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Hmong American home literacy environments and parent participation in a first grade classroom

Abigail Jane Beneke

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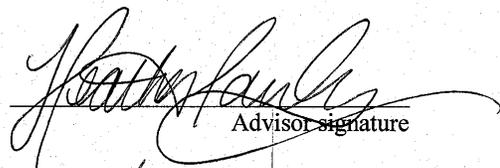
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HMONG AMERICAN HOME LITERACY ENVIRONMENTS AND PARENT
PARTICIPATION IN A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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An Action Research Master's Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
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This Graduate Research Project for
Abigail Jane Beneke
has been approved for Cardinal Stritch University by
Dr. Heather Pauly



Advisor signature

4/28/16

Date

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Abstract

Research on Hmong American childrens' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs) is limited. Further, although parent participation is increasingly encouraged in the American school system, Hmong American families may face significant barriers to school participation. This study investigated the Home Literacy Environments (HLEs) of 18 Hmong American first graders in an urban Midwestern city through parent interviews. The relationship between home literacy practices and reading achievement data was analyzed using codes from parent interviews and archival reading achievement data to identify emerging patterns and potential relationships. Further, barriers and supports to parent participation in the classroom were explored using parent responses and interviews with Hmong American staff members. Three primary findings emerged from the data, including: (a) nature of the students' HLEs, (b) emerging patterns between students' home literacy practices and progress on reading assessments, and (c) barriers and supports affecting parent participation in the classroom. Implications of the study are discussed in relation to future research and practice.

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Chapter One: Introduction

As a first and second-year teacher in an urban school with a predominately Hmong American student population, I sought to develop strong relationships with my students' families. I knew that this was central to my students' school success and was essential to developing culturally relevant and student-centered curriculum and pedagogies. Coming from a different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic background than my students, I was aware that there may be barriers between myself and my students' families that could potentially create misunderstandings and ultimately harm my students. I wanted to bridge this home-school divide by inviting parents to participate in my classroom. Yet, my efforts to include parents in the classroom proved to be difficult. I initially intended to create a multicultural literacy unit that would focus on and investigate Southeast Asian countries. As I discussed this project with potential participants, I hoped that parents could share oral stories or books they read as children. While several parents expressed interest in the project, no parents were ultimately able to participate. The present study represents my effort to better understand students' families' home literacy practices as well as barriers and supports to parent participation at school.

Background of the Study

Families are integral to young children's literacy acquisition (Weinberger, 1996). Even before they reach school age, research has shown that families can build on children's interests and scaffold their learning (Goodman, Martens, Owocki, & Whitmore, 2004). Further, in combination with children's access to a variety of literacy materials in the home, parent-child reading interactions can help contribute to intrinsic reading motivation and increased reading achievement (Afflerback, Baker, & Reinking, 1996; Brody, Munsterman, & Sonnenschein, 1996; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). While they may be different, all families have literacy practices

and attempt to imbue these practices to their children (Auerback, 1989; Feiler & Webster, 1998; Goodman et al., 2004). Yet, many children in the United States enter school without basic literacy skills. For example, the U.S. Department of Education (1998) has reported that one out of five preschoolers enter kindergarten without basic print familiarity. Such disparities in literacy skills fall along economic lines. One study found that 47% of parents receiving public assistance reported having limited access to alphabet books; in contrast, only 3% of professional parents reported this barrier (Mason & McCormick, 1986). In a similar vein, Goldenberg (1989) found that 60% of parent participants who reported low socio-economic status in her study had only zero to four books in their homes. Such findings provide an important challenge for schools serving low-income students.

Emergent literacy refers to an early understanding of reading and writing (Teale, 1999). Implicit in the body of research surrounding emergent literacy is the understanding that children learn through informal interactions with print, including exploration of print in their environments, such as newspapers, advertisements, and cereal packages (Clay, 1991; Purcell-Gates, 1996). Even before attending school, children begin to understand that print carries meaning, how to distinguish between print and pictures, and develop book handling skills (i.e., print faces right-side-up) (Ferriero & Teberosky, 1982). Thus, children begin to learn about literacy from their home environments at an early age.

While research has shown the importance of storybook reading in the home, the absence of storybook reading does not mean that children's homes are devoid of valuable literacy practices (Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Gallimore, Goldenberg, & Reese, 1992). It is worth noting that storybook reading is primarily practiced in the homes of middle-income families (Brody et al., 1996). Therefore, it is important to learn how the literacy

practices of low-income families can support children's literacy development (Brody et al., 1996). Low-income students' home literacy practices should not be regarded as deficits (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001). Rather, teachers and researchers should take an attitude of curiosity toward learning about students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs). Every home is a learning environment, and thus it is valuable for teachers to understand the out of school context that students come from as well as the knowledge they bring with them to school (Amanti, Gonzalez, Moll, Neff, 1992; Greenberg & Moll, 1990). While there is a growing body of literature surrounding immigrant families' HLEs, including that of Latino immigrants (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1996; Gallimore, Garnier, Goldenberg, & Reese, 2000; Madrigal, 2005), there is limited knowledge about the HLEs of Hmong American students. Thus, it is important that researchers investigate the home literacy practices of Hmong American families, so teachers can become more knowledgeable about their students' out of school contexts and the knowledge they are likely to bring with them to school.

The American school system increasingly encourages parent participation. For example, family literacy research has demonstrated the importance of parent involvement in their children's literacy acquisition (Afflerbach et al., 1996; Brody et al., 1996; Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). Significantly, research has shown that, despite often living in high-stress conditions, immigrant families are capable of contributing to their children's educational success and communicating with teachers and school administrators (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001, 2004; Gallimore et al., 2000). Yet, immigrant families may face challenges to participation if they have limited knowledge about how the American school system operates (Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; Lee, 2005). Therefore, it is essential that teachers and researchers gain a better understanding of the

barriers that Hmong American parents face to participation, as well as culturally responsive means of supporting their school participation.

Study Overview and Timeline

The present study is an attempt to extend the body of research surrounding HLEs and parent participation in school, specifically within the Hmong American population. Data were collected from April through June of the 2014-2015 school year. Using a mixed-methods approach, I investigated the nature of 18 Hmong American students' HLEs by employing semi-structured interviews with 19 parent participants in order to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the nature of students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs)?, (b) What is the relationship between students' home literacy practices and their reading achievement data?, and (c) What are barriers and supports to parent participation in the classroom? Students' home literacy practices were analyzed in relation to their progress over the course of the year on two reading achievement assessments, the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). The MAP Reading assessment is a computer-based adaptive assessment that measures student reading achievement in relation to the Common Core Standards and provides an instructional level for each child (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016). The QRI-5 is a reading inventory that includes both narrative and expository passages correlated to each grade level (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). The QRI-5 measures reading comprehension through the use of implicit and explicit questions as well as retelling passages (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). It also provides measures of word identification and fluency (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). Supports and barriers to parent participation were investigated using

parent responses and interviews with Hmong American staff at the school. A timeline of the study was as follows:

March-April 2015: invited parents to participate in a multicultural literacy unit, gained informed consent using initial form, recorded parent responses with regards to participation.

