I decided to study reported literacy engagement among low-income families and their preschool children. Participants will be selected through convenience sampling. The next chapter will present the findings from the study based on the results and data analysis of reported literacy engagement in low-income families.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low income parents and their preschool children. Previous research indicated that the vocabulary gap broadens during the school years, with vocabulary knowledge mediating the relation between children's socioeconomic background and their processing efficiency for word learning (Maguire et al., 2018). Patterns and themes were developed based on the shared experiences and perceptions provided by parents of preschool children from low income families regarding literacy engagement at home. This chapter contains information on the data collection and analyses obtained from the one-on-one interviews, reading logs, lexical analysis, documents, settings, and demography.

Setting

The interviews were conducted in a quiet setting, in a conference room at the public library in the target city in the southeastern United States. The weather was nice and other environmental conditions were normal. The interviews did not take a long time, so the participants were happy that we finished early. The participants were asked to share their experiences and stories, which could shed light on their literacy engagement at home.

Demographics

This study took place in one state in the southeastern United States among low income families. More than 10 parents were given the reading logs and were informed about the study but the 10 participants who responded were all women from a local low

income daycare center. Five participants completed the reading logs and took part in the interview process while another five parents responded only to the reading logs. Also, five of the parents were educated immigrants who speak and read in English; the remaining five parents were native English speakers and readers. Parent participation in the interviews was difficult to obtain because of their schedule, lack of understanding about shared reading, and reluctance to commit to participate in the study. The participants had a better understanding of the purpose of the research after they started answering the interview questions.

Data Collection

After Walden's IRB approved the study (approval #12-11-19-0263812), I recruited participants for this study. Ten participants took part in the research and they were all females from low-income families. Of the 10 participants, five completed the reading logs and participated in the interview, while the remaining five only completed the reading log. Data collection took a long time because getting families to commit was challenging. I visited five childcare centers with a low income population, but most parents did not return the reading logs and informed consent forms. Once the parents agreed to take part, it took a month for each participant to complete the reading logs. Although participation in this study was lower than I anticipated, completion of the reading logs and the interviews followed the process described in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Interview Data

The qualitative data analysis began after I transcribed the audio files from each recorded interview. I emailed each transcript to participants, who confirmed their accuracy. No changes were requested by any participant. I then analyzed the five transcripts using the coding and thematic analysis method I described in Chapter 3. According to Neuman (2005), data analysis involves identifying information through the analysis of written data and looking for patterns of common behaviors through word use of the participants. I identified 49 codes. The codes explained the time reading took place at home, the type of books being read, who reads to the child in addition to the participants, discussion of the book between parent and child, the emotional part of the story time, and how the parents obtained their books. The data indicated that these parents read to their children regularly, but not always at the same time of day, and that both children and parents are enthusiastic about reading together. Parents described owning many children's books and types of children's books, which they purchased from retail outlets, online, thrift stores, and yard sales. Only one parent said they used the library.

I then grouped these codes into six themes: when/where reading happens, what books are read, where books come from, who reads, conversation, and emotions around reading. The codes and themes are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Data Codes and Themes

Codes	Themes
Reading is done around bedtime	When/where reading happens
We read when everything has quiet down	
It has to do with mostly when I think I'm available	
There is no specific time	
It's a routine when she gets back from school	
In the evening	
We usually read every night	
They have an area dedicated for reading	
A bible book	What books are read
Lots of fiction books	
Animal books	
Storybooks	
We have little Jesus stories	
Sonics	
PJ Masks	
We do have lots of books	
We have the alphabet book	
We have books of shapes that talks about sounds	
We have books about God that talks about how the earth was made	
We have books about dinosaurs as well the different types of dinosaurs	
We have lots of books	
The Barney book	
ABC word book	
We have the paw patrol series Chases birthday	
I have Dr. Seuss books	
Cat in the Hat	
I buy books from yard sales, online, and thrifts stores	Where books come from
I have library cards but had never used it	
I have a box with lots of books inside	
We also use Storytime online	
We go to the library every 2 weeks	
Like I said there is a website called Epic	
I'm trying to get into, like, buy books	
We don't use the library	
So, when she sees a new word, she stops	Who reads
I tell her what word it is and what it means	
Older brother reads to them too	
It is usually me and him	
Sometimes it is with my husband because it's actually It is usually like a family time , I have four children	
I basically read and ask questions, read and ask questions	Conversation
Sometimes I asked him what the story is about	
I will not rush, we take our time to understand the meaning until he gets it	
We talk about the book a lot	
We have lots of fun	
He loves it so much	Emotions around reading
It's that time where you get to actually sit down with your child and do something together	
He likes when I read to him	
My son would be like daddy Come and join us, I want to read	

