Family, child, teacher perceptions of what African American adult family members think and do to assist their elementary school-aged children to become better readers

Shadrack Gabriel Msengi

University of Northern Iowa

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FAMILY, CHILD, TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT AFRICAN AMERICAN
ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS THINK AND DO TO ASSIST THEIR ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN TO BECOME BETTER READERS

A Dissertation

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, Chair

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July 2006
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ADULT FAMILY MEMBERS THINK AND DO TO ASSIST THEIR ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN TO BECOME BETTER READERS

An Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved
Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, Chair
Dr. Susan Koch
Dean of the Graduate College

Shadrack Gabriel Msengi
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July 2006
ABSTRACT

In this study, the perceptions were investigated of how African American adult family members, children, and teachers viewed the family members’ roles in assisting their elementary school-aged children to become better readers. These perceptions were explored to provide a detailed account of ideas that can impact the home-school relationship. To conduct this study, the researcher examined how similar or different the perceptions were among the three subgroups regarding: (a) the child’s reading level; (b) what families do to assist children in reading; and (c) the perceived barriers and opportunities in adult family members’ decisions to assist their children to become better readers.

Thirty-five family members, their third and fourth grade children, and seven associated teachers participated in the study. Survey questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data from each subgroup. Among those who returned the survey, 13 adult family member respondents, their children, and 7 teachers were selected and interviewed. Responses obtained from the survey and interviews were compared to determine whether or not the respondents had a shared understanding of family reading practices in the homes. The child’s score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and indices of congruence regarding the child’s perceived reading level were compared to perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practices. Adult family reading practice indicators included knowledge of a child’s reading level, the family’s provision for reading materials, the regularity of reading time at home for the child, the identification of family members who read to a child, the sharing of reading concerns with the child’s teacher,
and the family’s attendance at a parent education meeting about literacy. The study also examined the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, families’ decisions to assist a child with reading. Findings indicated a mismatch among a majority of respondents, suggesting a lack of shared understanding—a perspective that warrants our rethinking of the home-school literacy connection. However, in those instances where all three respondents agreed on a variable (i.e., reading to or with a child regularly), children were scored as reading above or at the class average.

These shared orientations provided a framework for increasing mutually shared perspectives regarding ways to assist a child to become a better reader. Differences in beliefs reflected processes unique to the African American adult family member, the child, and the teacher, and pointed out conflicts in home and school relations. The inability to share reading concerns, family members’ work schedules, and the necessity of taking care of other children were identified as barriers to a family’s decision to assist children in their reading endeavors. These factors and several others that could account for disagreement among the respondents were explored.
DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the spirit of my father, Mr. Gabriel S. Msengi, and my mother, Mrs. Eliwaza G. Msengi. I now understand you and think highly of you and your lives. Your insightful words of wisdom will remain in me forever. I understand not only the meaning of life, but also how to be persistent in my undertakings. It is with great admiration that I follow your words and deeds. Without reservation, you always supported each step of my accomplishments, especially when I had doubts as I strived to climb this educational ladder. Thank you, Mom and Dad! I dedicate this work to both of you. Baba, Mungu Akuweke Mahali Pema Peponi!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the families, children, and teachers who participated in this study. I thank all those who supported and encouraged me throughout this process. I thank my chair, Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, who has been my mentor. She tirelessly listened and probed me with questions during the entire process of writing this project.

My committee members, Dr. Deborah L. Tidwell, Dr. Mingshui Cai, Dr. Richard Allen Hays Jr., Dr. Rebecca Edmiaston, and Dr. Amy Staples, have assisted and helped me expand my horizons to reach the end of this dissertation. I thank Dr. Bill Callahan for his wisdom, support, and encouragement.

A special thanks to my family for being patient and supportive throughout my graduate studies and with whom I share the reward: My spouse, Neema; my daughter, Naomi; my two sons, Gabriel and Samuel; my mother, Eliwaza; my sister-in-law, Clementine; my brother, Israel; my nephew, Elisante; and my nieces, Hope and Peace. To you all, I say thank you for your tireless support.

Finally, I thank all of my friends who shared this journey with me.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"The crucial issue in successful learning is not home or school-teacher or student-but the relationship between them. Learning takes place where there is a productive learning relationship" (Seeley, 1985, p.11).

Identifying and understanding family reading practices in the home (i.e., what adult family members think and do to assist their children to become better readers) have become vital topics in the literature with the primary focus on home-school partnerships in contemporary society. Most of the research in the 1980s and 1990s investigating home and school connections typically involved middle class preschool samples (Estrada, Arsenio, Hess, & Holloway, 1987; Smith, 1995; Stewart, 1995; Taylor & Strickland, 1986). Yet, little published research in family reading practices, particularly about families of ethnic minorities, takes into account the family reading practices in Grades 3 and 4 (Taylor & Strickland, 1986). This is a critical stage because it is the juncture where parents typically become unsure of their ability to assist their children with the demands of reading and comprehending more complex narratives (Taylor & Strickland, 1986).

Research Problem

In this study, the researcher investigated the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the corresponding teacher’s perceptions concerning what African American adult family members thought and did to assist an elementary school-aged child (Grades 3 and 4) in becoming a better reader. Chapter 1 briefly describes the role of the context in a child’s development by providing background information on the theoretical and
sociocultural construction of learning and literacy. The subsequent section describes the interdependence between home and school environment as it relates to a child's development and learning. Ideas regarding African American families and their role in a child's reading development are considered by examining whether or not the adult family member, the child, and the teacher have a shared understanding of what the African American adult family members think and do to assist a child to become a better reader.

For many years, researchers have examined the role of the context in a child's development, viewing all human development from childhood to adulthood as being embedded within a system of social activities and cultural meaning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Particularly during the critical period between the ages of 4 and 9, a child grows in complexity as a person, and the child's competence increases in many different domains, progressively integrating the child into a particular society and its culture (Serpell, Baker, & Sonnenschein, 2005). In interacting with others (i.e., families, children, and teachers), children are provided with a range of experiences that allow them to acquire the necessary skills for reading competence (Diaz, Neal, & Amaya-Williams, 1992). As children are guided by a care-giving adult and gain a new understanding of a particular culture, they are also able to participate more fully in that culture (Serpell et al., 2005). To provide the background for the rest of the study, the following section focuses on the theories of sociocultural construction of learning and literacy.
Conceptual Framework

This section begins with a description of the theories that have significant implications for understanding the important roles that family members play in a child’s social construction of knowledge and the contexts that promote the child’s development. These theories present a holistic view of the role of various contexts in a child’s development and learning.

Vygotsky’s (1978) social historical theory emphasized the social nature of learning and the importance of social interaction for a child’s learning and development. He suggested that individuals’ consciousness is based on co-knowledge drawn from outside and derived from interaction with others. He wrote that human nature presupposes a specific nature and a process by which a child grows into the intellectual life of those around the child (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, each function of the child’s learning and cultural development first appears between people (i.e., a child and an adult) on a social level, or interpsychological level, and then it manifests within the individual level, or intrapsychological level. The development of an individual occurs as a result of social interaction; the individual is thus formed through an internalization of activities carried out within the bosom of society and through the interaction that occurs within a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

A zone of proximal development refers to what the child does as a result of the child’s association with and/or assistance from a more competent partner, thus allowing the child to function beyond the current level of competence. A child’s behavior is a shared act, an interpersonal phenomenon (Vygotsky, 1978). “Since the human infant is
immersed from birth in a social cultural environment, the child’s functioning and behavior are externally regulated by the adult care giving interactions” (Diaz et al., p. 129).

Gaining a more thorough understanding of the factors related to interaction and development in a given context provides a framework for investigating the relationship between the home and the school. Dewey (1916) made an effort to advocate education for all children. Dewey had a passion for democracy and for educating all individuals so that all could share and reap the benefit of a common life. He provided reasons for establishing, maintaining, and, in many cases, coordinating learning practices in both formal and informal educational settings (i.e., home and school). Dewey believed that learning is social in nature. What the child does depends greatly upon what significant others, such as peers, teachers, community members, and intermediate or extended families, expect, demand, and approve of as part of a democratic process of sharing knowledge. As the child interacts with others, new knowledge and insights are gained from these interactions, and the child is then able to relate the knowledge to prior experiences.

These theoretical and cultural perspectives exist for learning, family reading practices, and their relationship to a child’s reading development. Explorations of family literacy and its relationship to a child as a reader include the context in which a learner lives. Dewey (1916) viewed learning (in general) as social in nature and grounded in democratic ideals of social interaction among peers, family members, and significant adults. For example, the cultural context of literacy development is explored (Heath,
1983, 1991; Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988) to further illuminate literacy practices in the home and, as a child gains knowledge, away from home (i.e., at school). Discontinuity between the worlds of home and school involves more than the availability of resources and opportunities to interact with others (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001).

The discussion in this present study becomes clearer if the lens of inquiry is open to these broader concepts. By combining these theoretical views of the social and interactive nature of learning and views about actively constructing knowledge through reciprocal socialization (Vygotsky, 1978), researchers can form a conceptual framework to facilitate a better understanding of the important roles that family members play as they interact with a child.

Those who study the interdependence between home and school environments typically argue that what takes place in the family in conjunction with activities at school and within the community has a direct impact on a child's development and learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Edwards, Pleasants, & Franklin, 1999; McNaughton, 1995). Individuals (i.e., family, peers, and teachers) in these environments often provide children with feedback that may influence the children's perceptions of their own academic abilities (Cainey, 1995; Cole, 1991; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Wagner & Phillips, 1992). For instance, Phillips (1987) found that among highly competent third grade children, families' perceptions of their children's academic competence were more predictive of children's self-perceptions than were actual indicators such as grades and test scores.
A child’s reading ability does not develop in isolation; rather, it takes place within a rich context comprising both the direct and indirect influences of the home and school environments (Teale, 1982; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2005). Socioeconomic status (Heath, 1983), the amount of reading materials present in the home (Neuman, 1995; Neuman, Hagedorn, Celano, & Daly, 1995), the frequency of storybook reading interactions (Laseman & de Jong, 1998; Senechal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998) and their quality (Elliot & Hewson, 1994; Pellegrini, Galda, Shockley, & Stahl, 1995), and explicit reading instruction (Elliot & Hewson, 1994; Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992; Senechal et al., 1998) are just a few of the ingredients that can either contribute to a child’s literacy development or, if absent, detract from it. Accordingly, neither family support nor teachers are solely responsible in determining whether or not a child becomes a better reader (Edwards, 2004). Both home and school environments contribute to such progress and can influence the child’s reading development either positively or negatively (Serpell et al., 2005).

Misunderstandings between the family, child, and teacher may occur from a lack of shared views. For instance, Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill’s (1991) study found that if parents assumed that their child was doing well in class, they felt no need to contact the child’s teacher. On the other hand, families’ failure to attend parent-teacher conferences was due to being satisfied with how their children were doing rather than a lack of interest. Unfortunately, teachers misinterpreted the parents’ absence at Back to School night programs or their failure to sign up for routine parent-teacher conferences as a lack of interest in their children.
Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the adult family member's, the child's, and the corresponding teacher's perceptions regarding what African American adult family members thought and did to assist their elementary school-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) in becoming better readers. The intent of this study was to compare and contrast the adult family member's, the child's, and the teacher's perceptions of the child's reading progress and family reading practices to determine whether or not the three subgroups have a shared understanding. The subgroups' perceptions of what was being done by adult family members in assisting children's reading efforts were examined. The three subgroups' perceptions on identified reading practice variables were related to children's perceived reading or the children's reading levels as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). The study also compared and contrasted the subgroups' perceptions of opportunities for, or barriers to, the families' decisions to assist children in reading. These aspects of the present study attempted to bring about an understanding of home-school literacy connection, especially in the area of reading. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to generate data from the three subgroups to provide information that demonstrated similarities and differences of perceptions regarding the adult family member's reading practices and the child's reading level.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the large amount of literature that focuses on both home and school connections and families' influences on reading skills, little attention has been given to comparing the respective perceptions of African American adult family members,
children, and corresponding teachers as to how each views the role of the family in assisting children to become better readers (Burgess, Hecht, & Lonigan, 2002; Danseco, 1997; Graham, 1992; Hauser-Cram, Sirin, & Stipek, 2003). Much research has identified families’ beliefs concerning reading at home and focused primarily on views about the value and function of literacy, as well as views about child development and education (Sonnenschein, Brody, & Munsternman, 1996), socioeconomic status (Sonnenschein, Baker, & Cerro, 1992), and education level (Fitzgerald, Spiegel, & Cunningham, 1991). However, this research does not demonstrate whether or not such views were typically shared with the child’s teacher. Debates over home and school connections have not reached a consensus on the best way to link home literacy practices with classroom instructional practices (Ryan & Adams, 1995). Such debates may have not satisfactorily explored the nature of the interaction or the full extent of the relationships between home and school (Ryan & Adams, 1995).

Research has also explored (a) a child’s performance as reported by the teachers, while demonstrating less child-teacher interaction (Campbell & Mandel, 1990), (b) a child’s personal characteristics such as a child’s learning disability, while ignoring the child’s strengths and needs (Bornstein, Bornstein, & Walters, 1988), (c) parent-child interactions including helping with homework, but not taking into account what happens in school (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987), and (d) family relations such as conflicts, family sociability, and cohesiveness without considering the linkage to school, parents’ personal characteristics (i.e., introversiveness, expressiveness), and parents’ beliefs about education (Cohn, 1990). What has not been adequately explored is the
relationship among these variables, as well the family, child, and teacher interactions that are critical to a shared understanding (Ryan & Adams, 1995). Most of these studies contain gaps of knowledge pertaining to the home-school reading practice connection and have either focused solely on homes or on schools (Ryan & Adams, 1995).

To date, such research has suggested the need for further work that must emphasize a greater focus on the interplay between the family, the child, and the teacher in order to determine the degree to which these relationships can contribute to or detract from a child’s reading development. What families, particularly African American families, consider their roles to be and the actions they actually take regarding reading practices at home have been associated with several predictors of a child’s success or failure in reading, especially among minority groups (Hauser-Cram et al., 2003). Determining whether or not there is a shared knowledge between the family, the child, and the associated teacher regarding what families thought and did to assist the child to become a better reader would help to bridge the knowledge gap among the three subgroups.

Research Questions

The following research questions have guided this study:

1. Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level?

2. Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as measured by the ITBS reading score?
3. What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader?

4. What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practice as compared to the child’s perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS reading scores?

5. What were the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to help the child to become a better reader?

Need for the Study

This present study examined the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the corresponding teacher’s perceptions concerning what African American adult family members think and do to assist their elementary-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) to become better readers. The relevance of examining whether or not there is a shared understanding between these subgroups may be particularly apparent in the context of the move to improve connections between home-school literacy practices (Morrow, Tracy, & Maxwell, 1995). The differences in the family’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the child’s reading level (Pretzlik & Chan, 2004; Shields, Gordon, & Dupree, 1983), the best way to assist the child’s reading effort (Laseman & de Jong, 1998), the best way to handle the child’s specific reading difficulties (Pyor & Church, 1995), and how to incorporate the child’s strengths and self-perception of reading ability (Pretzlik & Chan, 2004) as measured by a standardized test are all liable to have an impact on a family’s relationship with its child’s school.
Research shows that popular societal perceptions of African American ethnic group members indicate they generally perform poorly academically (Farka, 1996; Farka, Grobe, Sheeben, & Shaun, 1990). Farka found teachers’ perceptions of low-income African American students’ academic abilities were lower than those they held for middle and upper income European American students. Studies that investigated the African American ethnic group’s academic achievement scores consistently compared African American students to students of European ethnicities or other minorities with the specific aim of determining where they rank (Danseco, 1997). This contributed to teachers’ low expectations for a majority of African American children and has tended to reduce the overall sense of responsibility in terms of the African American children’s academic progress and proficiency (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004).

Lee and Loeb (2000) and Lee and Smith (2001) viewed race and social status of the student as factors that may affect the way teachers regard and relate to minority (e.g., African American) students. A study is needed that focuses on similarities and differences in perceptions among African American adult family members, children, and teachers regarding what the family thought and did to help the child read. According to Shields et al., (1983), methodologies that investigate home and school literacy connections rarely included children’s ideas. Shields and colleagues concluded, “What children think helps or hinders them in learning to read is important for families and teachers to consider” (p. 438).
This information would enable the three subgroups to make collaborative informed decisions on ways to assist a child’s reading effort. Equipped with such knowledge, classroom teachers could integrate a child’s home experiences with classroom reading instructions, thus increasing teachers’ expectations and sense of responsibility. In turn, this would allow classroom teachers to explore ways of promoting reading practice connections between the child’s family (home) and the child’s school. At the same time, these three subgroups could merge their differing perspectives.

**Delimitations**

This study population was limited to African American adult family members, their children, and the third and fourth grade teachers of the children participating in the study. The results were limited to the perceptions of family members, their children, and teachers, including the perceived family reading practices. However, the ITBS scores were not seen as “perceptions” as noted in the next paragraph.

**Limitations**

The study was limited to a small, convenient sample size at one public school in Iowa. It was based on a one-time-only collection of data. It did not measure growth or change in the respondents’ perceptions and practices over time. Only African American adult family members who had children attending Harlingen Elementary School, located in a mid-sized city in Iowa, participated. The adult family members were defined as those whose names were listed by the school as the caregivers of the child. Each participating student in this study was racially classified as African American. The concept of what the adult family members thought (i.e., what they perceived their role to
be in terms of the child’s reading development) as compared with what they actually did was defined in terms of reading development only. The indicator of the child’s reading level in the present study relied on information derived from respondents’ oral reports and additional data from the child’s ITBS reading score.

**Definition of Terms**

Terms used in this study include the following:

**Barriers:** obstructions, either intrinsic or external, that create real or perceived boundaries or limitations (Shakeshaft, 1987).

**Beliefs:** the expressed values that the parent, children, and teachers have about the child’s education (Shields et al., 1983).

**Child’s Reading Level:** subgroups’ perceptions of whether the child read better than the child’s classmates (above the class average = high), whether the child read as well as classmates (at the class average = middle), and whether a child read below classmates (below the class average = low).

**Culture:** a dynamic and shared system of beliefs, values, attitudes, and practices (Helms, 1992).

**Discontinuity:** a mismatch between the children’s natal culture and the culture of the school (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 2000).

**Every Child Reads parent education session:** a sponsored family literacy program. At Harlingen Elementary School, families were invited to attend sessions to share and discuss reading matters and learn about ways to help children read (Dubuque Community School District Website, 2004).
**Family:** all members of a household who reside under one roof; two or more people who reside together, share similar goals and commitments, and who are related to each other (Edwards, 2004). In this study, the terms parent or family are used interchangeably.

**Family literacy:** the ways parents, children, and the extended family members are literate and use literacy at home and in their community (Edwards, 2004).

**Family reading practice:** actions that directly or indirectly impact reading skills (Edwards, 2004).

**Family-school partnerships:** the relationship that is created or exists between families and schools (Epstein, 1986).

**Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS):** a standardized battery that measures the development of general cognitive skills in the areas of listening, word analysis, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and other subject areas. It is utilized primarily to provide information that can be used to improve instruction. The ITBS also allows clear comparisons to national averages. Its scores are “Mean National Percentile” scores (Brookhart, 2004).

**National Percentile Rank (NPR):** the relative standing of an individual, class, or state compared to a larger norm group that results from a standardized test (Brookhart, 2004).

**Perception:** the ways in which families, children, and teachers report their views regarding whether or not families assist their children with reading (Shields et al., 1983).
Reading strategies: a decoding and meaning-making process. Decoding processes are identified as phonics, structural analysis, analogues, sight words, and context clues. Meaning making processes are influenced by the reader's background, knowledge, language development, and active engagement with the text (Bishop, Yopp, & Yopp, 2000).

Regular reading time: the families' reading habits such as after school, after dinner, every day, etc.

Shared understanding: an agreement among the adult family member, the child, and the teacher regarding what is being done at home to help the child read.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this study, the researcher examined the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the corresponding teacher’s perceptions concerning what African American adult family members thought and did to assist their elementary school-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) to become a better reader. Five research questions were addressed in the present study: (a) Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level? (b) Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as measured by the child’s ITBS reading score? (c) What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader? (d) What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practice as compared to the child’s perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS reading scores? (e) What were the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to help the child to become a better reader?

The review of literature is divided into topics that provide the context for understanding the reading issues related to this study focusing on African Americans by addressing the following areas: (a) conceptual and methodological considerations in investigating the African American ethnic minority group by expanding on materials presented in chapter 1, (b) cultural beliefs related to literacy development within the family and variability existing between families of the same ethnic background, and (c)
the importance of family reading practices, highlighting ideas of the home-school literacy
disconnections or connections. The review of the literature concludes with a summary of
the main issues discovered as well as the questions raised.