April-June 2015: shifted research focus to students' HLEs and parent participation, gained informed consent using new form, conducted parent and staff interviews.

May 2015-March 2016: analyzed data.

Conclusion

Given the importance of the HLE to young children's emergent literacy, as well as the necessity for teachers to understand the knowledge students bring with them to school, it is important that research investigate the HLEs of immigrant families. The limited research on Hmong American students' HLEs points to the need for qualitative research that explores the nature of this group's HLEs. Furthermore, increasing pressure in the American school system for parents to participate at school must be examined in relation to potential barriers and supports for parent participation, particularly among low-income and immigrant families. Thus, in this study, I examined the nature of 18 Hmong American students' HLEs using interviews of 19 Hmong American parents from one school in an urban Midwestern city. Additionally, I analyzed the potential relationship between my students' progress on two reading assessments over the course of the year in relation to their reported home literacy practices. Finally, I employed parent responses and semi-structured interviews of Hmong American staff members to gain a better understanding of barriers and supports to parent participation at school.

Definitions

Emergent literacy. An early understanding of reading and writing (Teale, 1999).

English Language Learner (ELL). An individual who is in the process of actively acquiring English and whose primary language is one other than English (American Institutes for Research, 2010).

Funds of knowledge. The “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Amanti, Gonzalez, Moll, Neff, 1992, p. 133).

Home Literacy Environment (HLE). Encompasses “the resources and opportunities in families that support the development of children’s reading skills at home” (Stubbe & Terelli, 2010, p. 1).

Reading and Writing Motivation. Children’s feelings and attitudes towards literacy-related activities (Mata, 2011).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews academic literature related to Home Literacy Environments (HLEs), school partnerships with first- and second-generation immigrant families and communities, and reading assessment of English language learners (ELLs). Thirteen studies are discussed and analyzed in order to provide a picture of the issues at hand when investigating parent involvement in a school with a majority Hmong population, as well as the relationship between students' HLEs and reading achievement data for the purpose of this mixed-methods study.

This chapter is organized into three sections. I first introduce the concept of HLEs and delve into the relationship between HLEs and student reading and writing motivation. I examine the various components of student reading and writing motivation as well as the impact of parent reading and writing beliefs on their children. Next, I explore school partnerships with first- and second-generation immigrant families and communities. The section begins with an examination of family-school partnerships and transitions into a summary of an action research study focused on one teacher's quest for cultural competency through increased parent participation in her classroom. I introduce several studies that delve into issues related to communication between schools and immigrant families and communities and explore ways in which schools can successfully support and partner with them. Within this section, I also provide a brief introduction to Hmong culture and attempt to illustrate the current context for Hmong American students. Next, I investigate issues related to assessment of ELLs by presenting several studies that test the validity and usefulness of various reading assessments for these students. I end the literature review by summarizing a study that challenges traditionally designed assessments by incorporating students' funds of knowledge into authentic assessments.

Home Literacy Environments and Motivation

The HLE encompasses “the resources and opportunities in families that support the development of children’s reading skills at home” (Stubbe & Tarelli, 2010, p. 1). Although young children tend to be highly motivated to learn to read and write overall, reading and writing motivation often declines as students progress to higher grades (Mata, 2011). This is important to note, because scholars have linked HLEs to reading and writing motivation (Baker & Scher, 2002) and to early literacy knowledge (Brown & Byrnes, 2013). Students with rich HLEs tend to have greater reading and writing motivation and early literacy success (Baker & Scher, 2002). It is essential to develop an understanding of factors affecting young children’s reading and writing motivation in order to establish a strong foundation for future reading and writing motivation in school. Further, it is important to discern the components of a rich HLE that can foster both reading and writing motivation and early literacy success in school. In order to best support the development of ELLs’ literacy skills, teachers must learn about their literacy practices outside of school, including their literacy experiences in different languages and modalities (Haneda, 2006).

With regards to motivation, Baker and Scher (2002) investigated the relationship between children’s motivation to read, parental beliefs, and home experiences with print using a scale that measured multiple dimensions of motivation. They also studied the impact of gender and sociocultural background on children’s motivation for reading. Participants included 65 six-year-old first graders and mothers from a wide range of sociocultural backgrounds. Thirty-three of these participants were also part of a larger longitudinal study entitled “The Early Childhood Project” (Baker, Serpell, & Sonnenschein, 1995).

Participants from the larger study were drawn from six public schools in Baltimore, and the sampling strategy was specifically designed to represent the economic, racial, and ethnic diversity of Baltimore. Therefore, all but seven families were considered low-income. To create

a more economically balanced sample population, the researchers recruited 32 children from three private schools in Baltimore.

The *Motivations for Reading Scale* was created by Baker and Scher (2002) to measure four dimensions of reading motivation: (a) enjoyment of reading, (b) perceived value of reading, (c) perceived competence in reading, and (d) interest in library-related situations. For example, to measure enjoyment of reading, children were asked to choose which of two stuffed animals they were more like in relation to a target statement—one stuffed animal held a positive view of the statement, while the other stuffed animal held a negative view of the statement. To reduce the tendency to respond in a socially desirable way, the children were asked to determine whether they were “a lot” or “a little” like the animal they chose. Scores were recorded using a four-point scale (i.e., 0 = *not at all*; 1 = *rarely, less than once a week*; 2 = *occasionally, somewhere between 1 and 3*; and 3 = *very often, almost every day*).

To measure the perceived value of reading, the researchers also created a four-point scale to inventory parental views of children’s home reading activity and motivation for reading. Parent responses were coded into nine categories based on themes present in their answers: (a) reading is necessary, (b) reading for learning, (c) reading for education, (d) reading for specific skills, (e) reading for self-esteem, (f) reading for enjoyment, (g) reading for empowerment, (h) reading for employment, and (i) reading for social relations. A sample of data were double-coded, resulting in 87% overall inter-rater agreement.

To measure perceived competence in reading, parents were asked to indicate how their children displayed their interest in learning to read, and responses were placed into four categories: (a) attends to words/decoding, (b) pretends to read, (c) demonstrates general interest in books, and (d) child reads. Inter-rater reliability was 95% for these data. To measure interest

in library-related situations, data relating to frequency of interactions with books were taken from an interview, and were given a numerical rating. Collaborators in shared reading were given 0 for a child and 1 for an adult. Parents who reported any library activity received a 1 and parents who reported no library activity received a 0.

This study suggests that there are multiple dimensions to students' reading motivation, including value, enjoyment, and perceived competence. For example, students' negative responses to items were revealing—43% of students responded negatively to looking for books by themselves and 39% responded negatively to liking to read. This is important to note as independent voluntary reading is vital to reading achievement (Baker & Scher, 2002).

This study found no significant difference across all four sociocultural groups (i.e., low-income predominantly African American population; low-income predominantly European American population; middle-income predominantly African American population; middle-income predominantly European American population) and supports previous research that has found that what parents say and do is more important than income level, in terms of students' reading motivation (DeBaryshe, 1995; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986). This study may also support previous research findings that, as early as first grade, African American students are more likely to have positive attitudes toward academic reading rather than recreational reading when compared to White children (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995).