Analysis of Reading Log Data for Lexical Diversity

I used Text Inspector, a professional online application to measure the lexical diversity of some of the books read by the participants. I selected these books randomly from the participants responses on the reading logs. I selected two books from each reading log by entering all book titles in a numbered column of an Excel spreadsheet and using a random number generator to identify two titles to review. The books were selected based on the frequency of readings at home. Some books were read more than once while some books were read just once. The selected books are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Books Selected for Lexical Analysis from those Read by Parents

Title	Author
Alphabet, Let's Get Talking	Rainstorm
Arthur Tricks the Tooth Fairy	Marc Brown
The Carrot Seed	Ruth Krauss
Clara the Cookie Fairy	Lara Ede and Tim Bugbird
Corduroy	Don Freeman
David Goes to school	David Shannon
Eyes, Nose, Fingers & Toes	Sesame Begininngs
Fox In Socks	Dr. Seuss
I Hear a Pickle	Rachel Isadora
Into the A, B, Sea	Deborah Lee Rose
Maisy Big, Maisy Small	Lucy Cousins
The More We Get Together	Celeste Cortright
Puppy Birthday to You	Scott Albert
Secret Seahorse	Stella Blackstone and Clare Beaton
A Surprise Garden	Nancy Parent
Ten Little Ladybugs	Melanie Gerth
This is the Way We go to School	Edith Baer
Walt Disney Snow White	Walt Disney
Walt Disney Pinocchio	Walt Disney
Who Is the Beast?	Keith Baker

McCarthy and Javis (2010) defined lexical diversity as "the series of diverse words used in a book, with bigger range showing a higher diversity" (p. 381). A book with high lexical diversity uses many different words, comprising a wide vocabulary (Johansson, 1999). I analyzed the selected books based on two aspects of lexical diversity, token count and type count. The token count is the total number of words in a text (tokens). For example, the sentence, *the dog sat on the table,* has six tokens. The type count refers to the number of unduplicated words in a text (types). For example, the sentence, *the dog sat on the table,* has five types (unique words), because "the" is repeated. Lexical diversity was measured by Text Inspector, with higher scores indicating higher diversity of the text. The lexical diversity data for the books I analyzed are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Lexical Analysis of Randomly Selected Books Read by Parents, by Title

Title of Books	Token count	Type count	Lexical Diversity
Alphabet, Let's Get Talking	107	57	15.13
Arthur Tricks The Tooth Fairy	491	190	58.06
The Carrot Seed	110	46	28.48
Clara the Cookie Fairy	553	259	105.64
Corduroy	730	305	92.98
David Goes to School	82	59	61.74
Eyes, Nose, Fingers & Toes	85	56	50.05
Fox in Socks	521	143	58.95
I Hear a Pickle	570	187	22.60
Into the A, B, Sea	119	75	46.60
Maisy Big, Maisy Small	91	47	12.51
The More We Get Together	388	104	32.52
Puppy Birthday To You	593	258	103.06
Secret Seahorse	130	90	92.31
A Surprise Garden	634	274	127.07

Table continues

Ten Little Ladybugs	142	64	19.47
This is the Way We Go to School	259	169	87.82
Walt Disney Pinocchio	505	251	109.33
Walt Disney Snow White	620	285	87.37
Who Is the Best?	211	75	22.81

The same titles are presented in Table 4, arranged by lexical diversity score.