The African American Ethnic Group: Conceptual and Methodological
Considerations

In most studies, ethnicity has been treated as an extraneous or independent
variable in which any variation in children's academic performance has been attributed to
the group to which one belongs (Berry, 1985; Cole, 1992). When two or more groups
are compared (as is the case in numerous studies) relative to one or more variables or
dimensions, a significant difference along these variables has been typically explained by
membership in a cultural group (Berry, 1985). This approach may narrow or limit our
understanding of the dynamic processes by which an individual's behavior is influenced
by that person's culture (Danseco, 1997). According to Betancourt and Lopez (1993),
culture is not an invisible static variable that can be controlled, manipulated, or quantified
according to a nominal scale. Nor is it an extraneous variable that explains the behavior
of people in a distant foreign land. Instead, for the purpose of this study, culture can be
viewed as referring to familial roles, communication patterns (i.e., discussion, turn-
taking), family practices (i.e., reading to or with the child), artifacts (i.e., books, pencils,
crayons, and papers), and attitudes (i.e., beliefs, expectations) (Betancourt & Lopez,
1993).

African Americans are an ethnic group within mainstream America with their
own culture that may influence their reading behavior in its own unique way (Danseco,
personal communication, October 11, 2005). Examining interethnic variations and mapping them onto a cultural-ethnic framework assumes that the underlying constructs within are equivalent (Poortinga, 1989; Watkins, 1989). This means that the operational definition for a construct varies from one group to another and the contextual validity of the construct itself needs to be carefully evaluated. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (1993) has advocated the use of analysis for each cultural group when examining cultural processes, knowledge, beliefs, and perspectives. Kazdin and Kagan (1994) have similarly suggested the use of analysis within groups of races and between individuals of the same race.

The approach of investigating a single ethnic group has been criticized on the grounds that it limits the generalizability of research findings (e.g., Graham, 1992; Helms, 1992). However, Graham performed a content analysis of topics covered on African American research to determine empirical studies of African Americans between the 1970s and 1980s that was published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology (JCCP)*, *Developmental Psychology (DP)*, *Journal of Educational Psychology (JEP)*, and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP)*. Graham (1992) found that most articles written on African Americans dealt mainly with: (a) determining intelligence among African American students only, (b) comparing African American students to one or more other racial groups and/or, (c) comparing socioeconomic status with educational achievement. For example, Reynolds and Jensen (1983) conducted a study that compared the scores of sixth grade African American children to scores of fourth grade European American children on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), a test battery that evaluates intellectual abilities.
Studies like those of Reynolds and Jensen compared the abilities of two age groups with different socioeconomic status and educational level. The results of such studies have indicated African American children as performing low academically.

Many African American psychologists have been particularly critical of the validity of race comparative studies that have served to reinforce the interpretation of African American behavior as deviant or substandard and have ignored the variation that exists within the group itself (Azibo, 1988). Danseco (1997), commenting on research instruments, argued that replication of investigations conducted among one ethnic group to be used in comparison with other groups is unacceptable and seriously flawed for these reasons: (a) such procedures disregard the dynamic cultural processes that mediate psychological phenomena and assume that the constructs being examined are the same across ethnic groups, and (b) such procedures assume culturally equivalent measures.

According to Reese, Kroesen, and Gallimore (2000), the culture directs or assists those who belong to that particular culture to assess and decide what to value (beliefs), which activities to include, and how to establish rules of interaction. These cultural values are often invisible and go unnoticed by those who are influenced and guided by them. Similarly, studies purporting to investigate African American family literacy practices find their basis in sociocultural theory and the cultural issues associated with it (Edwards et al., 1999; Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988). For instance, reading literacy in the United States today is characterized by the application of various reading approaches (e.g., phonics or balanced instruction) being used in various classroom contexts across the country (Nickse, 1990). All of those using such approaches (e.g.,
phonics or balanced instruction) hope that the results will indirectly benefit children or
directly benefit both parents and children. One problem with these approaches is that
they may not be suitable for individuals across various cultural groups.

Applying the reading approach to all individuals is a mistake because it ignores
important contextual issues and does not take into account the relationship within the
specific context in which individuals interact. According to Street (1993), the approaches
(e.g., phonics or balanced instruction) may also ignore the ways in which socio-cultural
and environmental contexts shape the development of literacy and the ways in which
people adapt literacy for their own purposes. Street continued to argue that families may
vary greatly in the ways they conceptualize the reading events and activities at their
disposal. The following studies show that even among the same ethnic group families
may vary in the way they conceptualize reading events and practices.

Variability Within Families.

Understanding the variability related to cultural issues within a single ethnic
group can help identify an individual’s problems and needs within a given cultural group
and then render the design of a culturally compatible reading practice lesson that is more
useful in multiple contexts. As families of the same cultural group experience variations,
agreement and disagreement are inevitable in terms of such things as perspectives about
learning (Neuman et al., 1995), reading skill (Purcell-Gates, L’Allier, & Smith, 1995),
perspectives about language development (Burgess et al., 2002), and the kinds of literacy
events, materials, and activities (Fitzgerald et al., 1991). Such variations are still
overlooked in the literature today in a number of studies.
Neuman et al. (1995) interviewed 19 African American adolescent parents from low-income backgrounds who had children ranging in age from 2 months to 6 years and who attended an early intervention program. Responses were coded into three categories that each reflected families' perspectives about learning. The coded responses indicated that families did not share common perspectives regarding their child's learning. One group believed that knowledge was finite, that is, some have it and others do not (i.e., I want my child to learn something). While still others believed that knowledge was not confined to a set of tangible skills, but was incorporated within a broader definition of education (i.e., children learn when they are ready to learn, or they make up their minds when they want). The third group thought that children were active constructors of knowledge (i.e., when I pick the game, my child shows me with her eyes that she is learning). In the study, families reflected basic beliefs highly compatible with those of many school professionals. However, teachers may be unfamiliar with individual families' perspectives about learning.

Anderson and Stokes (1984) observed pre-school children from three ethnic groups for 2,000 hours (19 hours per child) to determine what constituted their experience with literacy. They found variation regarding the regularity of storybook reading time. These were events in which the caregiver read to a child or children in the family as part of the caregiver routine. The analysis of frequency of reading time revealed a considerable variability in the number and quality of events across families and ethnic groups. African American families waited for the child to initiate interactions during book reading, whereas Anglo American families more frequently initiated these
activities. The study also showed literacy events that happen in the home and reading strategies that families use when reading to or with a child. The authors concluded that literacy events do not function in isolated bits of individual activities, but function as connected units established to facilitate daily living activities in given homes.

Purcell-Gates et al.'s (1995) study of 24 children between the ages of 4 and 6 in 20 families reported that families varied in terms of their literacy skills, and that parents with lower literacy skills did less to help their children acquire literacy concepts than did those with high level literacy skills. Families often read materials pertaining to a variety of categories such as entertainment, daily living routines, coupons and container print, books, magazines, and documents. The study indicated that families do read to their children at home, but did not show the types of strategies these families use when helping their children with reading.

Each of the above studies showed that families differ in terms of their approach to reading, regularity of reading time, beliefs about a child's learning, and reading skills. These studies are representative of studies that investigated families and children between ages 4 and 6.

Importance of Adult Family Member Reading Practices

In the socio-cultural construction of learning and literacy development, a family member plays an important role in a child's construction of knowledge. Studies have indicated the home environment influences a child's independent reading attitude because the home produces the first impact on reading to the child. What takes place in the family, in conjunction with activities in school, has a direct impact on a child's
development and learning. The following section presents studies that describe the importance of family reading practices as they relate to a child’s reading development in the contexts of the home and the school.

Decades ago, Hansen (1969) studied 48 fourth graders and their parents and reported a significant correlation between reading activities in the home and a child’s independent reading as well as a child’s overall score on achievement tests at school. Hansen defined the literacy environment as the availability of literacy materials in the home, the amount of reading done with the child, encouragement provided to the child, and parental behavior in providing a model for reading. However, the study did not consider the children’s varying home experiences, particularly in view of the fact that these children belonged to different ethnic groups. Moreover, children who enjoyed reading might have sought outside materials other than those provided in the home. Hansen noted that if teachers did not look at the home environment and the extent to which it might influence children’s literacy performance, they were more than likely to deny children more opportunities to connect their home literacy to what they encountered in schools.

Shields et al. (1983) employed cross tabulation and chi-square to identify and assess the significance of 32 low-income African American parents’ input such as knowledge, beliefs, and practices as related to reading achievement. Good readers and poor readers were determined based on the responses of the parents and the children involved. It was determined that these parents were aware of their children’s good or poor performance in reading. A correlation was also found between families’ reading
practices and children’s reading achievement. All good readers in the study were those
who received reading support from home and also were practicing reading at home.

Shields et al. indicated that families need not be middle class for their children to become
good readers. As well, families did attempt to help their children achieve academically,
but lacked the direction for their efforts.

Estrada et al.’s (1987) longitudinal study of 67 American mothers of European
origin correlated the mothers’ affective relationship to a child’s cognitive growth. The
study was conducted when children were 4 years old. Follow-up studies were done on
their cognitive performance at ages 4, 5, and 6 and compared with school achievement at
age 12. The findings indicated a positive relationship between the parents’ relationships
and the child’s academic development.

Significant others, including family members, peers, and teachers, constitute a
social mirror into which an individual looks to discover opinions or perceptions about the
self (Cooley, 1902) as a reader. Parents are believed to influence children’s perceptions
of their academic abilities (e.g., Jacobs & Eccles, 1992; Wagner & Phillips, 1992).

Phillips (1987) found that among highly competent third grade children, parents’
perceptions of their children’s academic competence better predicted children’s self-
perceptions than actual academic indicators such as grades and test scores. The children’s
self-perceptions of their abilities grew as children advanced from one grade to another.

However, a positive attitude by families and children themselves toward children’s
academic work supported the learning process (Pretzlik & Chan, 2004). Chapman and
Tunmer’s (1997) 30-month longitudinal study included 152 children aged 5 who were
tested three times for their perceptions: first at the beginning of the study, then after four weeks, and finally, after 12 months. Their findings indicated that children's perceptions were moderately stable during the first years of schooling. According to Chapman and Tunmer's observation, as parents, peers, and teachers supported children, children's self-concepts increased over time.

**Federal and State Initiatives for Family Literacy**

Federal legislators have recognized the importance of family literacy practices in a child's literacy development, and legislation providing financial assistance to literacy initiatives has proven to be the primary source of support for family literacy programs throughout the United States (Morrow et al., 1995). Some of the more prominent federal initiatives include the Adult Education Act (Title II and II), The Library and Construction Act (Title I and IV), The Head Start Act, The Family Support Act of 1988 (Title IV-A), The Family School Partnership programs, and The Every Child Reads program introduced into elementary and secondary schools. State and local initiatives for child reading literacy have also increased the awareness about the role the family can play in a child's literacy development (Morrow et al., 1995).

Among the above programs, the Every Child Reads program was established by Iowa educators in response to standardized test results across the state. The main pillars of the Every Child Reads initiative are action research, reading comprehension strategies, analysis of data, and peer coaching. The benefit of the program includes improved student reading comprehension on test scores and the students' use of comprehension strategies when reading independently. Through this initiative, action research was
conducted to determine how often students read at home. Teachers found that students were not reading at home and launched a reading-at-home program in which students read and recorded the number of minutes they read at home each night (Dubuque Community School District Website, 2004).

Discussions of these federal and state initiatives in the previous literature indicated that family literacy practices and home and school connections seem to be implemented through what Swap (1993) called a Home-to-School Transmission Approach, which is aimed at training families to be involved in a child’s education in the way the school desires. However, Swap preferred a partnership model that allows families to share the expectations, plans, and decision-making process with the child’s teacher through sharing their experiences.

Home and School Discontinuities

Many theorists and practitioners believe that a child’s success in school is facilitated when there is a partnership based on a shared understanding (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Any successful relationship between home and school needs to include a shared understanding with an agreement about the respective roles of each party (Sonnenschein & Schmidt, 2000). Despite the importance of the family in a child’s reading development, the effort to seek more appropriate ways to facilitate family-school literacy connections has continued to intensify, especially with minority families. Families are becoming aware of their role and the importance of literacy. Even though the child’s formal education takes place within the school, the family and other proximal variables (i.e., reading to or with the child, providing reading resources) can, and often do,
influence that process (Ryan & Adams, 1995; Serpell et al., 2005). Sharing common goals does not necessarily mean that families and teachers will hold the same beliefs or perceptions about how to accomplish these goals (Serpell et al., 2005).

Snow et al. (1991) noted that the quality of the connection between the home and the school can have a pronounced effect on school-aged literacy skills. These authors underscored the conviction that parents and teachers who actively support one another’s efforts are ultimately more successful in promoting literacy and language skills. Stewart’s (1995) study of a family’s support of literacy recognized the importance of the home environment and its strategic role in contributing to the reading development of young children. Lightfoot (1978) discussed the relationship between home and school: when families (home) and teachers (school) share common conceptions regarding developmental literacy activities, this facilitates their respective abilities to work together with the child toward a common goal. Lightfoot stated that the lack of a shared understanding between individuals within these two contexts may result in disparities in terms of the academic results, especially when the family members and the teachers have different and, perhaps, competing perceptions of each other’s respective responsibilities.

Several other reasons exist for discontinuity between home and school as it relates to a child’s learning that may obscure and inhibit the flow of knowledge pertinent to a child’s progress (Lawson, 2003). In her discussion concerning book reading, Edwards (1995) argued that teachers may assume that families have a clear understanding of the skills needed to be able to participate in the reading interaction. Reese et al.’s (2000) study of Latino immigrants presented reasons related to a mismatch between the
children's home and school experiences. Included were assumptions or expectations between teachers and students that may be caused by the differences between the language of the home and the school, conversational behavior (turn-taking between an adult and a child when conversing), motivation (whether or not the child feels rewarded by either the family or the teacher), and learning style (learning by observing before performing). In such cases as these, teachers simply telling parents to read to their children, particularly when the family's beliefs concerning literacy differ from those of the teacher, is not likely to be highly efficacious. Teachers' suggestions may not fit within a particular family's values, expectations, priorities, or their perceptions of how literacy develops (Reese et al., 2000). If what happens in school is compatible with the home culture, improvement in learning and development of a child's basic skills can be expected (Reese et al., 2000). Again, if a family does not believe in the reading strategies used in the classroom, what is the likelihood that such a family will support the child in a way similar to what a teacher does or vice versa? Edwards (1995) suggested that through a collaborative partnership, individual family members will be able to augment a teacher's classroom instruction by virtue of the fact that they will be better equipped to exchange ideas, talk about activities, and work with teachers to identify and achieve future common goals.

The literature includes examples of what happens when there is not consensus between families and teachers on how children should be taught. The following studies describe characteristics of the sociocultural environment as well as discontinuity concepts
such as the reading practices employed by family members at home that contradict the ones employed by the children’s teachers.

Snow et al. (1991), in a two-year study of 31 families from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, investigated both in-school and out-of-school literacy experiences of children in grades 2, 4, and 6. One of the goals was to investigate how parents and other family members were involved in their children’s education. The findings indicated that families were effective in influencing literacy and language skills. In the study results, Snow and colleagues discussed the disagreement between home and school regarding the literacy practices and the family’s role in a child’s literacy development relative to the child’s poor performance or failure in school. These authors viewed such disagreements as stemming from two seriously opposing views: one view considers it a barrier if most or all of the family members lack school-like literacy, whereas the other view considers the school as the main cause of such a misunderstanding. Those who look to the home as the catalyst for poor literacy skills tend to focus primarily on low levels of parental literacy education, marital/financial instability, a paucity of reading materials, or a lack of parental aspiration. Those who look to the school as the main cause point to such factors as limited school resources, inadequate and inappropriate teacher preparation, low expectations for student achievement, and a lack of communication exchanges between home and school.

Snow and colleagues (1991) also interviewed families and teachers about their knowledge pertaining to report cards. These researchers observed that a grade of A or B on the report cards did not always correlate well with children’s scores on standardized
tests. This discrepancy was primarily the result of teachers awarding grades based on non-academic factors such as motivation and aptitude. The parents in the study assumed that grades of B and C indicated their child was making satisfactory progress, a view not necessarily shared by the teachers. For example, 68% of the parents thought that their children were reading above grade level, but 40% of these children’s results (i.e., grades) were not based on their reading scores on achievement tests. Parents of a sixth grade girl who received a B in reading and was listed on the honor roll never talked to the teacher that year, even though the student had scored below grade level for reading on a recently completed standardized text. Factors that may have contributed to students receiving higher grades in the classroom did not necessarily translate into high scores on standardized tests. The fact that parents were never familiarized with the reasons for such discrepancies resulted in parent consternation and confusion. It was not clear whether the child’s reading level was low or the achievement test did not represent the child’s reading ability as measured by other kinds of tests reported to parents.

Barge and Loges (2003) studied six middle schools, using interviews to explore parental involvement and communication activities. They interviewed 81 parents who were divided into focus groups of 9 in each, 128 students who were placed in focus groups of 7 each, and 114 teachers from the six middle schools. Barge and Loges found disagreement among parents, children, and teachers on issues related to extracurricular activities, but agreement on a child’s performance and constructive teacher-parent communications. Their results reflected general perceptions of each subgroup and were
thus limited, due primarily to the fact that they never matched the response of an individual family member with the corresponding child and the child’s teacher.

Barge and Loges’ (2003) study anticipated the conflicts that may arise if both the school and the home do not possess consensual goals for a child’s education. To help clarify these concepts, Lightfoot, in her earlier work (1978), acknowledged that a lack of consensus existed between families and teachers even when teachers were inviting families to participate in school activities.

A lack of consensus between families, children, and teachers may result in discontinuities between home and school environments that ultimately deny families and teachers an opportunity to interact with each other (Sonnenschein & Schmidt, 2000). Parents and teachers may have different expectations and desires regarding a child’s learning. Studies show that teachers reported they considered a lack of parental interest and support to be the most frequently occurring educational problem. Information flow from the teacher to the families is perhaps the most vital communication, but one that presents only half the story pertaining to what happens in the school (Sonnenschein & Schmidt, 2000).

A study of low-income African American sixth and eighth grade students in Chicago (Menacker, Hurwitz, & Weldon, 1988) found that although a majority of parents (61%) did not help with school activities, the majority of students (86%) reported that their parents did help them almost three times a week. In the same study, parents reported that they had unsuccessful or negative school experiences themselves and,
consequently, did not view the school as a source of hope for their children’s future success and welfare.

Two decades ago, Epstein (1986), in a study of more than 1,269 parents in 82 first, third, and fifth grade classes in Maryland, found only four parents who were active in all types of contact. These types of contact were sending information about schedules, receiving report cards, speaking on the phone, conferencing with the teacher, and talking to teachers before or after school. Epstein found a correlation between children’s achievement and teachers’ expectations. Fifty percent of the surveyed parents reported that they rarely received requests from teachers to become involved in school activities at home, although 80% wished teachers could show them how to do specific learning activities. Regarding requests from the teachers, 58% of the families reported that they never received any requests from the teachers to assist their children in learning activities at home. Only 30% thought they received such requests. Sixteen percent of the parents said they received no memos from the child’s teacher. Thirty-five percent of parents had never participated in teacher-parent conferences, and approximately 60% never spoke to the teacher on the phone.

A cross-ethnic survey of elementary schools (Chavkin & Williams, 1993), which sought to determine African and Hispanic American families’ general views regarding teachers, indicated that 95% of these parents agreed to help their children with homework and 97% agreed to cooperate with their children’s teachers. These teachers and parents often tended to have negative attitudes toward one another or had assumed that the corresponding other shared their views on a child’s learning aptitude and performance.
(Chavkin & Williams, 1993). Stallworth and Williams (1982) reported similar findings showing that parents who represented a wide variety of economic backgrounds, including the disadvantaged, had positive self-perceptions and were willing to do more to work with the schools. However, the teachers surveyed in this same study tended to judge a majority of these parents as doing little to actually help their children. The study did not indicate whether or not the families that intended to help teachers were eventually true to their words and, if not, what impediments may have prevented them from doing so.

In a survey of elementary school teachers and parents, Epstein (1983) reported low cooperation and interaction between parents and teachers, with teachers making few overtures toward parents and rarely requesting parental help with learning activities at home. Three fifths (60%) of the parents in the study never participated in conferences with the teachers during the school year. Roughly the same 60% of the parents reported that they had rarely talked with the teacher by telephone. However, teachers in the study reported that they had communicated with parents concerning their children’s reading program at school, even in the face of contentions that such exchanges rarely occurred. Parents and teachers were not able to understand what was expected of each other since they did not interact using various types of communication.

Sometimes, parents may not receive sufficient guidelines from their children’s teachers, which may result in misunderstandings between the teacher and the parent in question. McNaughton and Parr’s (1992) study of early childhood education development suggested that there may be a mismatch between the type or amount of information that teachers think they are giving the parents and the information that the parents are actually
receiving. McNaughton and Parr investigated the guidelines that teachers gave when sending books home for children to read with their parents. Although all teachers and parents supported the practice of reading to children, two thirds of the teachers reported they had given the parents guidelines for reading with their children, but only one third of the parents reported receiving such guidelines. From the study, it was not known what the children thought about the teachers’ and the parents’ misunderstanding regarding the guidelines. This shows the extent to which teachers’ and parents’ perceptions may differ.