Important to the current study, significant differences were found between at-home literacy environments across sociocultural groups. While middle-income children were more likely to experience shared reading of storybooks in a one-adult, one-child situation, low-income children were more likely to experience shared reading of storybooks with another child. This may have an impact on the quality of the reading experience.

Two important findings of Baker and Scher's (2002) study were that parents who cited pleasure as a reason for reading were more likely to have children who scored higher on the enjoyment, value, and competence subscales of the motivation scale. Further, the researchers found a negative correlation between children's interaction with basic skill books and reading motivation.

I built on Baker and Scher's (2002) work in my own qualitative study of HLEs and student achievement in a first grade setting. As in Baker and Scher's study, I employed parent interviews in order to inquire about the types of materials read at home (e.g., alphabet books, picture storybooks) and parent attitudes toward reading. I also coded parent responses thematically. It was also important to consider other contributing factors to students' reading and writing achievement as to not oversimplify the relationship between HLEs and reading achievement.

To continue the work of Baker and Scher (2002), Mata (2011) employed Baker and Scher's *Motivations for Reading Scale* in her study of the nature of literacy motivations of kindergarten children. She considered students' reading and writing motivational profiles as well as gender differences. Participants were 451 kindergarten students across 32 classrooms representing a wide range of sociocultural backgrounds.

Mata's (2011) work was informed by earlier research by Baker and Scher (1997). Similar to Baker and Scher, she asked students to respond to items composed of two opposing statements regarding either reading or writing that were associated with two stuffed animals. Students were asked to pick which stuffed animal they were more similar to and if they were "a little" or "a lot" like the given stuffed animal.

Borrowing from Baker and Scher (2002), Mata (2011) used a four-point scale to record responses (i.e., 0 = *not at all*; 1 = *rarely, less than once a week*; 2 = *occasionally, somewhere between 1 and 3 times per week*; and 3 = *very often, almost every day*). Mata found three components that were statistically evaluated and determined to be reliable and valid: (a) Factor 1- Self-concept as a reader/writer, (b) Factor 2- Enjoyment of reading and writing, and (c) Factor 3-Value of reading and writing. Scores were high across all three factors. Value is the feature that scored highest in both profiles (reading and writing), self-concept scored second highest, and enjoyment had the lowest score. These data suggest that participants tended to associate reading and writing with self-value or importance more readily than they associated them with enjoyment or pleasure.

Despite similarities between reading and writing scores, the researchers found that scores for reading were consistently higher than those for writing. This indicates that participants tended to associate pleasure and value more closely with reading than with writing. Yet, students' self-concept scores were equal in both reading and writing (i.e., there was no significant difference between reading and writing in terms of students' perceptions of their future success).

Mata (2011) found three dimensions to characterize students' reading and writing motivation (i.e., self-concept as a reader/writer, enjoyment of reading/writing, and value of reading/writing). This could help to prevent the decline in motivation in reading and writing that had been documented by previous research (Eccles, O'Neill, & Wigfield, 2005).

Mata's (2011) research also supports the conclusions of Guthrie, Perencevich, Tonks, and Wigfield (2004) who found that students' motivation may be higher in certain areas and lower in others. Mata discovered that participants had a higher degree of motivation in reading than in

writing. Because she found that students tend to value writing less than reading, Mata suggests that classroom environments are powerful tools for increasing students' writing motivation.

Mata's (2011) findings about student motivation were integral to my study of HLEs. Although I did not examine student motivation in the present study, it was important to consider the ways in which HLEs could impact student reading and writing motivation, and in turn, academic success in reading and writing. It was also essential to consider the role that value and importance of literacy play in student motivation, particularly when investigating the value and importance that students' parents place on various aspects of literacy. If parents value certain dimensions of literacy, this value may transfer to their child (e.g., If parents value reading fluency, their child may be a fluent reader.) and impact classroom performance. Similarly, if parents do not value certain aspects of literacy, this lack of value could also transfer to the child. Finally, the implications of Mata's research for classroom environments were important to consider when thinking about my own classroom environment and how it encouraged or discouraged reading and writing motivation.

More closely tied to my own exploration, Brown and Byrnes (2013) investigated the relationship between HLEs and literacy knowledge in beginning readers. The sample population was composed of 147 preschool children, 70 girls and 77 boys, ranging in age from three to five years-old. These students were from the Melbourne metropolitan region of Victoria, Australia. All students had attended preschool in the previous year and would be attending school in the following year. Most participants attended preschools that largely served White Australian, English-speaking, middle-class families. Children came from 14 classes in six preschool centers and were grouped into four clusters according to age: 47-51 months ($n=20$), 52-56 months

($n=36$), 57-62 months ($n=65$), and 63-66 months ($n=25$). Parent participants included 123 mothers and 11 fathers.

This study is part of a larger study, The Young Learners' Project (see Brown & Byrnes, 2013 for more information). In the current study, Brown and Byrnes (2013) analyzed data from a parent questionnaire about their HLEs and a series of literacy tasks aimed to assess early literacy knowledge of student participants. Additionally, Brown and Byrnes analyzed questionnaire data regarding parents' HLEs, including their own reading habits and home literacy practices with their children. They also analyzed data from literacy tasks with child participants.

The literacy task with child participants was conducted in Term 2 of the school year. The four tasks were derived from Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) and included: (a) Readability 1, (b) Readability 2, (c) Readability 3, and (d) Readability 4, which the literacy field currently conceptualizes as "concepts of print." The Readability 1 task was focused on discerning whether students could differentiate between letters and numbers. The Readability 2 task aimed to: (a) determine whether children employ a hypothesis about the minimum number of letters that should compose a word and (b) determine whether children employ a hypothesis about words with a variety of letters. The Readability 3 task assessed students' understanding of spaces between words. The Readability 4 task determined whether children were able to read at least one word from a list of frequently occurring words in young children's books (e.g., dog, mum, day, tree, house, water).

Of the 146 students that completed Readability 1, 74% ($n = 108$) were able to differentiate between letters, numbers, and shapes. For Readability 2, 73% ($n = 106$) of the 146 students employed a theory that there is a minimum number of letters in a word (minimum quantity hypothesis). Of the 143 students that completed Readability 3, 37% ($n = 53$)

consistently selected correct items and 63% ($n = 90$) consistently selected incorrect items. Results indicate that girls were more likely to apply the word spacing rule than boys ($\chi^2 = 3.743$, $df = 1$, $p = .053$ (two-tailed)). Of the 147 students that completed Readability 4, 22% ($n = 32$) were able to read at least one of the frequently occurring words, while 78% ($n = 115$) were unable to read one word.

The parent questionnaire contained three items that related to HLEs. They included (a) Item 1—the types of literacy materials parents used, (b) Item 2—the frequency with which parents read for pleasure, and (c) Item 3—how often they read to their child. Brown and Byrnes (2013) viewed the parents' reading habits as models of literacy activities for children. The frequency with which parents read to their children was viewed as a measure of parental scaffolding of literacy.