Table 4

Lexical Analysis of Randomly Selected Books Read by Parents, by Lexical Diversity

Title of Books	Token count	Type count	Lexical Diversity
Maisy Big, Maisy Small	91	47	12.51
Alphabet, Let's Get Talking	107	57	15.13
Ten Little Ladybugs	142	64	19.47
I Hear a Pickle	570	187	22.60
Who Is the Best?	211	75	22.81
The Carrot Seed	110	46	28.48
The More We Get Together	388	104	32.52
Into the A, B, Sea	119	75	46.60
Eyes , Nose, Fingers & Toes	85	56	50.05
Arthur Tricks the Tooth Fairy	491	190	58.06
Fox in Socks	521	143	58.95
David Goes to School	82	59	61.74
Walt Disney Snow White	620	285	87.37
This is the Way We Go to School	259	169	87.82
Secret Seahorse	130	90	92.31
Corduroy	730	305	92.98
Puppy Birthday To You	593	258	103.06
Clara the Cookie Fairy	553	259	105.64
Walt Disney Pinocchio	505	251	109.33
A Surprise Garden	634	274	127.07

It is easier to think of lexical diversity in terms of type count. Type count refers to the number of unique or distinct words in a text. For example, the book *The Carrot Seed* has a type count of 46, meaning this book exposes children to 46 different words when it is

read to them. In contrast, *Corduroy* introduces children to 305 distinct words. See Table 5.

Table 5

Books Read by the Parents, by Type Count

Title of Books	Type count
The Carrot Seed	46
Maisy Big, Maisy Small	47
Eyes , Nose, Fingers & Toes	56
Alphabet, Let's Get Talking	57
David Goes to School	59
Ten Little Ladybugs	64
Who Is the Best?	75
Into the A, B, Sea	75
Secret Seahorse	90
The More We Get Together	104
Fox in Socks	143
This is the Way We Go to School	169
I Hear a Pickle	187
Arthur Tricks the Tooth Fairy	190
Walt Disney Pinocchio	251
Puppy Birthday To You	258
Clara the Cookie Fairy	259
A Surprise Garden	274
Walt Disney Snow White	285
Corduroy	305

Some books, such as *The Carrot Seed*, have a small lexical diversity score because they use small number of words (tokens) and low diversity of words (types). These books provide children with more limited vocabulary experience than do books with a greater lexical diversity score. If parents consistently read books with a low lexical diversity score, their children will be exposed to a more limited vocabulary than if those parents read a wider range of books with a wider range of lexical diversity. Most of the books parents reported reading in this study were read only once or twice. The books that

were reported most frequently were the books with a high lexical diversity score. This is illustrated in Table 6

Table 6

Frequency Books Read by Parents, with Lexical Diversity

Title of Book	Reading Log Frequency	Lexical Diversity
Arthur Tricks the Tooth Fairy	1	58.06
Corduroy	1	92.98
David Goes to School	1	61.74
Fox in Scoks	1	58.95
Maisy Big, Maisy Small	1	12.51
Puppy Birthday to You	1	103.06
Secret Seahorse	1	92.31
The More We Get Together	1	32.52
This is the Way We go to School.	1	87.82
Alphabet, Let's Get Talking	2	15.15
The Carrot Seed	2	28.48
Clara and the Tooth Fairy	2	105.64
Eyes, Nose, Fingers, & Toes	2	50.05
I Hear a Pickle	2	22.6
Into the A, B, Sea	2	46.6
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	2	87.37
Ten Little Lady Bugs	2	19.47
Who's the Beast?	2	22.81
Surprise Garden	3	127.07
Pinocchio	4	109.33

Discrepant Data

A few of the participants wrote the wrong authors on the reading logs. I confirmed the correct authors through online sites. Also, some participants mentioned during the interview that they normally read every day but none of them reported reading every day on the logs. None of the books cited in the interviews as books present in the home or child favorites were reported as read during the 2-week reading log period.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The credibility of the data was maintained with the use of interviews and resulting transcripts, reading logs, and the text of selected titles from reading logs, which together provided evidence of the quality of literacy engagement. Transferability was supported by giving a thorough explanation of the data and the framework. Based on my reporting, readers will be able to determine if the results from this study, conducted with the sample and setting I described, can be applied to their own setting and population. Dependability was ensured by being careful at each step of the study. I used reflexivity to reduce the effect of my personal opinions and biases, by keeping a journal throughout the process.