A study by Linek, Rasinski, and Harkins (1997) interviewed over 60 teachers from a cross section of schools in a Midwestern metropolitan area in order to ascertain their attitudes regarding parent involvement in reading. A structured interview combining closed and open-ended questions was used to generate data. Results indicated that teachers’ perceptions of what constituted parent involvement differed. Over 90% of teachers recognized the importance of involving parents. Less than 5%, however, supported involving parents as partners.

The results from Linek and colleagues’ study (1997) provided important insights as to the type of involvement teachers felt parents should engage in. Over 90% of the teachers recognized the importance of parents’ influence in determining a child’s attitude and motivation. However, none of the parents were asked to be volunteers on matters related to decision making at the school. Parents interviewed expressed reluctance to do so, due to previous negative experiences (disagreement over an issue) with teachers. This situation of misunderstanding becomes even broader when the parents vary in terms of their approach to reading practices in the home.
The discontinuity between home and school is more pronounced when parents and teachers do not model literacy habits and activities or foster beliefs about literacy development that are similar, or at least complementary (Weigel et al., 2005). Goldenberg et al. (1992) studied the effect of literacy activities from school on Latino children's home experiences and reading achievements. They found the school activities had a large influence on a child's performance. This particular ethnic group viewed using worksheets, rather than books, as appropriate reading activity. The books that prompted more reading-like behavior did not interest the parents.

Reese et al. (2000) reported another disparity: although teachers urged parents to read to their children, the parents believed that learning to read did not start until children received formal instruction in school and, as a result, never encouraged their preschool children to read at home. In addition, the parents believed that once children began formal instruction, they needed a good deal of rote learning in order to achieve proficiency (Reese et al., 2000). When talking about how they themselves learned to read, they described the process as learning the vowels, putting sounds together to make a syllable, and connecting the syllables to form the word (Reese et al., 2000). These parents and teachers lacked a correct knowledge of each other that ultimately impeded their communication. In addition, they lacked congruence regarding the child's experiences at home and what teachers expected and desired.
Families' and Teachers' Views of Each Other

In their study, Eccles and Harold (1996) questioned teachers of elementary students on the frequency and type of interaction of either teacher to parent or parent to teacher regarding assisting children with school activities. While teachers claimed that they frequently encouraged parents to assist children in school activities, they never offered any suggestions as to exactly what parents should do. This often resulted in parents being unsure of teachers' expectations for their children.

When parent and teacher partnerships are not built on a shared understanding of their goals and expectations about an individual child’s educational needs, little success can be achieved (R. Serpell, personal communication, October 5, 2005). In Serpell et al.'s (2005) study, 53% of parents and 73% of teachers who were surveyed believed that the home played a pivotal role in a child’s reading development. Thirty-seven percent of the parents and 27% of the children believed the school was primarily responsible for the child’s reading performance. A lower percentage of parents (16%) and teachers (16%) believed the home was primarily responsible. Serpell et al.'s study indicated that a lack of common knowledge of what happened at home or school led to such divergent views.

Such perceptions continue to prevent families, children, and corresponding teachers from converging in terms of strengthening home-school partnerships (Hauser-Cram et al., 2003). Hauser-Cram et al. noted that whenever there is a lack of shared views, the child is presumably disadvantaged. In their study that compared parents’ education levels and teachers’ ratings of student academic competence, Hauser-Cram and colleagues found yet another divisive factor between families and teachers. When
teachers believed the education-related values of parents differed from their own, they rated children as less competent academically and had lower expectations for those children’s future success. These authors suggested negative consequences for the mismatch between the family’s and the teacher’s views on the child’s academic ability. The teacher’s low expectations for the child’s ability affected the child’s reading performance. Their study was limited to low-income families from an ethnically diverse group. Parents may have distinct or similar views as to how they rated their children’s competence.

Dauber and Epstein’s (1993) study of parents’ attitudes and practices of involvement in elementary and middle school also found that the strongest and the most consistent predictors of home-school relations are a specific program and teacher practices that encourage and guide parental involvement. However, the report indicated that families chose to participate in school-related activities when they perceived their children were doing better in school. Similarly, parents were more involved when they perceived that schools had strong practices of involvement. When parents believed that the school did little to involve them, they also did little at home. These authors also pointed out that because parents’ repertoires and skills were not developed throughout their children’s grade levels, parents were reported as lacking the confidence to assist their children in more complex learning tasks as the children progressed to a more advanced grade throughout their academic career. Over 90% of the parents with children in lower grades wanted to help their children in reading skills. However, teachers rarely
shared ideas with the parents about ways to conduct home reading activities, signifying a lack of shared understanding.

**Summary of the Reviewed Literature**

The first section in this chapter extends the discussion on the rationale for investigating the African American ethnic group as well as variations existing within the same ethnic group in terms of literacy events (Anderson & Stokes, 1984), literacy skills (Fitzgerald et al., 1991), beliefs about education (Neuman et al., 1995), child reading progress (Shields et al., 1983), and what parents actually do (i.e., activities or reading strategies) to help the child read (Shields et al., 1983). The discussion of these variations is more important in the understanding of an African American adult family member’s reading behavior, the home and school relationship, and the role the family plays in a child’s education than are the typical studies that examine families as a group.

The literature reviewed in the present study primarily included studies of middle class families whose children were either between ages 3 and 5 (Estrada et al., 1987; Smith, 1995; Stewart, 1995; Taylor & Strickland, 1986), or middle school-aged children between 12 and 13 (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Barge & Loges, 2003; Stewart, 1995) indicating that more research is needed in the middle elementary grades (i.e., 3 & 4).

Socioeconomic status and education level are proxy variables and in many studies have been correlated to reading achievement. Although participants in some of these studies belonged to the same ethnic group (Goldenberg et al., 1992; Neuman et al., 1995; Shields et al., 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988), it was difficult to see the relationship
between the reading practice in the home and the school (i.e., a shared understanding between the family, the child, and the teacher).

Race comparison studies have ignored the differences existing within the same ethnic group. Instead, such studies pay attention to how one ethnic group has more academic potential than the other (Anderson & Stokes, 1984; Azibo, 1988; Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Danseco, 1997; Diamond et al., 2004; Graham, 1992; Serpell et al., 2005). Literacy variables measured within these contexts make it difficult to determine whether or not there is a shared understanding of strengths and weaknesses regarding literacy practices within the same cultural group. Studying such a cultural group can help describe similarities and differences of perceptions between the adult family member, the child, and the teacher. In previous studies, family-child-teacher perceptions have been focused on communication exchanges (Barge & Loges, 2003) rather than examining the compatibility of home and school reading practices. Also a virtual absence of data compiled from a mixed methodology using survey instruments, interviews, and student records that allow triangulation could mean incomplete information regarding whether or not there is a shared understanding among the family, the child, and the associated teacher.

The paucity of such literature suggests the need for additional findings that specifically address this area—an adult family member’s, a child’s, and a teacher’s shared views of the adult family member’s reading practice and child’s reading progress. Studying what the family thinks and does regarding its reading practices as perceived by those involved (i.e., adult family member, child, teacher) can help determine whether or
not there is a shared understanding regarding the variety of an adult family member’s reading practices and the child’s reading progress in school as measured by reading assessment tools (i.e., ITBS).

This present study takes a rather different approach by investigating perceptions of African American adult family members, children, and teachers in their answers to five research questions.

Research question 1 developed from the following reasoning. Previous studies have mainly dealt with showing how a family or a child from one ethnic group differed from another ethnic group (Azibo, 1988; Graham, 1992), ignoring numerous factors within a particular home that may not be shared with the child’s teacher but could likely influence the child’s reading development (Barge & Loges, 2003; Stewart, 1995). Thus, research question 1 compared the perceptions of the adult family member, the child, and the teacher about the child’s reading level.

Research question 2 was based on the role played by families, peers, and teachers on influencing children’s self-image about their reading abilities (Pretzlik & Chan, 2004; Shields et al., 1983). However, a lack of shared understanding in this case may inhibit or prohibit the children’s motivation or realization of their ability and potential in performing well in reading (Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). The question was designed to compare the adult family member’s, child’s, and corresponding teacher’s perception of the child’s reading level or the reading level of the child as measured by the ITBS.
Research questions 3 and 4 were based on findings in the literature that reported what the parents did at home to assist with a child’s reading (Shields et al., 1983; Stewart, 1995). This research question was based on the literature finding that indicated the relationship between a family’s literacy practice and a child’s reading development. In research question 4, family reading practices were compared with a child’s perceived reading level or the level at which the child read as measured by the ITBS.

Research question 5 extends the findings on a lack of shared views to find out whether or not families see opportunities for, or barriers to, making decisions to help a child’s reading. Little research has compared the perceptions of the adult family member, the child, and the teacher regarding the perceived opportunities for or barriers to a family’s decision in assisting a child in reading. The individuals in the three subgroups were asked to share what each perceived to be opportunities for, or barriers to, a family’s decision to assist a child’s reading efforts.

Chapter 3 details the methodology, population, data collection, and analytic strategy for this particular study.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

In this study, the researcher examined the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the corresponding teacher’s perceptions concerning what the African American adult family member thought and did to assist an elementary school-aged child (Grades 3 and 4) to become a better reader. A mixed methods design was used to address the following five research questions: (a) Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level? (b) Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as measured by the child’s ITBS reading score? (c) What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader? (d) What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practice as compared to the child’s perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS reading scores? (e) What were the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to help the child to become a better reader? Each adult family member, child, and teacher involved completed a survey, and a subset of respondents was interviewed. Student data included student records of ITBS reading scores.

The major portion of this chapter describes the selection of the participants, the site, the procedures for conducting the survey and the interviews, and the data analytic strategies. Through the strategic use of both quantitative and qualitative research
methods at various points, the study provided additional information regarding the subgroups' perceptions of children’s reading levels and family reading practices in the child’s home (Castwell, 1994). By triangulating the data from multiple sources (i.e., family, child, teacher, and student reading records), the information obtained helped to strengthen the results.

Protection of Human Participants

In compliance with Federal regulations, permission to conduct this research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Northern Iowa (Appendix A1) and from the Community Schools Educational Service Center (Appendix A2). Participation in the study was voluntary. The purpose of the study was explained to each of the participants, and they were asked for their consent in the disclosure of the information they provided. Participants were informed that there were no known risks related to their participation. Similarly, each participant was assured of confidentiality, informed that all data would be destroyed upon completion of the study, and that pseudonyms would be used in place of their names.

Instrumentation

Pilot Study

Prior to conducting a pilot study, a list of both open-ended questions and interview questions was compiled from well-known research studies (i.e., Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Shields et al., 1983; Stewart, 1995). With permission obtained from the authors, certain words were omitted, added, or changed from the original version of their instruments, then categorized and arranged according to variables appropriate to this
researcher’s objectives. The variables included perceptions of a child’s reading level (i.e., whether the child was a better, average, or below average reader) and perceptions of family reading practices (providing reading materials, reading concern, regularity of reading time at home, attending the Every Child Reads parent education sessions, and having other family members read to the child). The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions for adult family members, 6 questions for children, and 5 questions for teachers (Appendix B). Each set of questions requested information about the child’s perceived reading level, the family reading practices, and demographics.

Questions regarding the respondent’s perception of the child’s reading level scores were grouped as 3 (reading above the class average), 2 (reading at the class average), or 1 (reading below the class average). Respondents were asked to rate a corresponding child according to what each believed was the child’s reading level. The child’s score on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was also obtained from the school as a source of data. Using the ITBS established protocol (Community School District Annual Report, 2003-2004) and in consultation with the school district official, the scores were categorized by the researcher into low (scores of 0-40=1), middle (scores of 41-70 =2), and high (scores of 71-100=3).

Questions regarding family reading practices were categorized into whether or not the adult family member (a) Provided Reading Materials (PRM) for the child (e.g., books, reading games); (b) Shared Reading Concerns (SRC) with the child’s teacher (e.g., problems, reading strategies); (c) provided Regular Reading Time (RRT) at home (e.g., reading after dinner, before bedtime); (d) whether or not Other Family Members...
(OFM) read to the child (e.g., sister, brother, uncle, grandmother); and (e) whether or not the adult family member attended the Every Child Reads (ECR) parent education sessions (e.g., meeting with the teacher and discussing the child's reading needs, determining the times the family member attended).

A semi-structured interview for the three subgroups was utilized for in-depth information following the survey. These were organized in the sequence of introductory questions, key questions, and closing questions (Appendix B). Prior to administering the questions, they were submitted to the researcher's committee members for review.

The purpose of this pilot study was to test the clarity and efficiency of the survey components and to predict the effectiveness of the survey instruments and interview questions to be posed to the designated population (Jaegar, 1997). For example, the pilot study indicated how the participants would likely respond to the questions used in the primary study and what would make them feel comfortable. The study also furnished insights as to how the researcher should present and comport himself in relation to study participants, how he might go about establishing rapport, and how he could gain pertinent information that would yield the expected results desired from the primary research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Following a review of the instrument, the pilot study was conducted among 6 participating families, 6 children, and each of the 6 children's corresponding teachers, respectively. Subsequent to the survey, 3 family members, their children, and their teachers were individually interviewed. During the next phase, the questions were revised and finalized. According to Cole (1992), the categories of the research

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instrument that are used for one cultural group may be redefined and adjusted when being
administered to another ethnic group, but this should be done in accordance with the
prevalent beliefs and practices extant within that culture. The instrument used in this
research was piloted, modified, reviewed, and corrected to suit the new population.

Research Site

The goal for this research was to examine family, child, and teacher perceptions
concerning what the African American adult family members did to assist their
elementary school-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) to become better readers and to
determine whether or not the three subgroups had a shared understanding. The research
site was selected to allow ready access to a convenient sampling of African American
children, their corresponding family members, and their teachers. This research was
conducted in an elementary school in a mid-sized city in Iowa. According to school
district statistics (Community School District Annual Report, 2003-2004), the research
site is one of the most highly diverse elementary schools in an otherwise predominantly
African American neighborhood. The community school district report indicated that
this research site is characterized by high poverty and is one in which the students have
experienced low levels of reading achievement when compared to other children in the
district, as measured by ITBS.

The total student population at the research site was 426, with an additional 46
preschoolers. The ethnic breakdown of this population included: 5 Asian, 24 Hispanic,
256 European American, and 141 African American children. The total minority
enrollment was 39.9%, as indicated in the school district’s statistical data (Community
Schools District Annual Report, 2003-2004). The school has consistently scored low in reading on the ITBS over the past 17 years when compared with the remaining 13 schools in the district (Community School District Annual Report, 2003-2004). The school is the largest elementary school in the district.

The Population

Participants for this study included third and fourth grade children, their adult family members, and a corresponding teacher for each of the children who were involved in the present study. Among the 141 African Americans at the school, the sampling frame consisted of a convenient sample of 43 children in Grades 3 and 4, adult family members (43), and the corresponding teachers (7). Four of the seven teachers taught Grade 3, and the remaining three teachers taught Grade 4. Eight-seven percent (87%) of the 141 African American children at the school received free and reduced lunch. The sample of 43 children was unevenly distributed across 7 third and fourth grade classes, as explained by the 7 teachers participating in the study. Among the 43 students, 19 were boys and 24 were girls. The gender, age, educational level, and job status of individual family members was also determined. Only the primary caregiver for each child was identified and selected for participation.

Demographic Characteristics

The following section provides an overview of participants’ demographic information describing the adult family member, child, and associated teacher.

Adult Family Member Sample Characteristics

Of the adult family members who participated in the present study, 31 (88.6%)
were female, and 4 (11.4%) were male. Of these adult family members, 40% \((n = 14)\) were between the ages of 26 and 35. Nearly 43% \((n=15)\) were between the ages of 36 to 45. The remaining 17.1% \((n=6)\) were aged 46 years and above. The majority of the adult family members (child’s primary caregivers) were the child’s biological parent \((85.7%; n=30)\), with 11.4% \((n=4)\) comprising guardians, and the remaining 2.9% \((n=1)\) self-identified as “other”. Table 1 presents the demographic information on gender, age, educational level, and job status of the adult family member, as well as gender and age of children.

Nearly 52% \((n=18)\) of the adult family members had less than a junior college diploma, 37.1% \((n=13)\) had a junior college diploma, and 11.4% \((n=4)\) had college or university degrees. Regarding the job status of the participating adult family members, 68.6% \((n=24)\) were employed outside of the home, whereas 31.4% \((n=11)\) did not work outside the home. Of those who worked outside the home, 57.1% \((n=13)\) of the adult family members worked full-time and 42.9% \((n=11)\) worked part-time (see Table 1).

Child Sample Characteristics

Of the 35 children who participated in the present study, 54.3% \((n=19)\) were male and 45.7% \((n=16)\) were female. Sixty percent \((n=21)\) of the children were in the third grade class with the remaining 40% \((n=14)\) being in fourth grade (see Table 1).
Table 1

*Adult Family Member and Child Sample Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult family members</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-above</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Sample Characteristics

Seven teachers participated in the present study. Four were third grade teachers and three were fourth grade teachers. Regarding teachers' ethnic heritage, one was an African American female teacher, whereas the remaining five females and one male were European American. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 30 years. A majority of teachers had fewer than 7 years of teaching experience. Table 2 presents the teacher sample by grade level taught, average number of years of teaching experience, and the number of students the teachers responded for in each class.

Table 2

Frequency Distributions of Teacher Sample by Grade Level Taught and Number of Students They Responded For

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>% of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Alexander</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Baker</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Bernard</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Edward</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Herman</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Leonard</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Simpson</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Pseudonyms are used in place of teachers' actual names.
Procedures

Survey

Permission was requested and granted by the principal for the research to be conducted (Appendix A3). A list with the addresses of 43 adult family members and children was obtained from the school secretary. Consent and assent letters (Appendices A4a, A4b, A4c, & A4d) were mailed to all participating adult family members. After agreeing to participate in the study, each of the 43 adult family members was sent a questionnaire to be completed at home. The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose and the goals of the study and how the information obtained would be applied, as well as instructing them to complete the questions individually. They were guaranteed confidentiality in their responses.

After teachers consented to participate (Appendix A4e), questionnaires intended for them and their respective students were forwarded directly to the school. All children were given instructions on how to properly fill out the questionnaire before completing it at their own pace. In the process, the researcher helped to clarify some of the questions in case a student did not understand what the questions meant.

Return Rate of Responses

A total of 43 children and their corresponding 7 teachers consented to participate in the present study and each completed the questionnaire in a school setting, yielding a 100% participation rate. As for adult family members, out of the 43 survey questionnaires sent home, the initial return yielded 19 responses. A follow-up phone call was made to all of the family participants to remind them to return the surveys. Family
members who failed to return the survey responses subsequent to this follow-up phone call were called again and asked if the researcher could visit them in their homes in order to complete the surveys. These instances frequently involved a respondent who was only semi-literate. Such individuals were contacted with the aim of making the necessary arrangements to assist them in completing the questionnaire. The assistance was provided only after consent letters from both the family and the child had been signed. This process increased the number of family member survey respondents from 19 to 27. Another follow-up effort was made by phone. This one yielded 8 more family members, raising the returned survey of adult family members to 35. Family members who did not respond to either the telephone follow-ups or the visitation by the researcher were dropped from the study, as were those children whose families did not return the survey. This resulted in a final sample size of 35 (81%) family members, 35 (81%) children, and 7 (100%) teachers. Of the 93 questionnaires mailed out, 77 were returned, yielding a response rate of 87.3%. The process of survey data gathering took a period of over six months.

Data Analysis for Survey Responses

The data analysis in the present study employed analytic strategies consisting of the frequencies of responses (yes/no), the corresponding percentages, and chi square, the latter using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 11.0. Open-ended questions were coded and organized into themes. At times, the results were manually matched with corresponding respondents' (e.g., family, child, and teacher) responses to ascertain whether or not there was a shared understanding among individuals.
based on the survey and interview responses. In some areas of the analysis where large
differences between the respondents' perceptions occurred within a variable, chi square
analyses were performed in order to determine whether or not there were significant
differences between the subgroups’ perceptions on a given variable. In other areas of the
analysis, the use of a chi-square statistical test was rendered inappropriate due primarily
to the fact that chi-square analyses require a group size of at least five in all cells.
Insufficient numbers in cells were noted especially in those instances in which there were
more than two choices of responses in a variable (i.e., choices regarding the child’s
reading level as high, middle, and low); otherwise, an unusually large chi square was
compared, increasing Type I error (Siegel & Castellan, 1988). The unequal sampling size
existing among the adult family members, the children, and the teachers also presented
statistical limitations.

The data analysis section provided a detailed description of the children’s reading
levels and family reading practice variables. Each of the two main categories of variables
was operationally defined and further classified into several other subcategories. The
section pertaining to the child’s reading level variables detailed the analyses of the three
subgroups’ respective perceptions of the child’s reading level to determine whether or not
each of the three respondents was in agreement concerning the child’s reading level, and
also whether or not the three subgroups agreed or disagreed on the adult family member
reading practice variable (see Appendix C, Table C1).
A matrix (Appendix C, Table C2) was created for each component of the respective subgroups' responses on the reading questionnaire. A detailed descriptive statistical analysis was then performed in order to manually cross-match the survey and the interview responses received from each adult family member, child, and corresponding teacher, respectively. Matching the adult family member, the child, and the teacher responses resulted in total agreement, partial agreement, and total disagreement. Total agreement referred to those instances in which the adult family member, the child, and the teacher were all in agreement across the variables. Partial agreement designated instances in which (a) the adult family member and the child were in agreement, but the teacher was not; (b) the adult family member and the teacher were in agreement, but the child was not; or (c) the child and the teacher were in agreement, but the adult family member was not. Finally, the designation of total disagreement referred to those instances in which the adult family member, the child, and the teacher were all in disagreement.