For Item 1, parents were asked to report the frequency with which they engaged with traditional reading materials, environmental materials, or literacy related to new technology. Parents were able to respond “often,” “sometimes,” or “never.” Of the 139 parents that responded to this item, 79% ($n = 110$) reported an interest in all types of literacy and 79% ($n = 110$) read on a moderate to highly frequent basis, while 14% ($n = 19$) reported reading infrequently. The parents who reported reading the least preferred traditional literacy (26%, $n = 5$).

For Item 2, parents were asked to report the amount of time they spent reading for pleasure. Responses were grouped into the following categories: (a) read a bit (spent less than 20 minutes per day), (b) read a fair bit (spent between 20 and 60 minutes per day), and (c) read a lot (spent more than 60 minutes per day). Of the 136 parents who responded to this item, 67% ($n =$

91) reported spending between 20 and 60 minutes reading per day, 7% ($n = 10$) spent more than 60 minutes reading per day, and 26% ($n = 35$) spent less than 20 minutes reading per day.

For Item 3, parents were asked to report whether they read to their children daily, most days, weekly, occasionally, or never. Of the 134 parents who responded to this item, 69% ($n = 92$) reported that they read to their children daily, 25% ($n = 34$) reported that they read to their children most days, five reported that they read to their children weekly, and three parents reported that they read to their children occasionally.

Statistical analysis indicated a significant relationship between the strength of parents' literacy profiles and the frequency with which they read to their children. Parents with strong literacy profiles were more likely to read to their children on a daily basis. There was also a significant relationship found between the frequency with which parents read for pleasure and the frequency with which they read to their children. There was no relationship between parents' literacy profile and the amount of time they spent reading for pleasure. No significant relationship was found between parents' literacy profile and child readability variables. However, there was a significant relationship between the amount of time parents spent reading and children's performance on Readability 1, 2, and 3.

Brown and Byrnes (2013) suggest that students' literacy knowledge is likely influenced by their parents, who are a major factor in HLEs. Many children in this study came from rich environments, in terms of the types of literature with which their parents engaged, the amount of time their parents spent in literacy activities, and the routine nature of shared reading with their children. The results indicate that a strong parental literacy profile is associated with daily joint book reading and with emerging concepts of print. The results of Brown and Byrnes indicate that there are indirect associations between children's early knowledge of literacy and parents'

literacy behaviors as models for their children. For example, there was a relationship between parents' literacy activities and the frequency with which they read to their children. This suggests that literacy was a valued feature of family culture that parents wanted to impart on their children.

Similar to Brown and Byrnes (2013), the current study investigated the relationship between students' HLEs and their reading ability. Also like Brown and Byrnes, I asked parents about their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to reading and writing and their hopes for their children in the future. In my study, I built on Brown and Byrnes' research by exploring potential relationships and emerging patterns between students' HLEs and their reading achievement data.

The relationship between literacy and HLEs is complex, as documented by Baker and Scher (2002), Mata (2011), and Brown and Byrnes (2013). There are several dimensions to reading motivation, and motivation in one dimension of reading can be higher than in another (Baker & Scher, 2002). Although young children are often highly motivated in reading, value or importance of reading may be the most important motivating factor (Mata, 2011). This is important to note, because the things that parents say and do may have a large impact on children's reading and writing motivation (Baker & Scher, 2002). For example, parents who participate in shared reading of storybooks with their children may positively impact their children's reading and writing motivation (Brown & Byrnes, 2013). Further, parents who enjoy reading themselves may impart their enjoyment for literature on their children (Brown & Byrnes, 2013). Because families play a vital role in developing their children's literacy success, it is important that schools partner with them. Family-school relations are particularly important for families navigating linguistic and cultural differences, as they may need extra support in operating within the U.S. school system to advocate for their children.

School Partnerships with ELL Families and Communities

According to the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, teachers should “promote the meaningful, relevant, and active participation of all families” (2010). Family-school partnerships are essential to creating classroom settings that foster cultural competency and value diversity (Keyser, 2006). When strong family-school relationships exist, students’ backgrounds are incorporated into curriculum, and parents and teachers can partner in setting goals for students. Teachers can gain a better understanding of children’s backgrounds and tailor teaching and learning to the individual student. However, these relationships can be complicated, particularly in the presence of language barriers. Poor family-school relationships can result in lack of communication and confusion and can ultimately have negative consequences for students (Keyser, 2006). Family-school relationships are difficult to explore and even more difficult to measure. In order to closely examine factors related to family-school relationships, qualitative studies are reviewed below.

Mitchell and Souto-Manning’s (2010) action research study illustrates the power of parent involvement in the classroom. In their study, they sought to understand how implementing the responsive teaching cycle in a culturally diverse classroom could contribute to a culturally, economically, and linguistically diverse curriculum and practices. This research took place in a preschool lab-school setting over the course of five years, from the winter of 2002 to the winter of 2006. Participants were three to four year-old students (and their parents and families) in Mitchell’s classroom.

Mitchell, in the role of teacher, employed the responsive teaching cycle to document what was occurring in the classroom, envision events contextually, and develop ideas to change practices and curricula (Mitchell & Souto-Manning, 2010). Data were collected anecdotally and

systematically by the teacher through journaling, interpreted through a narrative, and transformed into instructional decisions based on interpretations. Narratives were created based on events that occurred (e.g., a conversation with a child) and then documented by the teacher in narrative form (e.g., jotting down a note about how she viewed the interaction). Mitchell continuously reflected on her narratives in order to change her teaching as she learned from students.

Souto-Manning, in the role of researcher, took field notes as she observed outside the classroom (Mitchell & Souto-Manning, 2010). Mitchell and Souto-Manning met twice a week to analyze Mitchell's narratives and document how she was progressing with regards to developing a culturally competent classroom. During this time, Mitchell and Souto-Manning discussed the interpretive narrative and co-authored the Analysis section of their report. They discussed ways to address issues that arose in the classroom in culturally responsive ways.

Children's and teacher's narratives were also woven into Mitchell's journal in order to honor students' personal experiences (Mitchell & Souto-Manning, 2010). In Mitchell's second year as a lead teacher, she chose to focus a week on holiday celebrations from multiple cultures during winter 2002. She selected multicultural books from the school's library that provided brief descriptions of holiday traditions. Students learned about Santa, Kwanzaa, Hanukah, and the Chinese New Year. After reflecting on this activity, Mitchell realized that the class could not relate to what she was teaching them. Although she based what she was teaching on the children's backgrounds, she did not focus on specific experiences they shared with their families. Mitchell recalled that one of the students' favorite parts of the week was when a parent came in to help make ornaments.