To determine confirmability in my study, I was very careful during transcription of interviews, to preserve their completeness and accuracy, and I was careful in selecting participants and selecting books for analysis at random from the reading logs and without bias. In addition, I made use of an audit trail by giving a detailed analysis of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data. I wrote down my thoughts about coding, provided a reason for merging codes together, and explain the meaning of themes. In these ways, I provided confirmability to my study and ensured its trustworthiness.

Results

Two research questions guided this study. RQ1 was answered with data collected during interviews with five parents. RQ2 was answered through analysis of lexical diversity of 20 books selected from reading logs submitted by 10 parents. The findings in this study are presented by research question.

Results for RQ1

RQ 1 asked, "How do low-income parents describe their shared book reading with their preschool children?" To answer this question, I applied responses of the five participants who took part in the interview process, participants 1, 2, 3, 9 , and 10. Key themes that emerged from this analysis of interviews included when and were reading happened in the home, what books parents read to their children, where these books came from, who does the reading, the level of conversation that occurs during reading, and parents' and children's feelings about the shared reading experience.

According to participants, reading happens most often in bedrooms and around the child's bedtime. Participant 10 said, "We usually read every night, especially at bedtime," and Participants 1 and 2 concurred. Participant 3 said they read to their child around snack time "when she gets back from school" and that this is "a routine." Participant 10 mentioned, "We usually read every night."

Participant 9 did not have a schedule for reading because of her job but she still creates time to read to her child. Participant 9 said: "Basically, it is like [Child's name], let's go read. I called him, it is storytime, he grabs the book he wants to read. We talked about the book. He was excited about it." Participant 9 said, reading "has to do with mostly when I think I'm available."

Reading at home is usually done with mothers but some participants responded that father and older siblings also join in the reading process. Participants 1 read to her twins but sometimes the older brother and the father read to them too. Participant 1 mentioned an "older brother reads to them too, sometimes they grab books themselves

and their father reads too." Both Participants 2 and 9 shared reading with their sons most of the time, but the fathers sometimes read to their children also. Participant 3 read to her daughter most often, but the older brother took part as well. Participant 3 said, "My son sometimes joins, he is older." Participant 10 read to her son but her older daughter read too, with other children joining in the storytime. She said, "It is usually like a family thing. I have four children and they love to listen too. I have a 15, 13, and an 11-year-old." All the participants reported engaging in conversations while reading to their children. Participant 9 said, "we read books and ask questions based on the book." Participant 10 responded, "we read the story, we pause, and I give him a chance to talk about the book. I let him talk before we move to the next page." Participant 3 mentioned that her child will take part in discussion only if she likes the book they are reading. She said, "If it is a book she is interested in, we talk about it, we talk about it for 20 minutes but if she does like the book, we discuss less about it."

Participants indicated their children are curious about new words encountered during reading. Participant 3 said, "So when she sees a new word, she stops, obviously, and looks at me like what word is that? And I tell her what word it is and what it means." Participant 2 responded that "when we come across a new word, my son asks me to repeat it and he continues to repeat the word too." Participant 10 mentioned, "If we come across a new word, he would ask. I pause and explain to him the meaning. I will not rush; we take our time to understand the meaning until he gets it."

Participants 2 and 9 remembered at least one new vocabulary word learned during reading time. One example of this type of response by Participant 9 was this: "Dinosaur. I

could not say the name of the species. He asked me 'Mom what is that?'" Participants 3 and 10 could not think of any new word during the interview. Participant 10 said, "It is a lot of them. I don't write them down and I don't have a list." Participants 1, 3, and 10 mentioned that their children repeat words in later play or conversations that were introduced from the books they read together. One example of this type of response from Participant 1 included: "For example, from their favorite book, they repeat some words and use it when they are playing. The word please in a storybook, they will say please, please, please because one of the characters in the book says it." Participant 2 said,

> The books we read don't have repetitions. He listens more and retells the story. He is not detailed yet. He does not ask questions when we read. Sometimes I ask him questions about the book. The word comes back but to repetition.