Each of the observed conflicting patterns was anchored to the child's reading level as measured by the ITBS. This process also laid the ground for determining dyads of participants that could then be interviewed for additional in-depth information. The phrases "the child reads above the class average," "the child reads at the class average," and "the child reads below the class average" were used interchangeably with "the child reads better than classmates," "the child reads as well as classmates," and "the child's classmates read better than the child" as they represent similar levels of quality.
Procedures for Interviewee Selection and Data Collection

Roughly two months after the initial survey, a follow-up procedure was conducted that consisted of sampling and interviewing a small number of the participants (12 families, 12 children, and 7 teachers). These were randomly selected from the original surveyed population. This sampling technique was employed to generate some additional information to the initial survey findings (McMillan & Wergin, 2002).

In addition to having each participant sign the consent form, the researcher also requested permission to audiotape each interview. Originally 13 children and one adult family member per child were randomly selected. The child and the child’s family member were then matched with the child’s teacher. Next, each was contacted to schedule face-to-face interviews to validate information obtained from the original survey. Interviewees were told that the interviews would last for approximately one hour. However, one family ultimately declined to participate in the interview process due to scheduling and work conflicts. This meant that one child would also have to be omitted from the final results. Thirty-one participants (2 families, 12 children, and 7 teachers) were eventually confirmed for interviews.

The availability of the adult family member depended on that person’s work schedule, family obligations, and interests. These interviews were conducted between the 5th and the 8th months following the initial surveys. Permission to tape-record the interviews was sought from each interviewee in order to provide a back up to the written notes and to ensure correctness of the information. Interviewees were informed that the tapes would be destroyed following the written transcription of the information on the
tape and completion of the project. The information was then coded, analyzed, and organized. Adult family members and some of their children were interviewed in their homes, whereas the seven teachers and some of the children were interviewed later at the school. During the interview process, codes (e.g., pseudonyms) were used in place of the names of the interviewees. Respondents were given opportunities to modify and deepen their responses by means of follow-up questions that expanded on the previous responses.

**Interview Data Analysis**

The interview responses were transcribed immediately following the taped sessions so as not to lose track of interviewees’ responses and to ensure a greater degree of accuracy. During the interview period, the researcher frequently accessed the information contained on these tapes in order to revisit the data on children’s reading levels and family reading practice variables. The express purpose of this was to ensure that the categories and themes, concepts that defined family, children, and teachers, and the perceptions of family reading practices were clearly represented in the results being generated (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The interview responses were coded according to variables used in the survey questionnaires. The purpose of the interview in the present study was to support and expand the survey information. Also, the interview questions provided respondents the opportunity to reflect on their perception of the child’s reading progress and the adult family member’s reading practices. Other emerging themes such as reading strategies used during family and child reading interactions, and perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to assist in the child’s reading efforts were coded accordingly. Responses that were judged to be vague or too
obscure were clarified or verified by means of contacting the interviewee and asking for further clarification. This procedure was performed consistently as a follow up to those interview sessions that contained vague or obscure information.

In order to identify these themes or patterns within the responses of the three subgroups, the comparison was segmented into three phases:

Phase one: The responses were read Key words and the significant ideas relevant to the research questions were noted. Quotations were jotted down in a notebook.

Phase two: The responses were coded and categorized. Each response was assigned a code relevant to variables used in the survey questionnaire.

Phase three: Additional emerging themes were noted and compared to each coded response (with other responses) in an effort to establish consistency.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

In this present study, the researcher examined the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of what the African American adult family members thought and did to assist their elementary school-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) to become better readers. The presentation of the results is based on the five research questions. The five research questions were divided as follows: (a) Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level? (b) Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as measured by the child’s ITBS reading score? (c) What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader? (d) What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practice as compared to the child’s perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS reading scores? (e) What were the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to help the child to become a better reader?

To reiterate, section one deals with research question 1, and focuses on the participants’ perceptions of a child’s reading level to determine whether or not individuals in the three subgroups had a shared knowledge of the child’s reading level (e.g., how the child perceived himself/herself as a reader, or how the child was perceived by the adult family member and the corresponding teacher). Included in this section are
patterns of the participants’ indices of agreement or disagreement and/or reported factors that accounted for the subgroups’ different or related perceptions. Section two focuses on research question 2 that compares the child’s perceived reading level and the level at which the child reads as measured by the ITBS reading score. Section three concentrates on respondents’ perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practice variables in the home. Section four compares the adult family member’s reading practices related to the child’s perceived reading level and the level at which the child reads as measured by ITBS reading scores. Again, included in this section is additional information derived from interviews that provide either similar or different views regarding the family’s role in assisting a child to read at home. Some of this information led to an independent analysis for emerging themes. Section five is mainly centered on the respondents’ perceptions regarding opportunities for, or barriers to, a family’s decision to assist a child to become a better reader (e.g., respondents’ ideas of what could have been implemented differently).

Figure 1 is a visual representation that shows a comparison of an adult family member’s, a child’s, and a teacher’s perception of the child’s reading level (on the right side) and an adult family member’s reading practices at home (on the left side). The child’s reading level was determined as either a high (better), middle (average), or low (below average) reader. The adult family member’s reading practice variables determined each respondent’s views about whether or not the adult family member: (a) Provided Reading Materials (PRM), (b) Shared Reading Concerns (SRC) with the child’s teacher, (c) had Regular Reading Time (RRT) at home, (d) Other Family Members Read
(OFMR) to or with the child, and/or (e) attended the Every Child Reads (ECR) parent education sessions. The subgroups’ perceptions of family reading practices were compared to either the child’s Perceived Reading Levels (PRL) or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) reading score. As mentioned in the methodology section, using the ITBS established protocol (School Community District Annual Report, 2003-2004) and information obtained from the school administrator, the scores were categorized by the researcher into (a) low (scores of 0-40=1), (b) middle (scores of 41-70 =2), and (c) high (scores of 71-100=3)

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** Relationship of Family, Child, and Teacher

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Research Question 1
Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level?

General Descriptive Analysis: Child’s Perceived Reading Level (PRL) by Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher

This section focuses on the participants’ perceptions of a child’s reading level to determine whether or not individuals in the three subgroups had a shared knowledge of the child’s reading level (e.g., how the child perceived himself/herself as a reader, or how the child was perceived by the adult family member and the associated teacher). Included in this section are patterns of the participants’ indices of agreement or disagreement and/or reported factors that accounted for the subgroups’ different or similar perceptions.

As mentioned earlier, to analyze the frequency and percentages of adult family member, child, and teacher perceptions of the child’s reading level, ratings of children’s perceived reading levels were categorized into numbers: 3 (reading above the class average), 2 (reading at the class average), or 1 (reading below the class average). Also the ITBS reading scores were grouped into three categories of low (scores of 0-40=1), middle (scores of 41-70 =2), or high (scores of 71-100=3).

As indicated in Table 3, a majority of both the adult family members (60%; n=22) and children (68.8%; n=24) reported that the child read at the class average, while teachers reported that 28.6% (n=10) of the children read as well as their classmates. For the survey responses in which the child was perceived by adult family members to be reading below the classmates, 37.1% (n=12) of the adult family members and 20% (n=7)
of the children reported that the children read below their classmates, whereas the teachers reported that 54.3% (n=19) of the children read below the class average. All three groups (adult family member, child, and teacher) perceived only a few children as reading better than their classmates. In this case, 2.9% (n=1) of adult family members and 11.4% (n=4) of children respectively perceived a child as reading better than his/her classmates. Teachers reported that 17.1% (n=6) of children read better than their classmates. A discrepancy was noted in those instances in which children were perceived as reading below or at the class average. Although a majority of children and their corresponding adult family members perceived the child as reading at the class average, teachers reported that a majority of the children read below the levels of their classmates. Perceptions of the adult family members and their corresponding children were consistently related.
Table 3

*Frequency Distributions of Adult Family Member (n=35), Child (n=35), and Teacher (n=7) Perceptions of Child’s Reading Level*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Middle**</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Middle**</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Low*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Low*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Low*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Middle**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>High***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>02.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>High***</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>High***</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Most classmates read better than the child  ** Child read as well as his/her classmates  *** Child read better than most classmates.
Research Question 2

Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as measured by ITBS reading scores?

Child’s Perceived Reading Level (PRL) by Child’s ITBS Reading Scores

Patterns were found when the child’s PRL and child’s ITBS reading scores were compared. Although the child’s PRL survey results indicated a majority of both the adult family members (60%; n=21) and children (68.8%; n=24) reported the child reading at the class average, the ITBS reading score indicated only 25.7% (n=7) read at this level. As it turned out, teachers’ perceptions were less disparate vis-à-vis the ITBS reading scores than were those of the children and the adult family members. Teachers reported that 28.6% (n=10) read as well as their classmates. In this instance, the ITBS indicated that 25% of the students read at their grade level.

Adult family members reported that 37.1% (n=12) of their children read below their classmates and 20.0% (n=7) of the children reported that they read below their classmates. Teachers reported over one-half (54.3%; n=19) of these particular children to be reading at a level below their classmates. According to the ITBS reading scores, 60.0% of the participating children were reading below their grade level.

Although teachers’ perceptions differed from both the adult family member and the child, generally all three subgroups (adult family member, child, and teacher) perceived only a few children as reading better than their classmates. In these instances, only 2.9% (n=1) of the adult family members and 11.4% (n=4) of children, respectively,
perceived a child as reading above the class average. Teachers' reports showed only 17.1\% (n=6) of the children read better than their classmates. The percentage reflecting the teachers' perceptions of the child's reading level was consistent with percentages represented by the ITBS reading scores, which were at 14.3\% (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Frequency Distributions of Adult Family Member (n=35), Child (n=35), and Teacher (n=7) Perceptions of Child's Reading Level (CRL) by ITBS Reading Score*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>ITBS score %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Middle**</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Middle**</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Middle**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Low*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Low*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Low*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>High***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>High***</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>High***</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Most classmates read better than the child  ** Child read as well as classmates  *** Child read better than most classmates. PRL= Perceived Reading Level.
Specific Descriptive Analysis of Child’s Perceived Reading Level (PRL)

Adult family member, child, and teacher. Although the discrepancies regarding the subgroups’ views of the children’s reading levels were noted in the previous (general) analysis, in this section an alternative (specific) descriptive analysis was performed to manually match the adult family member, the corresponding child, and the associated teacher to determine whether or not the respondents (family, child, teacher) agreed on views regarding the child’s reading level. To achieve this end, each respondent’s perception of the child’s reading level rating was matched to determine whether or not the respondents agreed or disagreed on the child’s reading level. Patterns of those who agreed or disagreed on a variable were divided into categories A, B, C, D, and E (see Table 5). Category A represents the instances in which the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agreed, whereas category B represents cases in which the adult family member and the child agreed, but the teacher did not. Category C stands for the areas in which the adult family member and the teacher agreed, but the child did not, whereas D stands for the instances where the child and the teacher agreed, but the adult family member did not. Finally category E stands for cases where the adult family member, the child, and the teacher all disagreed.

The following section presents indices of agreement and disagreement between the corresponding respondents’ views regarding the child’s reading level. As mentioned previously, matching the adult family member’s response to that of the child and the associated teacher yielded some noticeable patterns. The patterns were divided into the following categories (see Table 5): those who expressed total agreement (Column A),
partial agreement (Columns B, C, and D), or total disagreement (Column E). Total agreement referred to those cases in which all corresponding respondents (family, child, and teacher) agreed as to the child’s perceived reading level. In the partial agreement category, only two of the corresponding respondents agreed. For the total disagreement category, all corresponding respondents disagreed.
Table 5

Comparison of Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher Perceptions of the Child's Reading Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CN</td>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>CN</td>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>CN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonde</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>Delta*</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td>Charles*</td>
<td>2 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>2 2 3</td>
<td>Lilian</td>
<td>1 3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen*</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>Herma</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td>Moran</td>
<td>1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renate*</td>
<td>1 1 1</td>
<td>Illiad</td>
<td>2 2 3</td>
<td>Zack*</td>
<td>1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gembo</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>2 2 3</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>1 1 1</td>
<td>OMal*</td>
<td>1 1 2</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>2 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Umb*</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vivi</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wil*</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aar</td>
<td>2 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ceci*</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foe</td>
<td>1 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Isa</td>
<td>2 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key for the abbreviations: F= Family; C = Child; T = Teacher; CN=Child Name; PRL= Perceived Reading Level. *An asterisk indicates an interviewed child whose family and corresponding teacher were also interviewed.

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Adult family member, child, and teacher agreed. In this first category, the adult family member, the child, and the corresponding teacher shared views of the level at which the child was reading. Of the 35 adult family member-child-teacher cases, only six cases showed the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agreed regarding a child’s reading level. Of these six cases, four scored the child as reading at the class average and two scored the child as reading lower than classmates. Two children who were perceived by all three subgroups as reading at the class average scored as reading below the grade level on the ITBS (see Table 6).

Table 6

Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher Agreed on the Child's PRL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anode</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Kelly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Queen*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Renate*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Gembo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Kathy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRL=Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child’s Name; *Interviewed child; NPR=National Percentile Rank
Adult family member and child agreed, but teacher did not. In the second category, there were 14 instances in which the adult family member and the child were in agreement, but the teacher was not. Out of these 14 cases, teachers scored 7 children as reading below the class average and scored the other 7 children as reading either above or at the class average. In these instances, no child perceived himself or herself as reading better than classmates. Every time the teacher scored the child as reading above the class average, the family scored the child as reading at the class average. Half of the teachers rated the child as reading above or at the class average; the other half scored the child as reading below the class average. Teachers' ratings of a child’s reading level were consistent with the child’s ITBS score (see Table 7).
Table 7

Adult Family Member and Child Agreed on Child’s PRL, but Teacher Did Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Delta*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emma</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Herma*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Iliad*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jenny</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. OMal*</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Paul</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Umb*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Vivi</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Wil</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Aar</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Ceci*</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Foe</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Isa</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRL=Perceived Reading Level; CN= Child’s Name; *Interviewed child; NPR= National Percentile Rank

Interviewed families, children, and teachers in this second category revealed some concerns regarding the child’s reading progress. One of the seven teachers, Mrs. Edwards, Herma’s teacher, expressed observations that reflected the nature of communication exchanges with Mokena, Herma’s mother. This is what Mrs. Edward stated:

Again, the child struggles on her own, in order to get what she wants out of the classroom. The family does not help at all. I have never seen neither the mother nor the father calling or helping the child. I called the other day and I was cut off. I tried to talk to them a couple of other times on the phone, but I am always cut off, and this time they didn’t show for the conference.
Although Mrs. Edwards talked about Herma's efforts in reading, she also expressed dissatisfaction with Mokena's assistance of Herma's reading efforts. On the one hand, Mrs. Edwards appeared to blame Mokena for her unwillingness to receive calls to discuss the Herma's reading progress. While from the adult family member's perspective, Mokena viewed Herma's reading effort in a positive way, although Mokena felt she lacked the time to support Herma in her reading effort.

Mokena's response reflected her past experience when she last communicated with Mrs. Edwards. Although Mokena seemed dissatisfied with the content of Mrs. Edwards' phone messages, she also offered a solution for the kind of message she thought would be beneficial to both Herma and her teacher. This is what she said:

The other day Mrs. Edwards called. Instead of telling me about my daughter's performance in reading, she started telling me about how stubborn my daughter was. I talked to the teacher and explained to her of what I was doing at home. Both of us talked... because she comes in and asks how my daughter is doing and I tell her my daughter liked to read.

Despite Mokena's past negative experience with her daughter's teacher, she was aware of Herma's reluctance to work hard on her school work and her unwillingness to acknowledge her reading difficulties and work toward improving her reading. As Mokena stated, "My daughter's reading level has dropped quite substantially." Despite Mrs. Edwards and Mokena's difference of opinion about each other, Herma knew very little about the nature of the interactions between her mother and her teacher and the fact that they thought she was not getting enough help. This is what she stated when she was asked about her reading progress: "I am a better reader. My classmates ask me and I help them read."
The shared experiences of Mokena, Herma, and Mrs. Edwards demonstrated a lack of day-to-day interactions as well as their efforts to make sense of their differences and what each one could do for the betterment of Herma’s reading progress.

**Adult family member and teacher agree, but child did not.** In the third category, six adult family members and six teachers agreed about the child’s reading level in six cases, but the corresponding child did not agree. In the 5 of the 6 cases, adult family members and teachers scored the child lower, whereas the children each self-scored as reading above or at the class average (see Table 8).

### Table 8

**Adult Family Member and Teacher Agreed on Child’s PRL, but Child Did Not**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Charles*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lillian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Moran</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Zack*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Emily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Herb</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRL=Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child’s Name; *Interviewed child; NPR=National Percentile Rank
Zack, who was rated by his mother, Holly, and his teacher, Mrs. Simpson, as reading below the class average, self-scored as reading at the class average. When Zack’s mother was interviewed, she noted that Zack was quite smart, but too quiet to express his opinion. The teacher, Mrs. Simpson, also shared that the child enjoyed reading. Holly’s ideas about her son did not directly reflect Zack’s reading progress. Instead, Holly talked about how children could generally be taught. However, she understood that individual children need help from their teachers. This is how Holly shared her thoughts:

To learn more about your students, you have to get familiarized with them. You have to know them on a one-to-one basis. Whether you have 30 in your class or 15, you have to pay attention to some of those who are quiet sometime. Things like during recess, or take a look at their stuff. Get personalized - that way you know where they lack the knowledge and you know what type of course you may offer because a lot of the kids who are enthused about going to school. There are a lot of kids who won’t go to school. A lot of kids who don’t want to go do that for two reasons: one, the parents are keen about going; second, they know they gonna get the help they need. Kids don’t learn the same way other people learn. You got to figure out what is going to make your child learn. For instance, if this child is getting Ds, there is a problem. Don’t imagine that this is their problem. You need to help them figure out. Maybe they have a problem with answering questions. Maybe they can answer a question if they know it. Maybe they have a problem with the test. Maybe they do excellent in their homework, but when it comes to a test they can’t do it or they cannot remember things upfront. I think teachers need to find different ways of learning and to work with the kids’ learning style.

There was a lack of shared knowledge between Mrs. Simpson and Holly regarding what the adult family member was doing at home in reading. When Mrs. Simpson was asked how Zack was doing in reading, she seemed unfamiliar with any of the child’s adult family members, or the reading activities taking place at home. However, she was satisfied with Zack’s reading progress. As Mrs. Simpson said,
I think they [family members] are busy. They know the child reads at the grade level and enjoys reading. His parents are very involved and I help Zack with reading to improve his reading skills. The family can do so much, if they could just go over the homework with the child.

This is what Zack expressed about his reading, “I am improving in my reading and I like reading.”

Child perceived reading level: Child and teacher agreed, but adult family member did not. In the fourth category (see Table 9), there were five cases in which the child and teacher agreed, but the adult family member did not. In the five cases, 3 family members scored the child as reading above or at the class average, 3 teachers scored the child as reading as well as the classmates, 3 children self-scored as reading at the class average.

Table 9

*Child and Teacher Agreed on Child’s PRL, but Adult Family Member Did Not*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Nieta*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Sally</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Benny</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Tatty*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Jessica</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRL=Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child’s Name; *Interviewed child; NPR=National Percentile Rank

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In this category, when Nieta’s mother, Robina, was interviewed regarding what she thought about Nieta’s reading progress, Robina said she respected Mr. Leonard (the teacher) but she expressed regret about Nieta’s behavior.

I highly honor her teacher’s work. One part it is my child’s behavior and the other part is the teacher’s problem. Nieta is more of a leader. She wants to be a leader that makes her to be very talkative in class. She may find some other time to practice her leadership, but not the time when the teacher asks her to read. I may be wrong, but I have decided to move her to another school. I believe she can do better than where she is right now reading level. The teacher also could do a better job of letting me know when my daughter is doing well.

Robina’s comments emphasized the need for a good relationship and open communication between herself and Mr. Leonard, but indicated an area of dissatisfaction. On one hand, Robina was concerned with Nieta’s behavior, but on the other hand, she blamed Mr. Leonard for overlooking Nieta’s reading problem. However, Robina did not know that Mr. Leonard perceived Nieta as reading at the class average.

When Nieta was asked why she thought she read as well as her classmates, she did not speak about her behavior. Instead, she talked about what a better reader she was saying, “I don’t know; I feel like I do read as well as everybody else and always like to read.”

**Adult family member, child, and teacher disagreed.** In four cases, the adult family member, child, and teacher disagreed. Despite the disagreement among the respondents, all of the children self-scored as reading above or at the class average. When all respondents disagreed on the child’s PRL, scores indicated teachers perceived all but one child as reading below the class average. However, in this instance, 3 out of 4 children self-scored as reading above the class average, and one child self-scored as
reading at the average. One family member scored the child as reading below the class average, whereas that child self-scored herself as reading at the class average, and the teacher scored the child as reading above the class average (see Table 10).