In winter 2003, the teacher chose to involve more parents in the holiday week (Mitchell & Souto-Manning, 2010). That year, more parents came into the classroom to talk with children about their traditions. Mitchell noted that students enjoyed the parents coming in, reading, telling stories, and engaging students in hands-on, culturally-specific activities. That year, Mitchell focused on capitalizing on parents' funds of knowledge (Amanti, Gonzalez, & Moll, 2009) by allowing cultural practices from home to be part of the classroom. She based this change upon observations from the previous year, when she noticed that students were most engaged when parents were the experts and shared their knowledge with students in the classroom. This, the teacher noted, helped students begin to understand the concept of diversity as parents shared authentic, culturally-specific activities that they practiced. Mitchell noticed that a community of respect was fostered as parents became more involved in her classroom.

In 2005, Mitchell planned two weeks to dedicate to holiday traditions instead of three (Mitchell & Souto-Manning, 2010). This year, Mitchell focused on holiday traditions from the students' cultures, homes, and countries of origin. The teacher researched at home about holiday traditions, positioning herself as learner. Students were socialized so that they could share about their own cultural traditions. Mitchell also incorporated multilingual education into the curriculum, exposing students to the many languages present in the classroom.

After analyzing data the next year, Mitchell found several themes (Mitchell & Souto-Manning, 2010). First, she had come to value diversity in her classroom and had to take a "humble stance" (p. 274) by allowing herself to change according to her students, rather than expecting her students to change to fit her cultural background. She took a supportive role by welcoming parents and families as valued holders of funds of knowledge. In order to take a humble stance, Mitchell "blurred the roles of learner and students" by allowing herself to learn

from her students and their families as well as teaching them (p. 274). She did this by sharing ownership and learning about students' cultures. Mitchell fostered dialogues that allowed her and her students to learn about one another's cultural backgrounds and helped create a true understanding of diversity in the classroom.

Throughout this process, participant assumptions were challenged. For example, students learned that Christmas, which is often thought to occur in winter, occurs during the summer in places in the Southern Hemisphere. These classroom conversations also caused Mitchell and her students to develop sociopolitical consciousness as they became involved with community problems and learned to understand and act upon injustices.

Mitchell and Souto-Manning's (2010) action research study shows how multiple voices and cultural practices can be incorporated into preschool settings. It also documents how a classroom can be continuously reimagined and advanced in order to improve practice. The importance of involving parents and families in curriculum is highlighted in this study as well as the value of making student experiences integral to curriculum throughout the year. Finally, if teachers are both learners and teachers, they can come to value cultural traditions and honor diversity in their classrooms, as well as develop more culturally competent classrooms.

Similar to Mitchell and Souto-Manning's (2010) work, the current study employs an action research framework to examine how schools and families can partner to improve education for a student population that is ethnically, culturally, and linguistically different from the teacher. Like Mitchell and Souto-Manning, I employed qualitative methods to learn from and understand students' home experiences. I built on their work by employing semi-structured interviews in order to learn more from parents about their HLEs and understand the relationship

between students' HLEs and their reading achievement data. Staff interviews allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of barriers and supports to parent participation in school.

To continue a detailed examination of the relationship between parents and school, some scholars have investigated different ways in which schools and families partner in order to determine best practices for teachers and school leaders to encourage strong family-school relationships. One such study by Panferov (2010) explored: (a) how ELL parents view literacy and their own literacy practices, (b) the qualities of literacy practiced in their homes, and (c) the issues specific to parent-child and parent-school interactions and communications that might contribute to school success. Panferov employed ethnographic methods to describe the stories of two first-generation American parents, Ivan Pavlov and Hadiya Omar. Data were collected through observations of the home and school settings as well as through interviews and questionnaires with the different families' participants and teachers.

In the first family, Ivan was parent to two elementary-aged children, Marina and Sveta, who lived with he and his wife. Both children received special English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in pull-out programs during school and were academically successful, receiving excellent grades. In the other family, Hadiya had several children from her first marriage who had settled all over the United States; the study focused on the children living with Hadiya at the time of the study. Her daughter, Fatima, was living with her at the beginning of the study but moved out partway through the study. Hadiya's son, Abdi, also lived with her, as well as her elderly mother. During the study, Fatima and Abdi were both enrolled in high school. Both struggled in school and were regularly in trouble for disciplinary infractions. These two families, the Pavlovs and the Omars, had different backgrounds, literacy experiences, and relationships with school.

The Pavlovs immigrated to the United States in 1999. Both Ivan and his wife had attended post-secondary school. Ivan was 44 years-old and had graduated from a business management school in Moscow, Russia. When Ivan first arrived in the U.S., he studied English in a community-based ESL program and later graduated from a community college, majoring in computer programming. Ivan recalled reading when he was eight years-old. He did not read before starting school but did remember his mother reading children's books to him. Ivan remembered reading the same books to his younger sister and to his own daughters.

The Omars immigrated to the U.S. in 1997. Hadiya, her first husband, and her children took a dangerous route from war-ridden Somalia to refugee camps in Kenya and eventually to the U.S. Hadiya's first husband was killed in a bombing in Somalia. Hadiya was a 51 year-old mother of five children. She had a secondary education and was employed in a financial department of the government. She lived with three of her children, her second husband, and her mother at the time of this study. Some of her older children had attended school in Somalia and some had attended school in refugee camps in Kenya previous to their immigration to the U.S. Other of Hadiya's children received no formal schooling until their arrival in the U.S. Hadiya's mother did not know how to read or write, but her father was able to read and write in Italian. Hadiya remembered her father reading stories to her and her mother telling her stories before bed. Like Ivan, Hadiya told the same children's stories to her own children. Hadiya went to school through twelfth grade, where she learned biology, chemistry, geography, math, science, and Italian.

Ivan believed literacy meant the ability to read and understand websites, newspapers, and books. He commented that literacy is the direct result of schooling. In contrast, he explained that oral skills may be acquired through listening and speaking. Ivan reported reading occasionally

for enjoyment but also read work documents, schools memos, and bills. He primarily obtained news from English and Russian newspapers and websites. In his view, Russians read more than Americans. He reported reading an average of four English newspapers per week. He had a limited ability to write in English but was able to perform tasks for work by using a template or form letter for documents such as resumes, cover letters, and thank you letters. He also sent instant messages for work. Ivan reported speaking Russian 99.5% of the time and English .5% of the time. Ivan attended school five days a week for about seven hours each day, where he explained he was exposed to greater levels of English.

Hadiya similarly reported spending most of her week speaking Somali, her native language. At the time of this study, Hadiya was attending a workforce training program that was specifically aimed to train Somali women in childcare skills and English. Like Ivan, Hadiya spent about seven hours per day at this program. Hadiya completed the program months later but never worked in a childcare center. Instead, she helped care for her mother at home. Hadiya explained that reading and writing in both Somali and American cultures are more important than listening and speaking and are central to literacy. She explained that the purpose of literacy is employment. Hadiya's writing was limited. She reported writing letters in Somali on occasion. She only wrote bills in English. Hadiya's reading was limited to the Quran. She read bills, magazines, and school communications in English.

In addition to the contexts described above, the Pavlov and Omar homes differed with regards to their HLEs. The Pavlovs provided their daughters with many books in both Russian and in English as well as internet access. Their daughters had a set time to do schoolwork, and their parents would often help them. The Pavlovs began reading to their children when they were

infants. They modeled reading and writing in English and in Russian for their children at an early age by making lists and writing letters to friends and family.