Participants 2 and 9 mentioned that the books they read at home do not have rhyming words.

Emotions parents reported around reading were centered on the child's favorite book, and how much fun and enjoyment families have during reading. Participant 3 said, "We do have lots of fun because she gets to see new words and ask for the meaning of the new word." Participant 1 responded, "My children love being read to because it is a way of getting my attention." Participant 9 said, "My son loves being read to. He initiates storytime." Participant 10 said, "He loves it so much; he cannot sleep without me reading to him. He enjoys it and picks his book. He will make you read." Parents enjoy reading too. Participant 4 said, "For me it is the bonding and asking questions. We were able to bond together. This is the time we actually sit down to do something together. He asks

questions and broaden his mind." Participant 2 added: "We enjoy reading. If he had a choice, he would read every day."

Participants 1, 3, 9, and 10 said their children have favorite books. Participant 1 said, "They both have favorite books. They want me to read their favorite books every day. It is a bible book even one of the twins sleeps with the book every day." Participant 3 said, "His favorite book is the shape book. That is the book he picks most." Participant 2 responded that her son does not have a favorite book. She said, "He picks different books whenever we are reading. He does not read the same thing. He engages more when he picks his books." Participant 10 said. "He loves Dr. Seuss books."

Participants 1, 3, 9, and 10 responded that their children pick up books and look at them alone. Participant 10 said, "He loves reading, so I don't stop him from reading alone." Participant 2 mentioned that her son is not allowed to read by himself because he rips books and so he does not have access to books until storytime.

Parents responded that they get the books they read by buying them at retail stores, thrift stores, or yard sales, or they access them online using digital applications**.** Participant 9 responded that they have books at home, but she is not sure if they are age-appropriate for her son. Only one participant reported getting books from the library. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 9 suggested they do not use the public library because they have lots of books at home. Participants 1, 2, 3, and 9 said they have never used the library before. Participant 1 said, "We have the library cards, but I had never used it, but the older brother gets books from the school library. As a matter of fact, the library is right opposite where I live." Participant 3 said, "We have never used the public library. We

don't have library books. I buy books." Participant 9 answered, "No. We have never gone to the library before." However, Participant 10 said, "We go to the library every two weeks and I love to buy books because I have five children."

What books are read depends on the books the parents have at home that are age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate. Participant 1 said: "We have lots of fiction books, animal books, storybooks and most of the books are right books for their age." Participant 3 said, "We do have lots of books, we have Christian books, Disney books, and Barney books, and characters." Participant 2 mentioned, "Despite the number of books we have at home, we have not read all the books we have." Participant 9 responded, "We have books at home, but I am not sure if they are age-appropriate for my son." Participant 10 said, "I have lots of books on my shelves. I have different books depending on the age-group, such as Dr. Seuss books." Participant 10 mentioned. "My son uses an app[lication] called Epic to read and it has rhyming words."

According to parents who took part in the interview, reading is an activity that children love to do regardless of the time, place, day, and who reads to them because they get to spend extra time with their parents or with a respected older sibling. The parents recognize reading as a family activity and engage their children in conversation about the story and new words encountered in the reading as regular aspects of the reading experience. Low-income parents in this study described shared book reading as a positive experience they and their children enjoyed.

Results for RQ2

RQ 2 asked, "How is lexical diversity apparent in the books low-income parents record on a two-week reading log as the content of shared reading with their preschool child?" To answer this question, I analyzed the lexical diversity of the books read by the 10 parents who submitted a reading log. A total of 95 books appeared on the reading logs. To select 20 for analysis of lexical diversity, I selected two books from each reading log by entering all book titles from each log in a numbered column of an Excel spreadsheet and using a random number generator to identify two titles to review. I analyzed the 20 books using Text Inspector, a professional online application used to measure the lexical diversity of books.