Table 10

**Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher Disagreed on Child’s PRL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Felicia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. George</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bertha*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Dan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRL=Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child’s Name; *Interviewed child; NPR=National Percentile Rank

**Summary for Research Question 2**

Whereas the majority of adult family members and children thought most children read at the class average, teachers perceived that the majority of children read below their classmates’ levels. The teachers’ assessments were reflected in the child’s ITBS reading score, which is also meant to reflect the child’s reading skills. The alternative analysis that matched responses from an individual family member, child, and teacher showed some patterns. When all three (family, child, teacher) agreed on the child’s reading level,
the child was scored as reading above everybody else. When they all disagreed, the child was scored low by the teacher. Most children self-scored as reading above or at the class average. A consistent pattern was also observed. When the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agreed, the child, in most cases, was scored as reading above or at the class average. The adult family members and their corresponding children agreed more often than did the teachers with either the adult family member or the child.

However, the reading levels of most children as perceived by the teachers were consistent with children’s actual ITBS reading scores. During the interview process, family members and teachers often reflected their agenda beyond the concerns of the child’s reading level. However, they rarely had opportunities to meet face-to-face with one another to discuss matters related to a child’s reading progress.

Research Question 3

What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader?

General Descriptive Analysis: Perceptions of Family Reading Practices

This section concentrates on respondents’ views of adult family members’ reading practice variables in the home and the way such practices related to the child’s perceived reading level or ITBS reading scores. Included in this section is additional information derived from interviews that provided either similar or different views regarding the family’s role in assisting a child to read at home. After an analysis of the respondents’ perceptions of the children’s reading level, research question 3 focused on whether or not
the adult family member, the child, and the teacher had a shared view of what was being done to help the child to become a better reader.

To reiterate, the purpose of the question was to determine whether respondents thought the adult family member (a) Provided Reading Materials (PRM), (b) Shared Reading Concerns (SRC) with the child’s teacher, (c) had Regular Reading Time at home (RRT); (d) identified Other Family Members who Read (OFMR) to or with the child and (e) attended Every Child Reads (ECR) parent education sessions, and the extent to which these practices related to the child’s reading level. This section also consists of data and results related to the hypothesis examining the differences among the subgroups’ perception of family reading practices. Patterns of responses from the above category of questions were compared with the child’s perceived reading level and ITBS reading score. Additional information is provided from interview responses for some cases. The following section begins by showing the frequencies of the respondents regarding whether or not the family provided reading materials.
**Provided Reading Materials (PRM) by Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher**

In the analysis of the frequencies and the percentages of family, child, and teacher perceptions regarding whether or not the adult family member provided the child reading materials, over one-half (60.0%; \( n = 21 \)) of the families and 68.6% (\( n = 24 \)) of the children reported the family provided reading materials, whereas teachers reported that slightly over one-half 54.3% (\( n = 19 \)) of the adult family members provided the child with reading materials (Figure 2).

Note. Teachers indicated 19 families provided reading materials to their children

**Figure 2.** Perceptions that adult family members provide reading materials by adult family member, child, and teacher.

---

**Shared Reading Concerns (SRC) by Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher**

Another area of analysis was whether or not the family shared its reading concerns with the child’s teacher. Figure 3 revealed that 56.0% (\( n = 20 \)) of the family members and 62.0% (\( n = 21 \)) of the children reported that the adult family members shared
reading concerns with the child's teacher, whereas teachers reported that 42.0 % \((n=10)\) of the family members shared reading concerns with them (Figure 3).

![Bar chart showing perceptions of reading concerns by family, child, and teacher.]

Note. Teachers indicated only 10 families shared reading concerns with them.

*Figure 3.* Perceptions that adult family member shares reading concerns by adult family member, child, and teacher.

**Provided Regular Reading Time (RRT) by Adult Family Member and Child**

As for the variable of adult family members providing regular reading time, under one-half, 42.9\% \((n = 15)\), of the family members and over one-half, 65.7\% \((n = 23)\), of the children reported that they had regular reading time at home (Figure 4).
Figure 4. Perceptions that family has regular reading time by adult family member and child

Other Family Members Read (OFMR) to or With the Child by Adult Family Member and Child

Next, 40% \((n = 14)\) of the family members and more than one-half, 54.3% \((n = 19)\) of the children reported that other family members read to or with the child (Figure 5).
Attended Every Child Reads (ECR) Parent Education Sessions by Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher

In another area of analysis, the respondents were asked whether or not the family attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. Of the adult family members, 45.7% \( (n=16) \) reported that they attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. Children reported that 37.1% \( (n=13) \) of the family members did attend the Every Child Reads parent education sessions, whereas teachers reported that only 31.4% \( (n=11) \) of the adult family members attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions (Figure 6).

*Figure 5.* Perceptions that other family members read to or with child by family and child


Note. Teachers indicated only 11 families attended Every Child Reads conferences.

Figure 6. Perception that adult family member attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions by adult family member, child, and teacher.

Significance Level of Perceptions Between the Subgroups

The null hypothesis was stated: There are no differences in perceptions between each adult family member, child, or teacher who agreed and those who disagreed that the family provided Reading Materials (PRM), Shared Reading Concerns (SRC), had Regular Reading Time (RRT), had Other Family Members Read to the child (OFMR), or the family attended the Every Child Reads (ECR) parent education sessions. The results of scores of family reading practices partially support the hypothesis. The perceptions measured by adult family member SRC were not significantly different between families, children, and teachers ($p>.05$). However, children’s perceptions as measured by adult
family member PRM variable and adult family member having RRT were significantly lower than the perceptions of families and teachers ($p<.05$). Furthermore, the teacher perceptions as measured by adult family member SRC were significantly lower than the perceptions of family and child ($p<.05$). Finally, the family perceptions as measured by OFMR to child were significantly lower than the perceptions of the child ($p<.05$; see Table 11).

Table 11

*Significance Level for Respondents’ Perceptions Between the Subgroups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = .257, $p = .612$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = 8.257, $p = .004^*$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = 6.429, $p = .011^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = .714, $p = .398$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = 1.400, $p = .234$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = 3.731, $p = .053$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRT</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = 2.314, $p = .128$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = 8.257, $p = .004^*$</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFMR</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = .257, $p = .237$</td>
<td>$\chi^2$ = .257, $p = .612$</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A significant difference was found among the subgroups
Research Question 4

What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practices as compared to the child’s perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS?

Specific Descriptive Analysis

Again, as an alternative to the general descriptive analysis, respondents were manually matched and/or compared to determine the indices of agreement or disagreement on a family reading practice variable. As presented in Appendix C, Table 28, the indices of agreement and disagreement regarding family reading practices were also compared to both the child’s reading level and the child’s ITBS reading scores. This section presents the respondents’ views of whether or not the family provided reading material. The following are patterns of respondents’ agreements and disagreements on whether or not the adult family member Provided Reading Materials (PRM), Shared Reading Concerns (SRC), had Regular Reading Time (RRT) for the child at home, other family members read (OFMR) to or with the child, and attended the Every Child Reads (ECR) parent education sessions at the child’s school. Included in this section are interview responses that provide more information highlighting several factors that accounted for differing perceptions from the adult family member, child, and teacher differing perceptions.
Adult Family Member Provided Reading Materials to Child

Adult family member, child, and teacher agreed. Of the 35 family member-child-teacher cases, only 4 adult family members, children, and teachers were in agreement. The patterns of agreement or disagreement on whether or not the adult family member provided reading materials were then compared with the child’s perceived reading level and/or ITBS scores to determine whether there were relationships between each adult family member’s provision of reading materials and the child’s reading progress. Four adult family members and three teacher cases scored the child as reading above or at the grade level. All of the children self-scored as reading at or above the class average (see Table 12).

Table 12

Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher Agreed on Adult Family Member PRM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRM</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Bertha*</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRM = Provided Reading Material; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child
Adult family member and teacher agreed, but child did not. In four cases, adult family members and teachers agreed that the adult family members provided reading materials. Of these, teachers scored 2 children as reading below the class average and the other 2 as reading at the class average, whereas one adult family member scored the child as reading below the class average and two children self-scored as reading at the class average. One of the 2 children who self-scored as reading below their classmates was scored as reading at the class average on the ITBS (see Table 13).

Table 13

Adult Family Member and Teacher Agreed on PRM, but Child Did Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRM</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRM = Providing Reading Material; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

Adult family member and child agreed, but teacher did not. In 10 cases the adult family member and the child agreed that the adult family member provided reading materials, but the teacher disagreed. Of the 10 cases, 5 teachers scored the child as
reading at or above the class level; 8 children self-scored as reading at or above the class average; and 7 adult family members scored the child as reading at or above the class level. Although one-half of teachers scored the child as either reading above or at the class average, none of the teachers reported that the family provided the child reading materials (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Adult Family Member and Child Agreed on PRM, but Teacher Did Not*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRM</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Charles*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lilian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Omal*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Paul</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Queen*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Zack*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Umb*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Vivi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Isa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRM = Provided Reading Material; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

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In response to the interview question about whether or not teachers are aware that the adult family member provided reading materials, one of the teachers (Mrs. Bernard) thought that the adult family member did not, whereas both the adult family member (Naali) and the child (Delta) thought the adult family member did. Mrs. Bernard seemed unfamiliar with what Delta’s adult family members did at home. She relied on the available classroom reading materials that children could select from and perhaps take home to read to or with their families. At the same time, Mrs. Bernard realized that there were areas she needed to improve to better approach the adult family member regarding reading at home. As Mrs. Bernard explained,

I have not met the family this year and actually I do what I can. I do not have the time to reach this and that house. I have a lot of books from which the child can choose from and take that home to read with or to the family or sister. Some of these kids take those [books] home and other do not take these home. They can make sure that they read half an hour or if they have the older siblings to have those older or younger siblings read to the younger kids. I have told them, but I have no time to monitor. We want them to monitor the reading. Students need to be responsible so that the parents don’t have to bother telling them, but they lack the routine to do that. They tell me they do not have the time to do that. The parents do not care.

She added,

We do have a variety of books as you can see. If they want they can take home and read. I ask them to take the book that they are interested in. I have never asked them to get books at home, the kind of books they [family] have. Maybe that is something I need to work on.

Delta talked about the kind of reading material she got from her family, and Naali (her mother) recalled the kind of reading materials Delta brought from school. When asked whether the family provided her reading materials, Delta said, “My mom asks me to read the newspaper and I tell her things that happened. I also got books for Christmas.”
Naali never shared whether or not she provided Delta with reading materials. However, Naali recalled what the teacher once told her about what she should do with reading material sent from school. This is what Naali noted, “The teacher had contacted me about materials sent from school and I read those with Delta sometimes.”

Child and teacher agreed on adult family member PRM, but adult family member did not. For this category, five child-teacher cases agreed that the adult family member provided reading materials, but the family did not agree. Of the five cases, 3 teachers scored the child as reading high or at the class average, 4 children self-scored as reading at the class average, and 3 adult family members scored the child as reading at the class average. In this category when the respondents agreed that the family provided reading materials at home, 2 out of the 5 children were scored by all three subgroups as reading either at or above the class average (see Table 15).
Table 15

*Child and Teacher Agreed on Adult Family Member PRM, but Adult Family Member Did Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>PRM</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Iliad</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Aar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Ceci*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: PRM = Provided Reading Material; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

Adult Family Member Shared Reading Concerns with the Child’s Teacher

The respondents were also asked whether or not the adult family member shared reading concerns with the child’s teacher. The interview question was based on the respondents’ knowledge of whether the adult family member shared or did not share during the conferences when the child’s reading progress was discussed.

Adult family member, child, and teacher agreed. Table 16 shows five instances in which the family member, the child, and the corresponding teacher all agreed that the family shared reading concerns with the child’s teacher. In those instances, 3 adult family members, 5 children, and 4 teachers scored the child as reading at the class average; adult family members scored 2 children as reading below the class average.
Data indicated that when the family member, the child, and the teacher all agreed that the family shared reading concerns, the teacher scored the child as reading above or at the class average. While the adult family member perceived child 14 (Nieta) and child 24 (Benny) as reading below the class average, the children self-scored and were scored by the teachers as reading at the class average (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Adult Family Member, Child, and Teacher Agreed on Adult Family Member SRC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>SRC</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Anode</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Illiad*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Kelly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Nieta</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Benny</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SRC = Shared Reading Concerns; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed Child

Adult family member and child agreed, but teacher did not. Table 17 shows nine instances in which the adult family member and the child agreed, but the teacher did not agree that the family member shared reading concerns. In these cases, 6 adult family members and 7 children self-scored as reading at or above the class average, and teachers
scored 3 children as reading at or above the class average. Three adult family members scored the child and 2 children self-scored as reading below the class average, whereas teachers scored 6 children as reading below the class average. When the adult family member and the child agreed but the teacher disagreed, most teachers scored the child as reading below the class average.

Table 17

Adult Family Member and Child Agreed on SRC, but Teacher Did Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>SRC</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Felicia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Paul</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Renate*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Umb*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Vivi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Aar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Dan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Foe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Herb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SRC = Shared Reading Concerns; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child
Sonda, an adult family member, provided a more expansive illustration of this area when she was interviewed. She was more concerned with the teacher’s well being. Sonda thought the problem was not the child, but the teacher’s low pay.

Mrs. Alexander calls me when the child has a problem. I think teachers need to be paid more. I think teachers would put more effort into teaching if they were paid, because the teachers are raising our future kids and without the teachers, we will not raise any of them. They are there to teach our kids how to push the future forward and they have to train them how to work, we are training our kids how to respect people. Every little knowledge kids need comes from the teachers. If we are not willing to pay the teachers as much as we pay the police, they will not be able to train our kids.

Mrs. Alexander had a different view:

The family has never shared any concerns. I think they want the child to succeed. I think the family is not involved due to job obligation; I am going to see that her participation is encouraged. I send things home. I have not talked to the family. I just need to overcome the child’s frustration. The child is easily frustrated. I could take time to share with parents, but my goal is to get the child to the level she deserves.

Child and teacher agreed, but adult family member did not. Table 18 shows only two cases in which the child and teacher agreed that the adult family member shared reading concerns, but the adult family member did not agree. In this case, the teachers scored the children as reading below the class average, whereas one adult family member scored the child and 2 children self-scored as reading at the class average.
Table 18

Child and Teacher Agreed on SRC, but Adult Family Member Did Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>SRC</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Wil*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Emily</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SRC = Shares Reading Concerns; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

Adult family member and teacher agreed, but child did not. In only one case did the adult family member and the teacher agree that the family shared reading concerns, but the child did not. In this case, the child self-scored as reading at the class average, whereas both the teacher and the adult family member scored the child as reading below the class average (see Table 19).

Table 19

Adult Family Member and Teacher Agreed on SRC, but Child Did Not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>SRC</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Moran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SRC = Shared Reading Concerns; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name NPR= National Percentile Rank

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In summary, the patterns show that when the family, the child, and the teacher agreed that the family shared reading concerns with the child's teacher, the teacher scored the child as reading above or at the class average. When the adult family member and the child agreed, but the teacher disagreed, the teacher scored the child as reading below the class average.

**Family Has Regular Reading Time for the Child**

*Family and child agreed and/or disagreed.* Adult family members and children were asked if they had a regular reading time at home. In 10 of the 35 cases, the adult family member and the child agreed that they had a regular reading time at home. Six adult family members scored the child as reading at the class average. Four adult family members scored the child as reading below the class average. Eight of the 10 children self-scored as reading at the class average, and 2 self-scored above the class average. Scores for the child's reading level showed that when child and family members agreed that they had regular reading time at home, the teachers scored 5 children as reading above the class average, while 5 children were scored as reading below their classmates (see Table 20).
Table 20

*Adult Family Member and Child Agreed on Having RRT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>RRT</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bertha*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Felicia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Illiad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jenny</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Lilian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Moran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Sally</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Zack*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Umb*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: RRT = Regular Reading Time; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

In most instances, when the adult family member and the child agreed that there was a regular reading time in the home, either the teacher scored the child as reading above the child’s classmates, the child self-scored as reading at the class average, or the adult family member scored the child as reading at the class average. None of the
children self-scored as reading below their classmates when the child and the family perceived having a regular reading time at home.

**Other Family Members Read to or With the Child at Home**

What happened when other members of the family read to the child at home? Whether or not they agreed, what was the child’s reading level as perceived by the adult family member, the child, and the teacher?

Adult family member and child agreed. In 9 out of 35 cases, adult family members and children agreed that other family members read to the child at home. Out of these nine cases, 6 teachers scored the children as reading above or at the class average. Seven adult family members scored the child and 7 children self-scored as reading at the class average. In three instances in which the family and the child agreed, the teacher scored the child as reading below the class average. In two of those cases, the child self-scored as reading at the class average. In this group, only 2 families scored the child and 2 children self-scored as reading below the class average. In this category, none of the adult family members scored the child as reading above the class average (see Table 21).
Table 21

Adult Family Member and Child Agreed on Having OFMR to or with the Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>OFMR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Kelly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Emma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Illiad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Omal*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Paul</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Vivi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Isa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Jessica</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Bertha*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: OFMR = Other Family Member Read; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

Adult family member and child disagreed on whether other family members read to or with the child. What happened when the adult family member and child disagreed on whether or not other family members read to the child at home? In 19 cases, adult family members and children disagreed that other family members read to or with the child at home (see Table 22). Teachers scored 13 children as reading below the class...
average, 4 as reading at the class average, and 2 as reading above the class average.

However, 14 out of the 19 children self-scored as reading at or above the class average.

Teachers scored more children as reading below the class average compared with how most children self-scored.

Table 22

*Adult Family Member and Child Disagreed on Having OFMR to or With the Child*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>OFMR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Queen*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Renate*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Kathy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Herma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jenny</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Umb*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Wil*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Aar</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OFMR = Other Family Member Read; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name
NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

(Table Continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>OFMR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Ceci*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Foe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Charles*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Lilian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Moran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Zack*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: OFMR = Other Family Member Read; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN = Child Name; NPR = National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed Child

**Adult Family Member Attended the Every Child Reads Parent Education Sessions**

*Adult family member, child, and teacher agreed.* In only two instances did all respondents agree that the adult family member attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. In these cases, one case of the adult family member, the child, and the teacher scored the child as reading below and the other case of the adult family...
member, the child, and the teacher scored the child as reading below the class average (see Table 23).

Table 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>ECR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITBS</td>
<td>NPR%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Queen*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Renate*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ECR = Every Child Reads; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name  
NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

Adult family member and child agreed, but teacher disagreed. In six instances the adult family member and the child agreed, but the teacher did not. In these cases, teachers scored 5 children as reading below their classmates, whereas the adult family members and children scored the child as reading at the class average in most instances (see Table 24).

Five of the 6 children indicated that they were quite pleased with their performance, and one of them (Charles) sympathized with his mother’s (Trivia) busy schedule. As Charles explained:
My parents are busy working and I know they cannot attend the meeting. For example my mom has two jobs. She is very busy. I can give you their phone number and you can try to call them.

According to Trivia, attending the Every Child Reads parent education sessions did not appear to be very important as long the child was doing well in school. As she expressed:

My child does well in school, so I do anything I can to help. I think education is concerned with responsibility lying on the parents. I have not attended the meeting. My child does well in almost every subject. If you are sending the child to school, you know you don’t want to aid them with help they are receiving in school, you know the child is going to act however the parent allows them to act. If the child doesn’t read, that means someone in the home is not making them feel like reading. It is important for them to do so, that it is home based act. The parents need to help. Then kids go to school they get help from the teacher. Then, they bring that help home. They show to the parents and they go from there, and the parents should be there for that, and whether they can do it or not or find someone else who can do it. They have to make sure that someone at home can do it.
### Table 24

*Adult Family Member and Child Agreed on ECR Parent Education Sessions, but Teacher Did Not*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>ECR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Charles*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Moran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Umb*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Vivi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Herb</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Issa</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:** ECR=Every Child Reads; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN=Child Name; NPR= National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

In only two instances did the adult family member and the teacher agree, but the child did not. The adult family member scored the child and the child self-scored as reading at the class average, but the teachers scored the child as reading above the class average (see Table 25).
Table 25

*Adult Family Member and Teacher Agreed on ECR Parent Education Sessions, but Child Did Not*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>ECR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jenny</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Aar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ECR = Every Child Reads; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN = Child Name
NPR = National Percentile Rank

**Child and teacher agreed, but adult family member did not.** In four cases the child and the teacher agreed that the adult family member attended ECR parent education sessions, but the adult family member did not agree. In these four cases, 3 children self-scored as reading at or above the class average. Adult family members scored 2 children as reading at the class average, and teachers scored 3 children as reading at the class average (see Table 26).
Table 26

*Child and Teacher Agreed on ECR Parent Education Sessions, but Adult Family Member Did Not*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CN</th>
<th>ECR</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>ITBS</th>
<th>NPR%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bertha*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. George</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Kelly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Omal*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ECR = Every Child Reads; PRL = Perceived Reading Level; CN = Child Name; NPR = National Percentile Rank; *Interviewed child

It appeared that some adult family members and the corresponding teachers who were interviewed had little knowledge of what was expected by the other party in terms of helping the child read. Most children responded with either, “I don’t know,” or simply refused to answer the question. However, those who responded to interview questions provided information, when available, after each of the indices of agreement or disagreement on a variable.