In contrast, the Omar children were often unsupervised at home with their grandmother. The children preferred to watch television, play video games, and rarely spent time at home studying. Although Hadiya understood the importance of helping her children with their schoolwork, she felt that she could not help them due to her limited English language skills. Hadiya wrote letters on occasion and read and wrote in English on bills; she did so much less frequently than the Pavlovs.

Panferov (2010) also explored how the two sets of parents were able to support expectations for academic success. The Pavlovs had attended school regularly in Russia and similarly in the U.S. Their children, Marina and Sveta, had regular school attendance. They reported being upset when made to miss school. Their teachers gave positive reports about their behavior. In contrast, Hadiya's children, Abdi and Fatima, both struggled with attendance, skipping and missing school frequently. Further, Abdi and Fatima missed additional school days as a result of suspensions for disciplinary infractions. Abdi and Fatima "talked back" to their teachers, skipped class, and fought with classmates, according to school reports.

Both the Omar and the Pavlov families relied on their children for translation of bills, letters, and other English communications. The children of both the Omar and the Pavlov families had surpassed their parents in English-language proficiency. Although the Pavlovs tried to only ask their children to translate for them occasionally, Hadiya relied heavily on her children to aid her with communication in English.

The communication that parents received from school contrasted between families. While almost all communication sent home to the Pavlov family was positive, the Omars largely

received messages about their children's poor discipline. Often, Hadiya had to rely on Fatima and Abdi to translate the communication honestly for her. There was occasional communication from the school in Somali, but she had to rely on her children to deliver it to her. In contrast, the Pavlov family knew to expect weekly memos about homework assignments.

This study found that regular written and spoken dialogue was effective for establishing home-school communication, particularly when offered in the parents' first language. Messages that conveyed both positive feedback as well as reports about negative or disruptive behaviors were helpful in establishing communication between parents and schools. Home visits were valuable and helped to establish respect between the parents and the school.

Panferov (2010) asserts that interviews may be the best way to establish the most effective modes of communication for parents. The author noted that many school districts rely on the radio or television broadcasts to relay critical information. However, the parents in this study would not have been able to receive information this way. Panferov suggests establishing phone trees, listservs, texting, or internet communication in order to reach families. Furthermore, Panferov proposes that new parents to the school might be paired with a "buddy parent" to help new parents navigate school communication systems.

According to Panferov (2010), schools might also consider giving explicit advice about ways in which parents can help their children with schoolwork. For example, some school districts offer workshops to inform bilingual parents about opportunities for involvement. Panferov cautions that such sessions must take into consideration work schedules and childcare, so that parents can attend. It may also be helpful for parents to have access to computer labs, libraries, and other resources to support their need for study materials.

Schools may encourage parents of ELLs to volunteer in classes or at school events to encourage home language literacy. Panferov (2010) suggests that schools provide resources in multiple languages to show students the value of all languages. Allowing parents to act as experts of their own culture can transfer a positive attitude to ELL families. Learning the stories of parents of ELLs can encourage parent involvement with school and create a better experience for all involved. The author argues that there is a need for more long-term qualitative research on ways to improve ELL parental involvement in schools and to improve ELL school readiness, particularly for children of parents who have limited English language proficiency or have had little or no formal schooling.

As in Panferov's (2010) study, the participants in the present study are members of an immigrant group. Also like Panferov, I employed ethnographic methods as I sought to learn about my students' families. Interviewing parents allowed me to learn more about my students' backgrounds and also enabled me to view parents as experts of their own culture. As in Panferov's study, the current investigation allowed me to learn about and address potential obstacles to positive home-school relationships. As Panferov suggested, I explored ways in which parental involvement in school can improve. Furthermore, this exploration of students' HLEs allowed me to learn more about ELLs' school readiness, as I began to understand the literacy environments of my first grade students. Important to understanding students' literacy environments, it is critical to explore students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The students in the current study are Hmong American, so the next section will provide a brief introduction to the Hmong culture.

Hmong context. Scholars have conducted studies of home-school relations in Hmong contexts (Adler, 2004; Ngo, 2013; Rah, 2013) and Hmong student identity (Lee, 2005, 2009).

Before delving into several of these studies, I will provide a brief overview of Hmong culture and the current context for Hmong American students. The Hmong are an ethnic group that have been described as a people on the move (Faruque, 2002). They are thought to have originated in China and later fled to Laos due to ethnic persecution by the Chinese (Quincy, 1988). Similar to their life in China, the Hmong were viewed as outsiders in Laos as tensions between Lao Buddhists and Hmong animists created ethnic friction. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. government employed Hmong people as secret spies (Faruque, 2002). After the war, the Hmong were prosecuted by the Laotian government, and many Hmong fled to Thailand and the United States (Faruque, 2002). The largest Hmong population in the U.S. is in the Midwest with high density populations in Minnesota and Wisconsin (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Hmong culture stems from a patriarchal society and is organized into eighteen clans (Vang, 2010). Hmong mothers are traditionally supposed to yield to fathers when making decisions for their family, although traditional family roles and clan politics are more recently being challenged (Faruque, 2002; Vang, 2003). Traditional Hmong culture is marked by celebrations and family gatherings for events such as engagements and weddings (Vang, 2003). Funerals are also central events in Hmong culture and involve complex customs and rituals (Vang, 2003). The two major varieties of Hmong language are White Hmong (Hmong Daw) and Green/Blue Hmong (Hmong Njua) (UCLA Language Materials Project, n.d.). A written Hmong language system was only recently developed in the past 60-70 years (UCLA Language Materials Project, n.d.).

Despite their changing surroundings, the Hmong people have maintained a unique sense of identity. According to Faruque (2002), because many Hmong families migrated to the U.S. at the same time, they did not need to adapt to American culture as quickly as families that

migrated alone. Rather, they were able to maintain many of their traditional beliefs and customs and adapt to American culture in gradual and deliberate ways (Faruque, 2002). Yet, the Hmong have faced many “linguistic, educational, economical, cultural and racial barriers” in the U.S. (Faruque 2002, p. 40). For example, the traditional Hmong values of family and group welfare come into conflict with the American ideals of individualism (Faruque, 2002). Yet, some Hmong people view the shift to an individualistic mindset as a necessary component of assimilation to American life (Ngo, 2013).

When Hmong students first came to America, they faced problems in school, because public schools lacked the resources to meet their academic and linguistic needs (Vang, 2005). Christopher Vang (2005) argues that Hmong children were frequently identified as having insufficient English language proficiency and were placed into ESL classrooms. Teachers often perceived Hmong students as having inadequate academic capabilities. Further, there was a dearth of bilingual teachers; therefore, Hmong students were kept academically and socially separate from mainstream classrooms. Today, Hmong students face many of the same problems. Many parents struggle to advocate for their children due to linguistic and educational barriers. Additionally, Hmong students face socioeconomic barriers, as the Hmong are one of the most impoverished immigrant groups in the U.S.