A book with a higher index of lexical diversity has more complex, more advanced and more unique vocabularies than a book with lower lexical diversity, which repeats the same few words over and over again. *Maisy Big, Maisy Small* was the book included in my analysis with lowest lexical diversity of 12.50, total words (tokens) of 90 and 47 unique vocabularies (types). *A Surprise Garden* was the book in this set with the highest lexical diversity of 127.07 with total words (tokens) of 634 and 274 unique vocabularies (types). The 20 books included in my analysis presented a wide range of lexical diversity and type totals. This suggests that books parents typically read to preschool children may provide children with exposure to a rich vocabulary, but this is not assured.

Nine books were read once as reported by parents in this study, while another nine books were read twice; *A Surprise Garden* and *Walt Disney Pinocchio*, were read three and four times, respectively. *A Surprise Garden* and *Walt Disney Pinocchio* were

also books with the highest lexical diversity among the books I analyzed. The books that were read more than once may be due to children enjoying these books, and perhaps enjoying the rich vocabulary, more than books with lower limited lexical diversity. In total children and their parents were exposed to 2,994 unique words from the 20 books randomly selected for analysis.

Some books with high token count do not have a high- number diverse words. For example, *I Hear a Pickle* has a token count of 570 including 187 types, but a lexical diversity score of 22.60, less than the lexical diversity of 75% of the books I analyzed. In contrast, *Secret Seahorse* has a token count of 130, including 90 types, and a lexical diversity of 92.31. Moreover, books that were read more than once, such as *A Surprise Garden* and *Walt Disney Pinocchio,* may expose children to repeated vocabularies and diverse words that children then experiment with using at home. For example, Participant 1 mentioned that "from their favorite book, they repeat some words and use it when they are playing. The word *please* in a storybook, they will say *please, please, please* because one of the characters in the book says it." The individual books each presented unique levels of lexical diversity, with total lexical diversity available to each child an aggregation derived from parental reading of many different books. Parents reported most books were read only once or twice, so that a wide range of books were read over the span of the two-week log period.

Lexical diversity was apparent in the books low-income parents recorded on a two-week reading log because children were exposed to a total of 2,994 unique words. Books of greatest lexical diversity were read repeatedly to a greater extent than were

books of lesser lexical diversity. In general, parents read diverse books including a wide variety of unique words.

Conclusion

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. Participants in the research study included 10 low-income parents. I collected data through one-on-one interviews with five parents and reading logs kept over a two-week period by 10 parents. Six themes of when and where reading happens, what books are read, where books come from, who reads, conversation, and emotions around reading emerged from the interview data, and I grouped these into two themes of the reading process and interactions during shared reading at home. I analyzed a selection of 20 books listed in parents' reading logs for lexical diversity. The data indicated that children love being read to and parents believe children see shared reading at home as a way of getting their parents' attention. Also, the lexical analysis revealed that children can be exposed to new words if they read books with diverse unique words. Chapter 5 contains a summary of the conclusions of the study and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low income parents and their preschool children. The research was focused on the lack of knowledge regarding the lexical diversity and shared reading literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. I used an interpretative qualitative design to explore the phenomenon of shared reading experienced among lowincome parents and their preschool children. Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with five parents and reading logs kept over a 2-week period by 10 parents. I randomly selected 20 books listed on the logs and analyzed them with Text Inspector lexical diversity tool. In this section I will present an interpretation of findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations, implications, and conclusion I derived from this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this qualitative research I concentrated on how the reading experience in low income families can affect the development of rich vocabulary in small children. Hart and Risley (1995) identified variables that are often associated with literacy outcomes in low-income families, including vocabulary exposure and family socioeconomic status. The work of Hart and Risley formed the conceptual framework on which this study rested. They found that children from families on welfare heard about 616 words per hour, while those from working class families were exposed to around 1,251 words per hour, and those from professional families heard approximately 2,153 words per hour (Hart & Risley, 1995). Because children's literature tends to include a wider, more varied

vocabulary than does conversational speech (Gilkerson et al., 2017), in this study I focused on parents' report of the books they read with their children and the quality of the read-aloud experience.