In addition to alternating the survey and interview information, an independent analysis was conducted to provide a discussion of issues that tended to surface more often (i.e., issues regarding whether the teachers had discussed ways to assist the child in
reading during Every Child Reads parent education sessions, or whether or not adult family members used reading strategies).

An Independent Analysis

Whether Families Were Provided or Used Reading Strategies

During interviews centered on OFMR/SRC/ECR variables, a question surfaced regarding whether families used reading strategies and whether the teacher shared any reading strategies to help families assist their children with reading efforts. In response to the questions pertaining to whether or not they provided reading strategies to adult family members, each of the 7 participating teachers reported that they had not provided families with reading strategies.

Mrs. Baker: No strategy.
Mrs. Bernard: I try to encourage her to read at home, just read anything.
Mrs. Simpson: The family is not open to a relationship yet.
Mrs. Alexander. No.
Mrs. Hartman: No.
Mrs. Edward: No, I haven’t tried.
Mr. Leonard: No.

To assess whether or not the adult family members used reading strategies when reading to or with a child, each of the 7 adult family members was asked to identify some situations in reading with a child (i.e., what they did when they arrived at a word the child did not understand). Each corresponding child was also asked to share some things the adult family member did when reading to or with the child.

As noted earlier, none of the teachers said they ever provided the families with reading strategies nor were they aware if families used strategies. However, 6 out of 7 adult family members and all 7 children indicated that they used reading strategies at
home. Several responses from adult family members and their corresponding children indicated that they used strategies similar to those used in reading classrooms. When coded into categories, it appeared that families used reading strategies such as Phonemic Awareness (Adam, 1992; Bishop et al., 2000), Support Reading Strategy (Rasinski & Padak, 2004), Contextual Analysis (Rasinski & Padak, 2004), Modeling Strategy (Rasinski & Padak, 2004), and Reciprocal Questioning (Manzo, 1969). The following are families’ responses on methods they employed when reading to or with their children.

**Support reading strategy/phonemic awareness.** Humphrey has been monitoring Ceci’s reading and provided her with assistance, support, and encouragement as she reads. At the same time, he provided a phonemic awareness strategy when he asked Ceci to sound out a word.

Humphrey (Family): I explain what the word means. I make sure she understands what the word means.

Ceci (Child): They try to make me figure it out... sound it out, do action

**Contextual analysis/prediction.** Ana reported that she provided Renate with challenging books and encouraged her to read by herself. In that case, Ana used contextual analysis strategy, where Renate was required to use the context (pictures) to predict what the story was about. This strategy helps the reader become curious and interested in what is happening in the story.

Ana (Family): I try to get her some challenging books
Renate (Child): I try to look at pictures. They correct what I say.

**Contextual analysis/repeated reading.** Tehama used the context strategy to enable Tatty to rely on the passages, sentence meaning, and his own experiences to determine unknown words. Similarly, Tehama asked Tatty to repeat what was read, a strategy that
enabled him to become more familiar with recurring phrases and other predictable language, thus supporting a better understanding of the story and allowing him to acquire more vocabulary.

**Tehama (Family):** I tell him to read word by word.

**Tatty (Child):** Sometimes they grab a piece of paper, write out the word, and sometimes they rip it up and we put the pieces under the word. Then, I try to spell. Sometimes when it is hard either, they don’t sound it out. They tell me to go past it, and after, I go back and read it.

**Modeling strategy.** Mokena is helping her child, Herma, by modeling when she reads aloud to or with her. This reading strategy is important, especially for less able readers.

**Mokena (Family):** If she has problems, I will read them or use directions on the computer games. I will read those [directions]. I read those all the time so that she can understand.

**Herma (Child):** They help me sound it out.

**Phonemic awareness.** Nina used a phonemic awareness reading strategy to help Queen develop an awareness of individual words in the text. She has also been assisting Queen decode and comprehend the materials they are reading.

**Nina (Family):** I tell her to slow down and just pronounce letter by letter and pronounce the word.

**Queen (Child):** No, they don’t do anything. Sometimes they sound it out.

**Reciprocal questioning.** By guiding the child to ask questions, Tanya was applying reciprocal questioning, a strategy that allowed the child and the teacher (in this case, the family) to ask questions, to clarify information not directly contained in the text. Subsequently, by asking the child to use a computer or a dictionary, Tanya helped OMal find synonyms and use the context to find definitions for new words.
Tanya (Family): I tell her to ask questions about it. If she doesn’t know the meaning, she’s got the computer...dictionary. If she cannot pronounce, I tell her to sound it out.

OMal (Child): They ask me questions: How did you like the book? To remember, tell us something about the book. They help me if this is really a long word.

It appeared that adult family members had some knowledge and used reading strategies. However, teachers did not know whether adult family members used a variety of strategies when reading to or with their children at home.

**Summary for Research Question 4**

The fourth question compared the perceptions among the adult family member, the child, and the teacher regarding what the adult family member did to assist the child to become a better reader. Variables considered within the fourth question were whether families shared reading concerns, had regular reading times for the child, had other family members read to the child, attended Every Child Reads parent education sessions, or used reading strategies. The results indicated that whenever the respondents agreed that the family provided reading activities, the child was always scored either reading above or at the class average. Although teachers thought they never provided families with reading strategies, it appeared that families used strategies similar to those used in the classroom. It also appeared that when the family member, the child, and the corresponding teacher agreed that the family shared reading concerns, had regular reading time, or other family members read to the child at home, the teacher scored the child as reading above or at the class average. Also, when the child and the family agreed, but the teacher did not, the child was scored by the teacher as reading below the
class average. However, when the child and the teacher agreed or the family and the teacher agreed, the child was always scored as reading either at or above the class average. Whenever the teacher disagreed with either the child or the adult family member on any of the perception variables, the child was always scored as reading below the level of classmates. A majority of respondents also lacked a shared understanding on whether or not the adult family member attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions.

Research Question 5

What are the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to help the child to become a better reader?

Perceived Opportunities or Barriers

This section is mainly centered on the respondents’ perceptions regarding opportunities for, or barriers to, a family’s decision to assist a child to become a better reader (i.e., respondents’ ideas of what could have been implemented differently). The results in this section were primarily based on responses from the interviews. As mentioned earlier, out of a total of 35 adult family members, 35 children, and 7 teachers, only 12 adult family members, 12 children, and 7 teachers were interviewed.

Respondents were asked to reflect upon the opportunities, constraints, problems, and concerns related to the reading assistance the child received at home. Interview questions focused on whether the families perceived any window of opportunity to share reading concerns. They also helped identify the families’ wishes concerning what family members, children, or teachers could do to assist the children to become better readers.
Finally, a question focused on the family members’ own views regarding communication activities between the home and the school.

Humphrey, a pastor in a local church, shared some of his concerns regarding his child, Ceci. He acknowledged his desire for more positive communication with his child’s teacher, Mrs. Baker. As he said, “I need to hear from the teacher that my child is doing well.” He also wanted to see rewards and the teacher helping his child to select different books. He further stated, “I wish I had more time. I would encourage her to read more books.” However, Mrs. Baker reported that Humphrey never shared any of his concerns nor had he attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. The teacher perceived the child as reading below the class average, whereas both the family and the child agreed that she was reading at the class average. Mrs. Baker reported, “I suggested books to be read at home, and I called for a meeting, but the family never showed up at school. The family is very quiet and wants the child to succeed.”

Ana, a single mother, was aware of what it meant to assist her child, Renate, in reading. However, she noted, “My daughter’s negative view about her teacher prevents her progress.” She also remarked, “I should be more involved, for me it is just time. Being a single mom, I don’t see that my child gets enough help.” Regarding the child’s reading ability, the family, the child, and teacher agreed that the child read below the class average. The teacher’s concern was that the family never attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions, whereas the family thought it did attend when there was a parent education session. However, the adult family member thought that the only time she could contact the teacher was during the scheduled parent education session. Most
family members expressed a desire for more contact with the teacher and wanted their children to read more challenging books.

Tehama, Tatty’s grandmother, felt that she helped Tatty with reading. However, she said, “I wish I had opportunities to meet with the teacher. I have a busy schedule.” Her child’s teacher, Mrs. Simpson, also wished that the family could attend the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. Although Tehama thought Tatty read at the class average, Tatty and his teacher scored Tatty as reading below the class average. In this instance, the teacher and the family had good intentions concerning the child’s reading practices, but their perceptions of the child’s reading level differed.

Mokena, Herma’s mother, indicated her willingness to work with her child’s teacher. The teacher, Mrs. Edwards, wished that she had met the adult family member. She said, “The family is not always open to a communication relationship yet.” However, Mokena had a different view about the teacher and said, “I don’t think the teacher talks about positive things about my child. I wish the teacher could talk about positive things.” Although the family and the child perceived the child as reading at the class average, the teacher scored the child as reading below the class average.

Nina, Queen’s mother, also shared what she wished could be done differently and concerns regarding opportunities for, or barriers to, the family’s reading practices.

“I wish they could do more for the child’s reading. The teacher calls me when Queen is in trouble. I wish Mrs. Hartman could spend more time with Queen, instead of calling me every time…deal with the problem and then call me. Tell me Queen is reading at this level or she is moved to this level.”
Mrs. Hartman, Queen’s teacher, was concerned about the family as well. For instance, she said, “After the first meeting, I tried to talk to the family members, but they did not respond to me. A couple of times I was almost cut off. I called them four times but they didn’t respond.” The adult family member, the child, and the teacher all agreed on the child’s reading level by scoring Queen as reading at the class average.

Tanya, Umb’s mother, acknowledged that reading was the most important part of class lessons. However, she expressed her concerns about Umb’s reluctance to read. She also regretted not having the time to attend a reading meeting at her child’s school. Despite the mother’s regret, Mrs. Edwards, Umb’s teacher, did not have any concerns, nor did she have any complaints about the child’s reading. Although both Mrs. Edwards and Tanya had a positive attitude toward each other, both admitted that they had never met at any of the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. They all agreed on the child’s reading level by scoring the child as reading at the class average.

When children were asked to share what they perceived to be opportunities for or barriers to their family’s decision to assist them in reading at home, 3 out of 6 made no additional comments. However, the remaining 3 children wished that adult family members could help them with reading every day and buy more books for them. The children promised to work hard to attain their reading goals. Concerning the 3 children who declined any additional comments, 2 self-scored and were scored by their teachers as reading below the grade level, and one self-scored as reading at the class average. Out of the remaining 3 who provided additional comments, 2 self-scored and were scored by
both the family member and the teacher as reading at the class average, while one child self-scored as reading below the class average.

Summary for Research Question 5

Respondents were asked to reflect on the constraints, problems, and concerns they faced as they interacted with one another. In addition, respondents were asked whether they saw any opportunities that adult family members could have provided, but never did, to assist children in their reading efforts. Although to a certain extent respondents shared similar views regarding their perceived opportunities for, and barriers to, the family’s decision to assist the children to become better readers, their narrative was structured around five predominant ideas: (a) the nature of communication, (b) the lack of opportunity for interaction, (c) the families’ work schedules, (d) differing perceptions among individuals within the subgroups, and (e) differing expectations. Where disagreements occurred during interviews, both families’ and teachers’ stories reflected a constant uncertainty about each others’ knowledge as to whether a family practiced reading literacy in the home. Addressing such concerns would bridge their differences. All viewed their perceptions and actions as legitimate within their own contexts (i.e., home or school). It appeared that some adult family members and even, in some cases, the corresponding teachers felt a sense of isolation from each other, especially regarding their knowledge about individual children’s reading efforts at home. However, each of the subgroups saw opportunities that helped them find ways to strengthen their partnerships and share understanding as they strived to assist the child to become a better reader.
Summary of Chapter 4

The three main sections in this chapter addressed issues regarding whether the family, the child, and the associated teacher shared an understanding of what African American adult family members thought and did to assist an elementary school-aged child to become a better reader. To summarize, the findings indicated a mismatch among a majority of respondents suggesting a lack of shared understanding, a perspective that warrants our rethinking of the home-school literacy connection. However, in situations when all three respondents agreed on an indicator, children from homes that practiced literacy were scored as reading above or at the class average. The inability to share reading concerns, work schedules, and the necessity of taking care of children were identified as barriers to a family’s decision to assist children in their reading endeavors.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to compare the perceptions of African American adult family members, children, and corresponding teachers about what African American adult family members thought and did in the home to assist their elementary school-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) to become better readers. The primary purpose was to compare whether or not respondents shared their understanding of what the family thought and did in the home to assist the child’s reading skills. Despite the many studies in home and school literacy connections (Shields et al, 1983; Stewart, 1995), little research has been directed toward the specific concern addressed in this study (i.e., shared understanding), particularly with African American family members, children, and associated teachers. This study found similarities and differences in perceptions regarding an adult family member’s reading practices and a child’s perceived reading level or reading score as measured by the ITBS.

Five research questions were investigated in the present study: (a) Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level? (b) Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as measured by the child’s ITBS reading score? (c) What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader? (d) What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s,
and the teacher's perceptions of the adult family member's reading practice as compared with the child's perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS reading scores?

(e) What were the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member's decision to help the child to become a better reader?

This chapter contains (a) a summary of the procedures used in the study and relevant literature, (b) a discussion of the findings, (c) conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data, and (d) recommendations for areas of future research.

Summary of Procedures

As noted above, participants for the present study consisted of the family member, the child, and the associated teacher. Open-ended survey questionnaires and interview questions were employed for gathering data. Participants who completed and returned the survey questionnaires were randomly selected for interviews. This was done approximately 2 months after the initial analysis of the survey responses.

The analytic strategies and procedures consisted of descriptive statistics and chi square using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). These analyses were utilized to determine possible differences of perceptions among the three subgroups regarding a child's reading level and family reading practice variables. To analyze perceptions of the family reading variables, a .05 level of significance was used in the testing of the differences in perceptions between individuals in the subgroups. In order to examine more specific areas to determine the extent in which the subgroups agreed or disagreed on a variable, a matrix was created. The matrix was used as an alternative analysis that manually tracked back and matched the adult family member, the child, and
the associated teacher. Second, interview responses were coded following each variable that appeared on the survey. Emerging themes were also noted from these interview responses.

**Discussion of Findings**

This study was designed to compare the perceptions of African American adult family members, children, and corresponding teachers about what African American adult family members thought and did in the home to assist their elementary school-aged children (Grades 3 and 4) to become better readers. The five research questions were used as a framework for discussing the results. Section one begins with a discussion of whether or not the subgroups agreed or disagreed about the child’s perceived reading level, and section two of the discussion compares the child’s reading level as perceived by individuals between the subgroups and as measured by the child’s ITBS reading scores. Section three of the discussion focuses on the question of whether or not the subgroups shared an understanding of what adult family members did at home to assist a child’s reading efforts. The discussion in section three combines the results of research questions 3 and 4. Finally, the discussion in section four addresses the respondents’ perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member’s decision to assist a child in reading.
Research Question 1

Did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher agree or disagree on the child’s reading level?

The purpose of research question 1 was to determine whether or not respondents from the three subgroups had a shared understanding regarding the child’s reading level and, if not, would interviewing the respondents establish probable reasons behind the respondents’ disagreement? A shared understanding is based on mutual faith in a shared social world (Rommetveit, 1979). Interaction is a necessary basis for this complementarity. Vygotsky (1978) and Rogoff (1993) used a socio-cultural approach to help describe the importance of interactions between an individual and that person’s environment. As well, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), a well-coordinated setting may facilitate a shared understanding.

In the present study, evidence demonstrated the presence or lack of shared understanding between the subgroups. The result from research question 1 indicated that when the adult family members’, children’s, and associated teachers’ perceptions regarding the child’s reading level were compared, nearly three fifths of the adult family members and children were in agreement that the child read as well as classmates. This was compared with the teachers who thought only two fifths of the children were reading as well as their classmates. However, only one fifth of the adult family member-child cases reported a child as reading below the level of classmates. This may be a human tendency that rarely would adult family members or their children admit that a child was reading below the level of classmates. Also, only one fifth of the adult family members,
the children, and the teachers thought that the child read better than everyone else. The reason why all three types of respondents felt that just a few children read above their classmates was not established from the families’ and the children’s perspectives. Teachers’ reports of the child’s reading level may have been supported by their student’s reading performance data accessible to them. Could it be that the parents’ views and feedback to their children have influenced the students’ performance and self-perceptions as readers? The rating of children’s reading levels by adult family members and children themselves was consistent with what Pretzlik and Chan (2004) noted in their study. According to these authors, a rating of self-perception of competence does not necessarily reflect the kind of reading difficulties children face at home and in the classroom. Such difficulties may or may not lead some children to have negative perceptions about their reading abilities. Following Cooley (1902), children’s self-rating may be a result of others’ evaluation (i.e., being praised as a good reader or opportunities to help others in or outside the classroom contexts). Pretzlik and Chan (2004) argued that “common sense would dictate that children base their views of themselves as learners on the ‘reality’ of their ability that is to say on their actual performance” (p. 131). However, this was not necessarily so in the present study. The disagreements among the respondents raised concerns that prompted further questions.

As a result of the interview questions that probed for further information, several key elements were noted as indicative of reasons for sharing or not sharing understanding among the subgroups. Some of the reasons for differing responses may be due to the way a respondent interpreted the question asked or the way the question was worded. The
alternative analysis applied in the current study matched and compared the perceptions of
the individual adult family member, the child, and the teacher, as mentioned earlier, for
reasons of triangulating each response. This process revealed patterns that previous
studies, which relied heavily on general statistical analysis of frequency distributions and
percentages, have not explicitly acknowledged. The adult family member, the child, and
the teacher who were in agreement or disagreement were interviewed to determine
reasons for their agreement or disagreement. The following section of discussion focuses
on the findings from each of the five research questions. Each section discussing
research questions 1 and 2 consists of general analysis (i.e., of frequencies and
percentages), specific analysis (that matched the adult family member, the child, and the
teacher responses), and interview responses.

Research Question 2

Was there a difference in the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s
perceptions about the child’s reading level and the level at which the child read as
measured by the ITBS reading scores?

The purpose of research question 2 was to examine the differences and
similarities between the adult family members’, the children’s, and the teachers’
perceptions of children’s reading level and as measured by children’s ITBS reading
scores. Scores on ITBS reading are one piece of evidence that might suggest areas where
the child needs to improve in reading. It is important for adult family members to be
aware of both a child’s score on the assessments and the overall scores for the child’s
school (principal at Harlingen Elementary School, personal communication, May 22,
The results in the present study indicated that teachers’ perceptions of children’s reading were similar to children’s ITBS reading scores. As noted previously, although a majority of both the adult family members (60%; n=21) and children (68.8%; n=24) reported the child read at the class average, the ITBS reading score indicated only 25.7% (n=7) read at this level. As it turned out, teachers’ perceptions were less disparate vis-à-vis the ITBS reading scores than were those of the children and the adult family members. Teachers reported over one-half (54.3%; n=19) of the children to be reading at a level below their classmates. According to the ITBS reading scores, 60% of the children were reading below their classmates. All three groups (family, child, and teacher) actually perceived only a few children as reading better than their classmates. In this category, only 2.9% (n=1) of the adult family members and 11.4% (n=4) of children, respectively, perceived a child as reading above the class average. The teachers’ report, however, showed 17.1% (n=6) of the children read better than their classmates. This percentage reflecting teachers’ responses was similar to the percentage represented by the ITBS reading scores, which was 14.3%. Only a few family members, children, and teachers in the present study felt that many students were reading above the class average.

Why were families’ and children’s perceptions similar to each other, but different from those of the teachers? Explanations from studies that focused on teacher and family beliefs, race, and social bias have provided explanations for findings similar to these (Goldenberg et al., 2001). For instance, findings from Pretzlik and Chan (2004)
indicated that teachers’ expectations were closely related to the child’s actual academic skills. Hauser-Cram et al. (2003) argued that teachers tend to rate children from minority families as less competent academically and have lower expectations for the child’s future success than do parents, especially when such perceptions or judgments stem from selective or negative memories or perceptions of a child based on past experience.

However, in the present study, the African American teacher’s perception of a child’s reading level and an adult family member’s reading practice did not differ from those of fellow teachers who were European American. The African American teacher had 7 African American students in her class and she rated 2 of the children as reading above the class average, 3 as reading at the class average, and 2 as reading below the class average. Other possibilities for the discrepancies of perception among and between the three subgroups could be that the child’s reading progress may not have been consistently communicated to families, prompting respondents’ disagreement on a child’s reading level. In the current study, it appeared that family members’ reports were not backed up by updated data from students’ school records. Instead, adult family members relied heavily on their knowledge of their children’s perceived reading skills. Similarly, it may be the case that families had not taken the time to consult with their child’s teachers regarding their child’s reading progress.