In order to better understand the Hmong population in one Midwestern elementary school, Adler (2004) employed qualitative methods to investigate home-school relations within this population. Adler’s study took place in a school setting with a high Hmong population. She interviewed both parents and staff members in order to understand how well: (a) Hmong parents understood their roles in working with schools, (b) school personnel understood Hmong culture, and (c) school policies and practices met the needs of Hmong students and their families. This

study was conducted at a science magnet school in a major Midwestern city. There were three Hmong teachers, two Hmong aides/translators on staff, and over 50 percent of students were considered Southeast Asian, with the largest group being Hmong.

The researcher first sent open-ended surveys to academic staff and later sent surveys in a Likert scale format. Of the 65 staff members, 24 responded. Adler (2004) also conducted parent surveys using open-ended questions. Of the 106 parents surveyed, 37 responded. A Hmong research assistant called parents and documented verbal responses in some cases.

Adler (2004) made five visits to the school site. She spent three to four days observing in school and two days conducting interviews. Staff interviews were held at the school site either after school or during prep time. Adler conducted follow-up interviews via email or telephone. She also hired a Hmong parent research assistant to help contact families and administer surveys. This parent was also the Hmong Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) President at the school and was able to document meetings involving parents and the school, such as Hmong Food and Culture Fairs and the Child Reads program. Adler consulted with several other staff members at the school, including school administrators, a Hmong parent liaison to the school district, and several other Hmong community members. The parent educator and researcher provided documentation from school programs and policies for Hmong parents.

Following the survey collection, Adler (2004) categorized parent and staff surveys into four categories: (a) adjustment to society, (b) identity development, (c) home-school relations, and (d) school policies and practices. With regards to their general adjustment in the Hmong community, 65% of parents responded positively. Parents explained that the Hmong community was dispersed across many neighborhoods in the metropolitan area. Parents gave positive responses about their children's adjustment to school. Parents reported mixed feelings about loss

of culture. Staff felt that Hmong students should assimilate to American schools. Yet, Adler notes that some staff may not have understood the difference between “assimilation” and “acculturation.”

With regards to identity development, most parents (86%) reported speaking Hmong at home. Only one family spoke no English. Staff held positive views with regards to Hmong as a first language and also valued the importance of learning English for Hmong American students. Parents provided mixed responses about the importance of teaching culture in school. Staff generally held positive views of race and ethnicity. There were some mixed responses from parents about the staff’s knowledge of Hmong culture. For example, one parent noted that he or she thought teachers were too busy to learn about Hmong culture. While, another parent indicated that she wished staff would develop a better understanding of Hmong culture in the future. However, Adler (2004) notes that questions about race and ethnicity may have been misleading due to the examples used (i.e., Shaman, New Years). In contrast to parent views on staff cultural knowledge, staff members reported knowing a great deal about Hmong culture. Some staff indicated that they did not think Hmong should be taught in the classroom, which is consistent with English language learners (ELL) programs and contrasts with the philosophy of bilingual education programs.

With regards to home-school communication, 62% of Hmong parents reported feeling welcome in the school. All parent participants reported that they felt their children were receiving a strong education. Over half (65%) of parents had positive responses regarding their children’s learning. Parents cited language barriers as the largest reason for not being able to help children with their homework. Students’ siblings were often expected to help them with their homework. Staff gave mixed reports on parent involvement. Although they reported feeling

comfortable communicating with parents via telephone or in person, they felt less confident than parents about parents' ability to help their children with homework. Staff responses about parent involvement were mixed.

In the area of school policies and procedures, staff members were generally supportive of school policies and multicultural education curriculum that would support their Hmong students. Staff reported feeling that more could be done to support Hmong students. Parents had many suggestions for ways the school could improve its family services, including improvement in: their child's behavior, relationships with teachers, general education programs, and the ELL program. When Adler (2004) asked Hmong parents what they wished for the future of their children, responses were as follows: jobs, family, wealth, success, health, and a good future.

Although staff and administrators were supportive of the school, informants provided insight into problems facing Hmong families in the U.S. The male administrator felt that the Hmong community placed a great deal of pressure on him. Particularly, clan leaders wanted him to make change at the higher policy making levels. Yet, he explained that many Hmong community members were unaware of the bureaucracy of American institutions. Hmong staff members all highlighted the importance of holding high expectations for Hmong students despite their extra challenge of learning English. Some teachers reported explaining a concept in Hmong in order to clarify when teaching but stressed the importance of their students learning English.

Several Hmong staff members explained that they would rather not serve as translators due to their cultural context. For example, one school nurse explained that it is difficult for her to advocate for certain families. She shared that Hmong professionals she knows would rather work in a different cultural context than their own due to the stress of sociopolitical issues in the Hmong community. Hmong staff reported that they believed parents were encouraged to help

their children with homework by teachers, and that parents generally monitored their students' schoolwork. Yet, many parents did not help with homework themselves. Hmong staff reported that parents trust the teachers, even if they do not fully understand the American educational system. Further, Hmong staff noted that parents generally leave teaching to the teachers if their children are doing well and do not often openly challenge teachers.

Adler (2004) interviewed several non-Hmong staff members, including a school counselor, school nurse, principal, assistant principal, parent educator, and teachers. Teachers reported that Hmong parents were generally concerned about their children's behavior, rather than their academic progress, when they came to conferences. Yet, most staff members agreed that Hmong parents take academic achievement and schoolwork seriously. Staff members reported that attendance and obedience are valued by Hmong parents. Staff members expressed that Hmong parents rarely questioned the quality of curriculum.

Most non-Hmong staff members explained that the school provided culturally competent curriculum and programs. Yet, the ELL staff, Hmong teachers, and a few non-Hmong teachers felt that cultural concepts were not integrated into the curriculum frequently enough. Some staff members expressed a belief in a color-blind curriculum. For example, one non-Hmong staff member explained that he or she believed the curriculum should not take culture into account in order to aid Hmong students' English acquisition and understanding of American culture. Adler (2004) believes this view may have been more pervasive throughout the school than the data suggested, as some staff members chose not to participate in the study. One non-Hmong staff member explained that the "model minority" stereotype is not applied to Hmong people, as Hmong people are often connected to violence and murder in the media, which produces other stereotypes.

Adler (2004) found several constraints to parent involvement, including language differences, immediate family needs, and misunderstandings with regards to behavior. The biggest constraint to parent involvement was language differences. Many families had migrated several times before arriving in America and primarily communicated in Hmong at home. Adler recalls watching a teacher attempt a phone conversation with a Hmong parent. The teacher finally asked for assistance from an aide but was concerned that her message would not be passed on correctly. The aide expressed frustration that verbatim translations are not always possible in Hmong. Adler conducted two interviews with Hmong parents who spoke English. The first parent expressed concern about differential treatment of Hmong students with regards to discipline. Because of language barriers, the parent argued that Hmong students, like her son, were often misunderstood. The parent educator made attempts to involve parents in school and district-wide programs. For example, a Child Reads program was held with some success. However, Adler notes that immediate family needs seemed to be more important to most Hmong parents. More research is needed to determine what immediate family needs are impeding parent involvement at school.