According to the parents in this study, their children enjoy shared reading, and see it as a positive experience, in part because they get to spend extra time and get the attention of their parents. This finding agrees with findings of Lukie et al. (2014), who found that shared reading engagement at home creates joint attention between the parent and the child. Also, this joint attention promotes interest in literacy activities (Lukie et al., 2014). Moreover, parents in this study noted that they see reading as a family activity that engages their children in conversation about the story and exposes the children to new words, which they repeat over and over. This finding agrees with findings of Malin et al. (2014), that reading aloud at home gives children the opportunity to gain new vocabulary and develop understanding of words already in their current vocabulary. This was also confirmed by Hart and Risley (1995), who said that the process of vocabulary and grammar development occurs in back-and-forth discussions between the child and parents and discussions that contain several turns, with each turn building on what was said in the prior turn. Gilkerson et al. (2017) stated this vocabulary building happens during shared book reading activities, such as described by parents in my study.

Another finding from this study was the apparent of lexical diversity in the books parents read to their children; the children were exposed to books with high lexical diversity. This agrees with Montag et al. (2015), who wrote that shared reading provides an important mechanism for language learning and exposes children to new ideas and

vocabulary words not usually included in everyday conversation. Flack et al. (2018) stated that when same story is read frequently, this provides children with multiple exposures to new words, so those words become familiar and part of their vocabulary. The findings of this study also support the positive effect of unique words on vocabularies of children from low-income families.

In contrast, the results of this study do not agree with Hart and Risley (1995), who found that, on average, children from low-income families hear language less frequently and of lower quality than children from middle- and high-income families. Parents in this study confirmed that they engaged in dialogic conversation with children regarding the storybook they read, and the books they chose to read to their children provided experience with a wide range of vocabulary. Books with the richest vocabulary were the books that were read more repeatedly than books with less-rich vocabulary. In this study, low-income parents valued reading with their children and described their children as eager participants in reading. The books these low-income parents and children read together provided exposure to rich vocabulary, and a basis for conversation, curiosity, and application of new words to other settings.

In summary, in this study I found that low-income parents reported they and their children engaged in shared reading with enthusiasm and regularity. This research confirms that shared reading in low-income families can create a positive parent-child relationship with books and stories and encourages a love for language and reading, as predicted by Duursma (2014). The children described by low-income parents in this study love reading, want to be read to, and relish expanding their functional vocabulary,

using the greater variety of words, as described by Weisleder and Fernald (2014), that shared book reading offers over everyday conversation.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations affected this study. I did not get as many interview participants as I hoped. It was difficult getting parents to take part in the study due to family circumstances and some of them did not check their children's back packs for weeks, as reported by the preschool teachers. During the interviews, I learned that the 2-week commitment to the reading log was a problem for some of the parents and other parents informed me that they could not sit for a long interview. The major limitation was time commitment from the parents. These low-income parents worked more than one job and they naturally had difficulty making time to participate in my study.

Recommendations

A future study might replicate this study with a larger sample of participants, and parents in other areas of the country, to determine if the positive attitudes expressed by parents in my study are shared by low-income parents more generally. A larger study of the lexical diversity of books read by parents to their children might contribute evidence of the value of shared reading at home for children's vocabulary development. Future studies could explore the challenges to literacy engagement experienced in low-income families, such as long work hours and other responsibilities, that affected participation in my study. Although access to children's books was not cited by parents as a limiting factor in their experience of shared reading, no parent reported using the public library as a free source of books. A study of low-income parents' attitudes regarding public

libraries and their access to library services would also contribute to understanding of shared reading in low-income families. Also, future studies might explore the importance of repetition of books that offer high lexical diversity in developing children's expressive and receptive vocabularies. The study added to the existing knowledge of reading patterns among low-income families.