Based on the interview question of whether or not a teacher was aware if an adult family member assisted the child to become a better reader, one teacher (Mrs. Edwards) noted, “the child struggles on his/her own the family does not help at all” acknowledging that anxieties and stress stem from social and economic conditions within the home.
Another teacher, Mrs. Simpson, also noted, “Zack's parents are busy with work and are not open to a relationship yet.” A myriad of factors can influence a teacher’s or a family member’s perception of a child’s reading ability and a child’s self-perceptions (including what the parent or the teacher thinks about that child). Similar factors were reported by Goldenberg et al. (2001). These researchers indicated that when families and teachers are from different ethnicities, they are likely to have different expectations and beliefs regarding the child’s academic performance, that may lead to a home and school disconnect. This could be the case with this population sample. Delpit (1986) stated that there is a potential consequence for children when there is a mismatch between the culture of the school and of the home. Mokena, Herma’s mother, noted, “My daughter’s reading level has dropped substantially,” whereas Herma perceived herself as a better reader. Herma said, “I am a better reader. My classmates ask me and I help them read.” This could be true for the individual respondent, depending on the kind of data available.

Although this present study did not compare children from different ethnic groups, studies with mixed racial compositions—say African American children and a European American teacher—would provide another interpretation for results like these. Race comparison studies have shown evidence of European American teachers having low expectations for African American students’ academic performance (Graham, 1992). Zack’s mother shared reasons why some children do not pay attention in class. She noted, “If the teacher don’t pay attention, the child don’t pay attention too.” Diamond and colleagues (2004) also found that often when African American children performed high academically compared with their white counterparts, they were perceived as an
exception to the rule. By the same token, if a European American child performed poorly, that student was considered an exception.

This present study does not rule out these lines of thinking on the part of the teachers. When teachers have low expectations of students’ academic ability, they tend to give the student less challenging coursework (Farka, 1996; Farka et al., 1990). According to Diamond et al. (2004), teacher expectation and a sense of responsibility are coupled. When teachers emphasize students’ deficits, students tend to have a reduced sense of responsibility. It is likely that when a teacher believes a student has deficits and gives the student less challenging coursework (i.e., reading activity); the outcomes from these activities are likely to be different from nationally standardized measures, such as ITBS reading tests. Children’s self-perceptions regarding their reading level clearly demonstrate a closer affinity to that of the associated adult family member, while being quite disparate from that of the teacher. This evidence echoes Guthrie and Greaney’s (1991) argument that families are powerful socializers of children’s self-perceptions and provide them with opportunities at home that may likely influence their judgments of their children’s reading abilities. Also, according to the U.S. Department of Education (1991), students whose parents expect them to attain advanced education (college education) are more likely to pass achievement tests than those students whose parents expect only high school graduation. In the present study, it is most likely that uniformity of experience between families and teachers regarding the child’s reading ability was most likely what was missing in some instances, and led to differing perceptions.
The specific descriptive analysis focused on tracking back and manually matching the adult family member, the child, and the associated teacher from each of the three subgroups to determine whether or not they had a shared understanding regarding the child's reading level. The findings indicated patterns that warrant further considerations. When the adult family member, the child, and the teacher all agreed on the child's reading level, the child was unanimously perceived as reading either above or at the class average. When the teacher and the family member agreed but the child did not, three fourths of the families scored the child as reading below the class average whereas three fourths of the children self-scored as reading above or at the class average. One child self-scored as reading below the class average, although the teacher and the family scored the child as reading above the class average. When the family and the child agreed but the teacher did not, the child was most often scored as reading below the level of classmates.

These are the areas that teachers need to consider as they attempt to understand the child's family and find out why families think their children read at a level with which the teachers disagree. Such areas of differences or similarities could be discussed during the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. Hauser-Cram et al. (2003) reported that when teachers believed the value parents placed on education differed from their own, they rated children as less competent academically. These types of beliefs cannot be ruled out from this kind of sample in the current study. Although this present study included one African American teacher, this teacher's responses would not help to
determine if the children’s poor performance was a result of the teacher’s attitude and value differences from that of the child’s home.

The reason why most children self-scored as reading at the class average also merits some discussion. Pretzlik and Chan (2004) cautioned that sometimes when children compare themselves with readers who have strong support, they might feel that they have learned the basic reading skills and, thus, perceive themselves as similar in other respects to other readers. If this happens, it is a positive result in its own right (Pretzlik & Chan, 2004). Such self-perceptions need to be recognized within the dual context of both the classroom and the home. When children discover that their perceived and actual ability are not the same, it is incumbent upon educators and families to help them examine the causes for their success or failure and enable them to act accordingly (Pretzlik & Chan, 2004). Adult family members, children, and teachers need to share their feelings and expectations so that they can all, in their respective environments (home or school), work toward a common goal for the betterment of the child.

Research Questions 3 and 4

What did the adult family member, the child, and the teacher perceive was being done in the home to help the child become a better reader?

What were the relationships of the adult family member’s, the child’s, and the teacher’s perceptions of the adult family member’s reading practice as compared to the child’s perceived reading level or as measured by the ITBS score?

The results indicated each of the subgroups’ perceptions on the family reading practice variables were not significantly different. Children’s perceptions of the adult
The teacher’s perceptions measured by adult family member SRC were significantly lower than the perceptions of the family and child (p<.05). Finally, the family perceptions measured by OFMR to or with the child were significantly lower than the perceptions of the child (p<.05).

A specific descriptive analysis was performed to determine whether or not the corresponding adult family member, the child, and the teacher matched in their choices of the adult family member’s reading practices. A number of mismatches occurred between individuals from each of the three subgroups. Most teachers reported that family members never or rarely provided reading material, shared reading concerns, or attended Every Child Reads parent education sessions. In the review of literature in Chapter 2, it was noted that overall family involvement in assisting their children in school activities declines as the child advances from lower to higher grade levels (Hauser-Cram et al., 2003). This could be one explanation in the present study. In cases where all respondents agreed that the family provided reading materials to help the child read, shared reading concerns with the child’s teacher, and attended the Every Child Reads parent education sessions regularly, the child was always scored by all subgroups as reading above or at the class average. However, when the family and the child agreed but the teacher did not, the child was scored as reading below the level of classmates. In cases where all scored the child as reading above or at the class average, individual respondents also had positive comments about each other. As Barge and Loges (2003)
stated, "If teachers know the parents, they treat the student better. It makes a difference when the faculty knows the parents are involved and that the parents do care" (p. 146).

Based on interviews, some families reported they never read to their child because the child was a good reader: "I do not read to him [the child] because he is doing well in school." However, some families thought reading every day was part of their responsibility. Here is what one family member expressed: "I read every day. Her dad also reads every night. We all read, read, read, read."

Sometimes teachers may not be aware of what the adult family members do at home. Although some adult family members showed that they used reading strategies when reading to or with the child, some corresponding teachers said they were unaware of this and they never provided the adult family members with reading strategies, even during the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. These are the areas of concern of which teachers need to be aware.

Lawson (2003) pointed out that when teachers are unaware of what happens at home, they are likely to stigmatize practices of parents, which in turn alienates parents from school. As one parent noted in the interview, "I respect the teacher. I highly honor the teacher... I believe she [daughter] can do better than she is right now. The teacher also could do a better job of letting me know when my daughter is doing well." Edwards et al. (1999) have further argued that the importance of fostering understanding between all parties concerned with the child is overlooked, but it is an important role that both family members and teachers play in a child's learning process. A more thoroughly developed approach to a shared understanding involves a concerted effort from the
teachers and adult family members for both home and school to assume more responsibilities in meeting the child's literacy needs in a collective or collaborative way. This would present the child with greater opportunities to make the best use of the home and school learning environments. Adult family members in this study seemed to implement strategies of which teachers were not aware. As Dauber and Epstein (1993) argued, parents and teachers can work together to optimize what they know in order to better assist their children's reading efforts.

Research Question 5

What were the perceived opportunities for, or barriers to, an adult family member's decision to help the child to become a better reader?

Narratives regarding the perceived opportunities for or barriers to families' decisions to assist the children to become better readers appeared to cluster around five predominant ideas. Viewed either separately or collectively, these ideas are impediments to assisting the child's reading development: (a) the negative nature of communication (e.g., calling adult family member with a negative message regarding her child), (b) the lack of opportunity for interaction (the adult family does not share reading concerns), (c) the family's work schedule (e.g., the family is assumed to be busy with work), (d) misunderstanding among the three subgroups (i.e., not knowing exactly what the child's reading level is), and (e) having different expectations (e.g., the adult family member does not help the child because the child does well in reading).

When there was disagreement during interviews, both the family and the teacher accounts reflected uncertainties concerning the other's knowledge about whether a family
practiced reading in the home. Addressing such concerns would bridge many of the differences and assuage numerous doubts. All view their perceptions and actions as legitimate within their own contexts (e.g., home or school). Some adult family members and the corresponding teachers felt a sense of isolation from each other. When the teacher calls home and gets cut off, is frustrated as a result of families not attending the Every Child Reads parent education sessions, and is displeased with the children’s behavior are all aspects that merit consideration by the family, the child, and the teacher collaboratively. As Scott-Jones (1989) explained, “Shifting the blame for children’s school problems from the school to the home is not a satisfactory solution. Mutual support is the answer” (p. 66).

Despite the mismatch between the adult family member, the child, and the associated teacher, it was notable that each of the subgroups perceived opportunities that could assist in strengthening families’ partnerships with teachers as they strived to help the child to become a better reader. Adult family members wished their children could have more positive attitudes toward their teachers and regretted not having found time to attend reading conferences. As well, children wished their families could buy them more reading materials and read to them more frequently. Also, teachers wished to place children with reading difficulties into a remedial reading program and also wished children could receive more attention from adult family members. The subgroups perceived an array of opportunities. However, such wishes can easily be a rhetorical exercise with little hope of future implementation if those involved do not find a way to translate their words into concrete actions to collaboratively acknowledge and act on such
opportunities. Unless someone is willing to take the initiative, such hopes will be fruitless.

Studies (Goldenberg et al., 2001) addressing the contextual factors affecting child development also emphasized the concept of discontinuity between home and school, especially between minority families and school personnel.

**Implications for Practice and Suggestions for Professionals**

First, this study yielded findings concerning an adult family member’s, child’s, and associated teacher’s perspectives on what the adult family member does to assist an elementary school-aged child to become a better reader. The study delineated important elements for successful home-school collaboration and participants’ ideas that have an impact on home-school connections, positively or negatively. By mapping shared perceptions of a child’s reading level, a family’s reading practice in the home, opportunities for or barriers to the relationship, and identifying areas of divergence and conflicts, the three subgroups can be in a better position to build on their commonalties. A lack of one-to-one or collective communication may erode the likelihood of a shared understanding of what adult family members think and do in relation to successful reading practices both at home and school. These three subgroups may often be unknowingly in opposition due to conflicting interests, values, and expectations (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 2000). All of these can result in the parties not being able to attain consensus. Although there were differences among the respondents’ perceptions, there were also commonalties that adult family members, children, and teachers can learn from. The challenge that has emerged from this and similar studies is to find ways to
overcome the perceived barriers and to bring about more opportunities for a mutual understanding between the parties concerned, regardless of their beliefs and/or family-teacher ethnic background. This means creating greater and more frequent channels of communication.

Second, a mismatch of perceptions regarding a child’s reading level and a family’s reading practices may be minimized by discussing these areas during the Every Child Reads parent education sessions for the purpose of keeping each other current on matters related to a child’s reading progress and on reading activities either at home or school. Teacher preparation and professional development programs can share knowledge and skills for working with families during programs such as the Every Child Reads parent education sessions. This focus will prepare teachers with ways to bridge perception differences between themselves, the adult family member, and the corresponding child. These are the areas that seldom get explicit attention from teachers (Kamers & Teska, 1980).

Third, the methodology of gathering information by triangulating between the adult family member, the child, and the associated teacher can be a tool for a shared understanding leading to improved home-school relationships. This also means teachers’ instructional practices and decisions would be data driven. When teachers are exposed to these kinds of data, incongruity related to their perceptions of the child’s reading progress and family reading practices can be discovered and minimized by taking further steps to understand what is happening at either school or home.
Fourth, this study provides additional support for already established family educational efforts built on families' strengths rather than weaknesses and on flexible programs that are venues for exploring alternatives rather than merely dwelling on conflicts among the adult family member, the child, and the teacher. As this study has shown, there are areas of reading practice where families are knowledgeable and are committed to helping children achieve in their reading education. There is a need to support families’ reading practice in homes. Differences among the subgroups do not necessarily signify conflict, but are a reflection of their unique experiences (Danseco, 1997). However, if these experiences are not brought together, differences may lead to family, child, and teacher disconnect. For a child, a low score from the teacher and an average score from the adult family member can be confusing, depending on the reading data accessible to each respondent. Future studies need to reconsider the kind of data the family member, child, and teacher use when they are asked to respond to questions related to a child’s reading level. Cooley (1902) pointed out that failing to know the family and the school is failing to know the child. Diamond et al. (2004) extensively discussed teachers’ expectations and how such expectations could have an impact on teachers’ sense of responsibility for students’ learning.

Fifth, it appeared that each subgroup perceived barriers and opportunities to strengthen their partnership, such as wishes for frequent and positive communication (families), attending the Every Child Reads parent education sessions (teachers and families), and an adult family member reading to children and buying more books (children).
Commonalities and differences were found in the perceptions of the adult family members, children, and their associated teachers. In some instances in the present study, there was disagreement among the three subgroups, perhaps due to a lack of shared understanding stemming from a lack of communication, different beliefs, and expectations (Diamond et al., 2004; Hauser-Cram et al., 2003; Lawson, 2003) as discussed by a number of these previously cited studies.

**Limitations**

This study has several limitations that may have influenced the results of the investigation. Described below are six limitations the researcher identified.

1. The study was limited to the perceptions of a small sample size of 43 African American adult family members, 43 children, and 7 associated teachers in Grades 3 and 4 in one elementary school in Iowa. A limitation of the study was that 35 adult family members, 35 children, and 7 teachers in Grades 3 and 4 completed the survey and only 13 adult family members, 13 children, and 7 associated teachers were interviewed. This sample was not designed to be representative of the population in the school district or the state or other educational levels. Also, teachers’ perceptions of the adult family members and their children and vice versa regarding the adult family members and children may have depended on the length of time that the subgroups had been working with the children and their adult family members.

2. In general, the 87% return rate of African American adult family members, children, and teachers that were surveyed and agreed to participate in this present study was large enough considering that the 35 adult family members and the 35 corresponding
children were drawn from a sample of 43 adult family members and 43 of their corresponding children. However, it was still a small sample to allow other statistical analyses that could have produced significant results.

3. Although the research instruments were constructed, revised, and piloted with a small sample, in borrowing these research instruments from other studies there may have been some misinterpretation regarding how the respondents were expected to respond to both the survey items and interview questions that may have influenced the results. The interpretation of reading practices in the home context may have conflicted with what respondents perceived. As well, there are other reading practices that places of worship, such as churches and mosques, may have been offering via the adult family members and their children. Whether or not each respondent was cognizant of such practices may also have influenced the participants’ responses and the meaning each participant applied to each survey item.

4. Data obtained through the survey may not have reflected the child’s reading ability. Teachers may have relied on students’ standardized test results, such as the ITBS, to interpret the child’s reading level. Also, it was not clear what other data the adult family members and their corresponding children relied on for interpreting the child’s reading level. Discrepancies in results may be due to a variety of factors, including the information that was available to the child at the time of the survey or interview and the child’s cognitive maturity to process the information presented. These other (unknown) kinds of data could be helpful in comparing the meanings, especially for the adult family member and children that were used to interpret the question about the
child's reading level. That being the case, a follow-up study would allow for establishing reasons for the mismatch among the three subgroups' perceptions. This would eliminate the problem encountered in this study of dependence on perceptions of surveyed respondents.

5. The information for the present study was gathered through a survey. Using a focus group technique would have allowed the researcher to better define and clarify both the survey and interview questions. However, due to a time limitation, conflicting schedules on the part of the researcher and respondents, and the desire to include the adult family member, the child, and the teacher as a convenient sample, surveys and a few interviews were utilized.

6. A one-time study without follow-up questions over time may have affected the reliability of the results. Adult family members', children's, and teachers' perceptions were likely to change over time had this been a longitudinal study. Such changes could be investigated to increase the reliability of responses by designing a longitudinal study that allows data gathering more than one time. This would strengthen the conclusions derived from the observed patterns.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. By conducting a longitudinal study, one can expect a different outcome by determining whether there could be a change of participants' perceptions over time and a change in students' reading ability. However, educators must continue to consider multiple sources of information to better understand the child and the context in which the child grows.
2. Parallel studies in other areas of the state or country may offer further insight
and extremely valuable information that could pave the way to conceiving and effectively
designing reading plans that are more inclusive and practical in their results.

3. Research involving families, children, and teachers from the same ethnic group
(e.g., comparing African American family members, children, and African American
teachers' perceptions of what African American adult family members do to assist a child
to become a better reader) may provide further knowledge of the subgroups' perceptions.

4. Future studies should also investigate other types of family reading practice
that places of worship, such as churches and mosques, provide.

5. Research efforts need to continue to identify patterns of agreement and
disagreement among the family, the child, and the associated teacher in order to be able
to point out remedies and the steps to be taken for a shared understanding in the home
and the school setting. Research consisting of interviews and focus groups should be
undertaken in order to understand the in-depth perspectives of African American adult
family members, children, and corresponding teachers. In addition, the population sample
in the present study offered insight for further research to investigate more at other
elementary schools and to add a large sample that allows both quantitative and qualitative
methods for in-depth information. Other areas of literacy practices could be incorporated
to triangulate information (i.e., perceptions) obtained on reading practices or a child's
reading level across the three subgroups (e.g., adult family members, children, and
associated teachers).
6. Identified meetings such as the Every Child Reads parent education sessions, home visits, and informal or formal adult family member, child, and teacher meetings could be encouraged as a way to bridge differences in perception of issues related to reading practices.

**Conclusion/Reflections**

The topic of comparing perceptions of the three subgroups is relevant for encouraging home-school relations through effective communication. It was interesting to find how the three subgroups' perceptions on the reading variables differed from one another. This can be an area of emphasis in programs of home-school relations. At the beginning of this study I thought families, children, and their corresponding teachers would have more or less similar perceptions regarding the child's reading level. However, it turned out that adult family members and their corresponding children had very similar thoughts compared with those of the corresponding teacher. There is a need to consider a similar study that would incorporate several kinds of data that teachers use to report students' progress. These types of assessment should also be brought into awareness. Adult family members should also have opportunities to report some of their children's reading behaviors observed in homes that would enable teachers to better work with children.

Comments expressed by some respondents imply a lack of shared understanding due to poor communication. Research studies have often emphasized the importance of communication. However, the present study shows that little emphasis has been given in this area. This current study focuses on a shared understanding among individual adult
family members, children, and corresponding teachers in an effort to bridge their differences (i.e., the adult family member, the child, and the teacher) and is not generalizable to all home-school relationships.

Finally, this investigation provides additional support for adult family members, children, and teachers to work together within the context of the home and school to understand that differences of perception can be worked out through a shared understanding of their children’s reading progress and family reading practices. A continued dialogue through building relationships with mutual trust, respect, and openness can strengthen the home-school literacy (reading practice) connection that can foster a child’s reading development.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

A1. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

A2. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER (CSESC)

PERMISSION LETTER

A3. PRINCIPAL CONSENT LETTER

A4a, A4b, A4c, A4d, A4e. CONSENT & ASSENT LETTERS
Date: January 5, 2003

To: Shadrack Msengi,
1600 W. 30th Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

From: Dr. Mary E. Losch, Chair
UNI Human Participants Review Committee
(Institutional Review Board)

Title: The Nature of Family Involvement in Reading Development of Elementary African American Children in Iowa

Re: ID#02-0134

Based on your revisions to your protocol and consent/assent forms, your project, "The Nature of Family Involvement in Reading Development of Elementary African American Children in Iowa," has been deemed minimal risk and reviewed by the IRB through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.110. The applicable expedited category referenced in 45 CFR 46.110 of the federal regulations is:

Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

You may begin enrolling human research participants in your project. If you modify your project in a way that increases the physical, emotional, social, or legal risk to the participants or you change the targeted participants, you should notify the Human Participants Review Committee in the Graduate College Office before continuing with the research. Additionally, your project must be reviewed annually. You will receive a notification and continuing review form approximately 10 months from now asking for an update on your project.

If you have any further questions about the Human Participants Review policies or procedures, please contact me at mary.losch@uni.edu or David Walker, the Human Participants Committee Administrator, at 319.273.6148 or email david.walker@uni.edu. Best wishes for your project success.

cc: Institutional Review Board
    Linda Fitzgerald, Curriculum & Instruction
Busisilly
Community Schools
A Community of Promise

Educational Service Center. Assessment Office. 6305 John Goshen St. Busisilly, IA, 793865

December 2, 2002

Shadrack G. Msengi
University of Northern Iowa
1600 W. 30th St.
Cedar Falls IA 50613

Dear Mr. Msengi,

Permission is given for you to conduct your research at Hadagen Elementary School. Please contact principal, Nadett gdi, to set up the procedures you will use in the building. As you are aware, you will need to obtain parent permission. Also, teacher involvement in your study is voluntary on their part. I wish you success in your study.

Sincerely,

Herbert Bagoney
Ph. D.
Consultant for Research and Assessment

C: Nadett gdi
Dr. Lynn McGuire
A3: Principal Consent Letter

(Printed name of participant)

<<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

DATE

<<Address 1>>

<<Postal Code>>

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As part of my work toward a doctoral degree, I am conducting research on perceptions of family involvement in reading development of a child that will include elementary school students.

Enclosed find two sets of questions one for you and another for your child. I would ask you and your child to fill out the questionnaire separately. For the purpose of confidentiality, your names will not be used in my study. In case names are required for matching the results, code numbers will be used. Only my doctoral committee and I will have access to information you provide. Your participation is voluntary.

Please answer all questions and return the completed questionnaire to me in the enclosed envelope before August 4th, 2003. It will take you no more than 15 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. I highly value your cooperation for helping me accomplish this research.

Sincerely,

Shadrack G. Msengi

e-mail Shadrack@uni.edu

Phone: 319-222-5817

Dr. Linda M. Fitzgerald, Advisor

Phone: 319-273-2214
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
January 13, 2003

Dear _______________________________ Parent/ Guardian

I would like you to be a participant in a research project exploring reading development that I am conducting through the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. The following information will help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

We will spend half an hour of your time chatting about your child's reading interest. I hope, with your help, I will find out what works best in helping children to read.

I will ask you to respond to a survey questionnaire for less than 10 minutes. After that I will interview you for approximately 30 minutes. With your permission, I will audio and videotape the interview process. At the end of the study, I will erase the tapes. In case I need to match the names and results, I will use code numbers for confidentiality. Only my doctoral committee and I will have access to the tapes, which I will personally transcribe and remove any identifiers during transcription. I may interview you twice between February and October of 2003.

There are no known risks, nor will you benefit directly as a participant in this study. Should you wish to withdraw at any time you may do so. Your confidentiality will be strictly maintained.
Right to Refuse or Withdraw:
I have been told that my participation is completely voluntary. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw from participation at any time or to choose not to participate at all and that by doing so I will not be penalized. I understand that the interviews will be recorded and videotaped during the interview process for research purposes only.

I have been told that the investigator will answer any questions I have about my participation. I have also been advised that if I desire information in the future regarding my participation or the study generally, I can contact Shadrack G. Msengi at 319-222-5817 or his dissertation chair, Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Northern Iowa 319-273-2214. I can also contact the office of the Human Participants Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-2748, for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.

Agreement:
I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.

________________________   _______________________
(Signature of participant)   (Date)

________________________
(Printed name of participant)
A4b: Assent Letter (Child)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT FOR YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION

January 13, 2003
Dear_______________________________________ (Parent/Guardian)

As part of my work toward a doctoral degree in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, I am conducting a study on parental involvement that will include elementary school students.

I am inviting your third/fourth grade child to participate in a research project I am conducting through the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to allow your child to participate in this project. I am providing the following information to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

I will ask your child to respond to survey questionnaires for 15 minutes and interview for 20 minutes regarding their reading practices. I hope the findings will furnish better ways to improve children’s reading development.

With your permission, I will audio- and videotape your child during the interview. At the end of the study, I will erase the tapes. Names will not be used in the project. In case I need to match the names and results, I will use code numbers for confidentiality. Only my doctoral committee and I will have access to the information, which I will personally transcribe and remove any identifiers during transcription.

There are no known risks or direct benefits for your child as a participant in this study. Should you wish to withdraw the consent for your child’s participation, you may do so at any time without consequence. In addition to my doctoral dissertation, the information also may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference.

Shadrack Gabriel Msengi
University of Northern Iowa
1600 W. 30th Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 222-5817 (Home Phone)

Advisor: Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, Associate Professor,
University of Northern Iowa
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
(319) 273-2214 (Office Phone)
Right to Refuse or Withdraw:

I have been told that my child’s participation is completely voluntary. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my child’s consent for participating at any time without any consequences.

I have been told that the investigator will answer any questions I have about my child’s participation. I have also been advised that if I desire information in the future regarding participation or the study generally, I can contact Shadrack G. Msengi at 319-222-5817 or his dissertation chair Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Northern Iowa 319-273-2214. I can also contact the office of the Human Participants Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-2748, for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.
Agreement:

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my child's participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in this project.

(Signature of parent/legal guardian)  (Printed name of parent/legal guardian)
A4c: Assent Letter (Child)

University of Northern Iowa Human Participants Review
Informed Assent for Older Child Approximately 11-17 Years Old

January 13, 2003

Dear ________________________________

I would like to ask you to join me in a research project exploring the family involvement in your reading development. You have been selected as a student who can help me understand family involvement in a child’s reading development. I have asked your parent/guardian to allow you to participate in this project.

I will ask you to respond to survey questionnaires for 15 minutes and interview questions for 20 minutes regarding reading practices. With your permission, I will audio and videotape the interview process. At the end of the project, I will erase the tapes. Any information you provide will be kept confidential.

Shadrack Gabriel Msengi Advisor: Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, Associate Professor,
University of Northern Iowa University of Northern Iowa
1600 W. 30th Street Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 222-5817 (Home Phone) (319) 273-2214 (Office Phone)

I, ________________________________, have been told that one of my parents/guardians has given his/her permission for me to participate in a project about family involvement in reading development.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I have been told that I can stop participating in this project at any time. If I choose to stop or decide that I don’t want to participate in this project at all, nothing bad will happen to me. My grade will not be affected in any way.

_________________________  ________________________
Name                      Date
A4d: Assent Letter (Child)

University of Northern Iowa Human Participants Review
Informed Assent
For young child approximately 6-10 years old

January 13, 2003
Dear __________________________

I would like to ask you to join me in a research project exploring the family involvement in your reading development. You have been selected as a student who can help me understand family involvement in a child’s reading development. I have asked your parent/guardian to allow you to participate in this project.

I will ask you to respond to survey questionnaires for 15 minutes and interview questions for 20 minutes regarding reading practices. With your permission, I will audio and videotape the interview process. At the end of the project, I will erase the tapes. Any information you provide will be kept confidential.

Shadrack Gabriel Msengi
Advisor: Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, Associate Professor,
University of Northern Iowa
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

1600 W. 30th Street
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 222-5817 (Home Phone)

(319) 273-2214 (Office Phone)
I _____________________________________, have been told that my mom, dad, or the person who takes care of me has said that it is okay for me to take part in an activity about my reading development.

I am doing this because I want to. I have been told that I can stop my part in the activity at any time. If I ask to stop or decide that I don’t want to do this activity at all, nothing bad will happen to me.

_________________________    ____________
Name                              Date
A4e: Consent Letter (Teacher)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT

January 13, 2003
Dear_________________________________(Reading Teacher)

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of
Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to
participate in this project. The following information is provided to help you make an
informed decision whether or not to participate.

This study is designed to investigate the nature of family involvement in reading
development of elementary African American children. It is anticipated that the study
will discover and suggest practical approaches and strategies that will be beneficial to
children’s reading development.

You will be asked to respond to interview questions for approximately 30 minutes and a
survey questionnaire for 10 minutes. During the entire interview process, with your
permission, you will be audio- and videotaped. At the end of the study, the tapes will be
erased. In case names are required for the purpose of matching the results, code numbers
will be used for confidentiality. Only my doctoral committee and I will have access to
the tapes, which I will personally transcribe and remove any identifiers during
transcription. You may be interviewed twice between February and October of 2003.

There are no known risks, nor will you directly benefit from the study as a participant.
However, I hope the findings will improve children’s reading performances. Should you
wish to withdraw, you may wish to do so at any time without consequence. Your
confidentiality will be fully maintained. I hope to publish results of this study in an
academic journal and to present at scholarly conferences.

__________________________________________
Shadrack Gabriel Msengi Advisor: Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, Associate Professor,
University of Northern Iowa University of Northern Iowa
1600 W. 30th Street Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 222-5817 (Home Phone) (319) 273-2214 (Office Phone)
Right to Refuse or Withdraw

I have been told that my participation is completely voluntary. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw from participation at any time or to choose not to participate at all, and that by doing so I will not be penalized or lose benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I understand that the interviews will be recorded. All audiotapes will be kept securely until the study is completed.

I have been told that the investigator will answer any questions I have about my participation. I have also been advised that if I desire information in the future regarding my participation or the study generally, I can contact Shadrack G. Msengi at 319-222-5817 or his dissertation chair, Dr. Linda May Fitzgerald, at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Northern Iowa 319-273-2214. I can also contact the office of the Human Participants Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at 319-273-2748, for answers to questions about rights of research participants and the participant review process.

Agreement:

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.

(Signature of participant) (Date)
APPENDIX B

B1. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
   B1a. ADULT FAMILY MEMBER
   B1b. CHILD
   B1c. TEACHER

B2. INTERVIEWS
   B2a. ADULT FAMILY MEMBER
   B2b. CHILD
   B2c. TEACHER
B1. Survey Questionnaire

B1a: Adult Family Member Survey Questionnaire

Your Name __________________________ Parent’s/Guardian’s
Age_________________
Child’s Name _________________________ Child’s Grade ___________

Please respond to each of the following survey questions (pages 1-2). It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential.

Demographic information (Mark one in each category or fill in the blank)

1. Sex: 4 (11.4%) Male 31 (88.6%) Female

2. Adult in your household who filled in the questionnaires.
   28 (80.1%) Mother 2 (5.8%) Father 4 (11.4%) Guardian 1 (2.9%) Other (s) (Please Specify) _____

3. Level of education you completed (mark all that apply)
   18 (51.4%) High School Diploma, 13 (37.1%) Junior College, 4 (11.4%) University

4. Your Age (check one): 14 (40%) 25-35, 15 (42.9%) 36-45, and 6 (17.1%) 46 and above

5. Do you work outside the home (choose one)
   11 (31.4%) No 24 (68.6%) Yes
   If yes, do you work?
   13 (57.1%) Part-time 11 (42.9%) Full-time

6. Do you provide reading materials to help your third/fourth child who is at Harlingen Elementary school to become a better reader?
   a. Yes 21 (60%)
   b. No 14 (40%)
   If Yes, what kind of reading materials? ______________
   If No, why not? ________________________________
7. Do you share reading concerns with your child’s teacher?
   a. Yes 20 (57.1%)
   b. No 15 (42.9%)

   If Yes, what concerns? ____________________________
   If No why not? ____________________________

8. Does your child have a regular reading time at home?
   a. Yes 15 (42.9%)
   b. No 20 (57.1%)

   If Yes what time? ____________________________
   If No, why not? ____________________________

9. Did any family member/family friend have an opportunity to read to your child yesterday?
   Yes  14 (40.0%)
   No   21 (60.0%)

   If Yes, what did they read? ________________
   If No why they do not read? ________________

10. Have you attended Every Child Reads parent education sessions at your child’s school?
    a. Yes 16 (45.7%)
    b. No 19 (54.3%)

    If Yes, what did you talk about? ________________
    If No what prevents you from attending? ________________

11. What is your child’s reading level? (Circle the best one that applies to your child)
    a) Reads better than his or her classmates 4 (11.4%)
    b) Reads as well as his or her classmates 24 (68.8%)
    c) Most of his or her classmates read better than she/he does 7 (20.0%)
B1b: Child Survey Questionnaire

Your Name_____________________
Your Grade __________________________
Your Age_____________________________

Please respond to each of the following survey questions (2 pages). It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential.

1. Does your family provide you with reading materials to help you to become a better reader?
   a. Yes 23 (68.6%)
   b. No 11 (31.4%)
   If Yes, what kind of reading materials?____________________
   If No, why not?________________________________

2. Does your family share reading concerns with your teacher?
   a. Yes 21 (60.0%)
   b. No 14 (40.0%)
   If Yes, what concerns?____________________________
   If No, why not?________________________________

4. Do you have a regular reading time at home?
   a. Yes 23 (65.7%)
   b. No 12 (34.3%)
   If Yes, what regular time?________________________
   If No, why not?________________________________

3. Did any family member/family friend have an opportunity to read to or with you yesterday?
   a. Yes 19 (54.3%)
   b. No 16 (45.7%)
   If Yes, what did they read?________________________
   If No why they did not read?_______________________

5. Has your family attended Every Child Reads conferences/meetings at your school?
   a. Yes 19 (54.3%)
   b. No 16 (45.7%)
   If Yes, what did you talk about?_____________________
   If No, what prevents you from attending?______________

6. What is your reading level? (Circle the best one that applies to you)
   a) I read better than my classmates 4 (11.4%)
   b) I read as well as my classmates 24 (68.8)
   c) Most of my classmates read better than I do 7 (20.0%)
B1c: Teacher Questionnaire
Please respond to each of the following survey questions. It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential.

1. Do you know whether X’s family provides reading materials to help the child become a better reader?
   a. Yes 19 (54.3%)
   b. No 16 (45.7%)
   If Yes, what kind of reading materials? ___________________________
   If No, why? __________________________________________________

2. Does X family share reading concerns with you about the child’s reading?
   a. Yes 10 (28.6%)
   b. No 25 (71.4%)
   If Yes, what concerns? _______________________________________
   If No, why? __________________________________________________

3. Do you know if X’s family has a regular reading time for the child at home?
   a. Yes 15 (42.9%)
   b. No 23 (66.7%)
   If Yes, what time? _____________________________________________
   If No, why? __________________________________________________

4. Has X’s family attended Every Child Reads conferences at your child’s school?
   a. Yes 11 (31.4%)
   b. No 24 (68.6%)
   If Yes, what did you talk about? ______________________________
   If No, what prevents you from attending? _______________________

5. What is the child’s reading level? (Circle the one that applies to you best)
   a. Reads better than his or her classmates 6(17.1%)
   b. Reads as well as his or her classmates 10 (28.6%)
   c. Most of his or her classmates read better than she/he does. 19 (54.3%)
B2: INTERVIEWS

Introduction to the interview

My name is Shadrack Msengi. I am a graduate student from the University of Northern Iowa. I would like to talk with you about how you/your 3rd/4th grade child, who goes to Harlingen Elementary school, is doing in reading and the kind of things you do to help your child to become a better reader.

To be able to remember what you say, I would ask for permission to audio-tape our conversation. I would also like to ask for permission to use your responses, to write a report that would help families, teachers, students, and the community to find better ways to assist children in their reading efforts. No real names will appear in the report. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Please feel free to say anything that you consider to be truthful in line with what is asked during our conversation. I will also do the same.

Do you have any questions before we start?
B2a: Protocol: Adult Family Member Interview Questions

**Introductory Questions**
1. Tell me who you are and one thing that you remember about reading when you were in elementary school.

**Transition Questions**
2. How often do you read? What are some of the things that you read yesterday/at home/when you were driving? What does reading mean to you? What does it mean to be a better reader?

**Key Questions**
3. Do you have an opportunity to read to or with your third/fourth grade child who is at (name of school). How often does that happen at home?

4. Tell me what it is like when you read to or with your child? Are there things that you read with your child? What are those things?

5. What are some of the things that you do to help your child to become a better reader? What are some things that you do when your child comes to a word that she/he does not understand?

6. Have you shared with your child how she/he is doing in reading? How often have you shared your child’s reading concerns with his/her teacher? What reading concerns?

7. Do you know if there are Every Child Reads parent education sessions at your child’s school/class? Do you participate in those conferences? What did you discuss? What did you like or dislike about those conferences? Let’s start with what you disliked.

8. Are there some things that your child’s teacher has shared with you on how to help you child to read? What are those things? Do you feel you need any information from your child’s teacher to help your child to become a better reader? What information?

**Closing Questions:**
9. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your child’s reading?

10. What do you wish that you or your child or your child’s teacher could do for your child to become a better reader? Let’s start with what your child’s teacher should do. With that in mind, is there anything I missed?
B2b: Protocol: Child Interview Questions

**Introductory Questions**
1. Tell me who you are and one thing that you like about reading.

**Transition Questions**
2. How often do you read? What are some of the things that you read yesterday/at home/at school? What does reading mean to you? What does it mean to be a better reader?

**Key Questions**
3. Do you have an opportunity to read to or with your family at home? Who do you read with or to? How often does that happen (at home)?

4. Tell me what it is like when you read to or with your family. Are there things that you read when you read with your family? What are those things?

5. What are some of the things that your family does to help you become a better reader?
   What are some things that your family does when you come to a word that you do not understand?

6. Does the family share with you how you are doing in reading? How often have they shared your reading concerns with your teacher? What reading concerns? What did they say?

7. Do your adult family members know if there are the Every Child Reads parent education sessions at your school/class? Do they participate? How often do they participate in those conferences? What did they tell you that they discussed?

8. Are there some things that your teacher has shared with your family on how to help you become a better reader? What are those things? Do you feel your family needs any information from your teacher to help you become a better reader? What information?

**Closing Questions:**
9. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your reading?

10. What do you wish that you or your family or your teacher could do for you to become a better reader? Let's start with what you wish you should do. With that in mind, is there anything I missed?
B2c: Protocol: Teacher Interview Questions

Introductory Questions
1. What type of things does X like to read? How often does that happen?

Transition Questions
2. Do you know the type of thing she or he reads at home? If yes, how do you know? If not, why not?

Key Questions
3. Do you know if the family has an opportunity to read to or with the child at home? How do you know? If not, why not?

4. Tell me some of the things that the family reads to or with the child at home? What are those things? Have you asked the families about those things?

5. Have you shared reading strategies with X family to help the child to become a better reader? What reading strategies?

6. Have you shared with the child’s family about how she/he is doing in reading? What reading concerns? How often have you shared those reading concerns with X’s family?

7. Does X’s family attend the Every Child Reads parent education sessions? Does the family participate in those sessions? What did you discuss? What did you like or dislike about those sessions? Let’s start with what you disliked.

8. Do you feel X’s family needs any information from you to help the child to become a better reader? What information?

9. On a scale of 1-3, 1 being below the average, 2 being at the average, and 3 above average, how would you rate this child? What criteria do you use for rating the child’s reading ability?

Closing Questions:
10. Is there anything else you would like me to know about the child’s reading?

11. What do you wish that you or the child or the family could do to help the child to become a better reader? Let’s start with what you wish the family would do.
APPENDIX C

READING LEVEL CRITERIA

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

&

MATRIX FOR ADULT FAMILY MEMBER, CHILD, AND TEACHER PERCEPTION VARIABLES
Table C1

*Reading Level Criteria and Open-ended Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading level perceptions</th>
<th>Sample responses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reads better than classmate</td>
<td>reads fast, likes to read, asks questions; retells the story to family; asks for books; reads harder books; has no problem with reading; comprehends; she got an A this quarter; he enjoys reading, asks questions when reading, doesn’t need any help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads as well as classmate</td>
<td>stumbles when goes across the words, but understands; he/she is a B straight B student; likes to read only if someone is listening to him; does not like to read by himself, reads faster and gets wrong words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmates read better than</td>
<td>doesn’t like to read; stumbles; stubborn; she/he is dyslexic; understands what he or she reads, but forgets easily; can not read word; gets upset when did not understand a word.</td>
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<td>child</td>
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Table C2

**Categories of Family Reading Practice and Responses on Open-ended Survey Questions**

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>Provides Reading Materials (PRM)</td>
<td>Books, games, Bible, Internet, scrabble, flash cards, monopoly,</td>
<td>Don't provide any reading materials</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>picture books, coloring books, religious books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shares Reading Concerns (SRC)</td>
<td>Reading problems, reading strategies</td>
<td>No concern, the child is doing well</td>
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<td>Regular Reading Time (RRT)</td>
<td>Yes (after dinner, before bed, everyday, after school, 30 minutes</td>
<td>No regular reading time, or no time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>every evening, when I am bored, when I get done with my homework,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>all day)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Adult Family Member Reads (OFMR)</td>
<td>my family, grandmother cousin, grandparents, friends, my mom’s</td>
<td>Nobody reads to child</td>
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<td>to or with Child</td>
<td>boy friend, sister, brother, uncle, aunt</td>
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<td>Every Child Reads (ECR) Parent</td>
<td>Every Child Reads parent education sessions, spelling competition,</td>
<td>Not attended any of these sessions</td>
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<td>education sessions</td>
<td>reading aloud, reading conference AND reading night</td>
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Table C3
Matrix for Perception Variables by Adult Family Member (F), Child (C), and Teacher (T)

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*An interviewed child whose family and teacher were also surveyed and interviewed. Numbers 1 to 35 are arbitrarily placed against the respondents names for the purpose of consistency only.
### Key to Table C3

| Column 1 | Child's Name |
| Column 2 | Perceived Reading Level (PRL) |
| Column 3 | Child's ITBS Reading Scores |
| Column 4 | ITBS NPR (National Percentile Rank) |
| Column 5 | Provided Reading Materials (PRM) |
| Column 6 | Shared Reading Concerns (SRC) |
| Column 7 | Regular Reading Time (RRT) |
| Column 8 | Other Family Member Read (OFMR) |
| Column 9 | Every Child Reads (ECR) Program |

Other Abbreviations: F= Family; C = Child; T = Teacher; CN = Child Name