Implications

Findings in this study suggest several implications for practice. First, because study findings point to the importance of parents reading to their children as a mechanism for children's vocabulary development, childcare teachers and center directors should encourage and promote activities that can boost reading at home. Because parents and children in this study already were enthusiastic about reading together, activities to promote reading at home should be based on the assumption that parents value reading and aim to make access to books easier. Centers might make books of high lexical diversity available to parents to read at home.

Childcare centers also should encourage more use of public libraries by low-income families. In collaboration with local public librarians, teachers could organize a family field trip to the library, as an opportunity for parents to get library cards and check out books. Public libraries also could investigate the barriers to library use that low-income persons experience, that might account for the lack of public library books among the books parents reported reading in my study. Barriers like fines for late return of books and loss of library privileges for lost books or lateness have been removed by some public library systems, as a way to encourage library use by low-income individuals

(Williment, 2019). Moreover, government can make available mobile libraries in low-income neighborhoods. Implications of this dissertation, for positive social change, include new insights for educators and policymakers on how parent-child shared book reading might be encouraged and how to provide quality books for low-income families.

Conclusion

The purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to determine reported literacy engagement between low-income parents and their preschool children. The study findings close the gap of lack of understanding of shared reading experiences in low-income families. It confirms the finding of Sawyer, Cycyk, Sandilos, and Hammer (2016) that the quality of home literacy experiences can be a key factor in improving the language and early literacy skills of young children from low-income homes. The study findings revealed that low-income parents and their children enjoy reading together and make time for reading together even when parents are burdened with employment responsibilities. In this study, exposure to rich vocabulary was part of the shared-reading experience, along with conversation about the stories. This study countered the contention by Hart and Risley (1995) that low-income parents engage their children in few activities that support vocabulary development, and demonstrated instead that low-income parents and their children engage with literature and each other in vocabulary-rich shared reading. This study raises an important question for teachers and policymakers: how can we encourage and improve literacy engagement in low-income families and provide books that have high levels of lexical diversity to children whose futures are optimistic with promise? Every child loves being read to.

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Appendix A: Reading Log

Day 1
What did you read?

Who wrote this book?

How much did you and your child talk about the book?

About how many minutes did you read together?

Did you enjoy reading today?

If you didn't read anything today, check here ___

Day 2
What did you read?

Who wrote this book?

How much did you and your child talk about the book?

About how many minutes did you read together?

Did you enjoy reading today?

If you didn't read anything today, check here ___

Day 3
What did you read?

Who wrote this book?

How much did you and your child talk about the book?

About how many minutes did you read together?

Did you enjoy reading today?

If you didn't read anything today, check here ___

Log continues in similar fashion for 14 days

Thank you so much!

Please bring this log to our interview. Bring it even if you didn't get it all done.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Good Morning/afternoon, my name is Olufemi Ojo. Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. I'm going to ask some questions about times when you read books to your children. To help me remember what you say, I will tape record our conversation, and I also might make some notes. Is that okay? Remember, this is just a conversation, and if I asked anything you don't want to answer, you don't have to. Also, if you decide you want to stop the interview at any time, just let me know. I think we will talk about 45 minutes. Does that work for you?

1. Think back to the last time you read to your child, tell me about that. How did it happen?
2. When during the day do you and your child usually read together?
3. Is it usually just you and your child, or do other people do the reading or are there other children or adults listening in?
4. How much do you and your child talk about the book while you're reading it?
5. How much fun do you have when you read together with your child?
6. How much does your child seem to like being read to?
7. Tell me about the books you have at home…
8. What is your child's favorite book?
9. How much do you and your child use the public library to find books?
10. How much do you allow your child to look at books on their own, or play with them?
11. Describe to me what happens when you come across a new word in a book you're reading with your child.

12. Can you think of a word your child learned recently from a book you read together?

13. Sometimes people play with words during reading time, making up rhymes or saying the words over and over. Does that ever happen when you and your child read together?

14. Thanks for completing the reading log. As you were doing that, did you notice anything about the books you were reading or your own reading process with your child that you thought was interesting?

5. Is there anything I've left out? What more can you tell me about reading with your child?

Thanks, so much for making time for me today. I'll let you know what I find out in this study. Do you have any questions for me before we stop?