This magnet school had separate Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) for Hmong and non-Hmong parents (primarily European-American). Adler (2004) asserts that the magnet school's model of dual parent-teacher organizations reflected the administration's commitment to valuing parents by providing a means for them to navigate cultural and linguistic differences. Adler noted that although most staff members did not usually attend the Hmong PTO meetings, they respected parents' decision to meet in their preferred way.

Most staff members did not categorize their Hmong students as "at risk," which Adler (2004) believed indicated their positive view of the Hmong people. When staff members did use

the term “at risk,” it was to indicate that they were not performing on grade level linguistically but would progress when they improved upon their language skills. Staff members were also hesitant to refer to their students as a “model minority,” and many had never heard of the term.

Most staff members had not addressed culturally relevant teaching or ethnic identity development in their classrooms. Most staff indicated that race was not an issue in the adjustment or academic progress of Hmong students. Staff explained differences between Hmong culture and western culture in terms of traditions, such as bride kidnapping and gender role separation. They viewed festivals and food fairs as a primary means of teaching Hmong culture rather than through culturally relevant pedagogy.

In traditional Hmong culture, education is viewed as more important for males, while females may be expected to drop out of school early in order to marry and rear children (Adler, 2004). However, Adler (2004) saw signs of cultural transformation, as reflected through the story of one Hmong teacher. This teacher explained that her extended family often worried for her, because she was “too old” to be unmarried. Yet, the teacher’s parents did not pressure her to abandon her schooling or career because of their awareness of mainstream American culture.

Like Adler (2004), I employed qualitative methods to investigate home-school relationships with a Hmong sample population. Similar to Adler, I used Hmong staff interviews to better understand ways to encourage parent involvement in the classroom as well as potential obstacles to parent participation. I documented parent responses to my request for their participation in the classroom. I also employed parent interviews to further understand students’ HLEs. As I conducted interviews and analyzed my data, it was important to consider Adler’s findings about parent comfort level communicating with the school (slightly more than half of parents felt comfortable communicating with the school). For example, I needed to acknowledge

that parents may not feel comfortable sharing certain details about their HLEs. In my interviews, I sought to understand and build relationships in order to foster partnerships with parents and support their agency in their students' education.

I also designed my research according to another study that explored home-school relationships with a Hmong population. In her study, Rah (2013) employed qualitative methods to better understand home-school relationships with the Hmong community. In her case study, Rah investigated how leaders in an elementary school addressed the needs of 25 Hmong refugee students and their families by working in partnership with a community organization. The goal of the community organization, Families and Schools Together (FAST), was to support elementary children in low-income areas through collaboration of students' families, social workers, therapists, and teachers.

FAST was held at a school building during after-school hours, and in 2004, began to include its outreach to Hmong-speaking families in order to accommodate an unexpected influx of Hmong students into the district. In spring 2005, 14 families enrolled in the Hmong FAST, and in 2006, 15 families enrolled. There were a variety of people who acted as FAST facilitators and were highly motivated to help Hmong youth. Through FAST, Hmong parents and their children participated in activities for an eight-week period. Activities included family flag, in which families worked together to make flags that represented their families' abilities, events, and interests. Other activities included family meals, games (including kids' time), parent group, special play, lottery, and closing. These activities allowed the children and families to interact with both school and community members in order to build supportive relationships, encourage parent involvement in school, and provide intervention/preventive care to increase student academic readiness.

In 2005, 13 of the 14 families enrolled in FAST graduated, and in 2006, all 15 families graduated. All 11 participants in a 2005 program evaluation reported that their relationships with their children had improved because of FAST. Most (75%) participants reported that their relationships with school staff had improved. The program facilitator reported that parents believed that their children were more comfortable at school and listened more to their directions.

Rha's (2013) study demonstrates how a group of school and community leaders were able to meet the needs of Hmong refugee students as well as provide their parents with resources in order to help them understand the American education system. Like Rha, I viewed Hmong staff at my school as experts and sought to learn from them in order to gain insight into challenges parents might face with regards to school participation. I went further, however, investigating the home literacy practices of Hmong families, which provided me with insight into how they navigate literacy practices that are valued by the Hmong community, as well as school expectations.

Similar to Rha (2013), Ngo (2013) investigated the role of Hmong leaders in her community. In her ethnography, Ngo (2013) asked two questions: (1) What conception of culture do Hmong community leaders draw on to make sense of Hmong identities and experiences? (2) How do they see the significance of culture in the educational experiences of Hmong children and families? This study used data from a large ethnographic study of Hmong American high school students. Hmong students, parents, and community leaders all participated in this study. Fieldwork occurred at a high school and at Hmong community organizations and events.

Methods of data collection included: (a) participant-observation and observation, (b) field notes, (c) interpretive notes, (d) document analysis, and (e) interviews with students, parents, and

community leaders. Ngo (2013) analyzed data by coding for possible themes using grounded theory procedures (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). The first stage of analysis involved coding for all possible themes and then axial coding to find smaller categories within using the research questions as a guide. Finally, Ngo selected an even smaller set of major categories that related to the research questions, which are described below.

Ngo (2013) found that Hmong American high school students struggled with their identities between two cultures. For example, several participants explained that Hmong American children struggle with a loss of identity, because they do not have a strong connection to Hmong language, history, and Hmong cultural experiences. Leaders also explained that Hmong students may struggle in school because they lack English skills necessary for school success and also lack proficiency in Hmong, making communication with Hmong family members difficult. Further, Hmong students do not feel as though they belong in mainstream society because they do not look like everyone else. One Hmong leader explained that Hmong children are bullied in school for being “Other,” even though they may have been born in the United States.

Community leaders in Ngo’s (2013) study reported what Ngo called “subtractive schooling.” Several leaders expressed concern that Hmong children suffered due to their disconnect from family gatherings, ignorance about Hmong refugee experiences, and language loss. Several leaders were also acutely aware of school curricula that privileged dominant American culture to the exclusion of Hmong culture. Further, one leader explained that texts that are used in school are written from the perspective of White Americans and can sometimes result in inaccurate historical accounts. For example, she explained that most American history books fail to mention Hmong involvement in the Vietnam War. Yet, this informant explained that the

demands mainstream culture places on Hmong students makes it important for them to assimilate in order to be successful in the future. This leader also expressed that Hmong parents may feel alienated because of a sense of not belonging. She explained that Hmong teachers are underrepresented, and many parents may feel excluded from the school because they do not feel understood by the staff, resulting in a limited parent engagement.

Many Hmong leaders described a shift from a group mentality to a focus on the individual within a theme that Ngo (2013) called “education as detrimental to family.” Particularly for youth, this change was seen as necessary for assimilation and future success. Yet, leaders expressed that a focus on the individual was harmful to the wellbeing of Hmong families and communities. When Hmong youth are indifferent to family and community, they experience failure, in the eyes of some Hmong leaders.

At the time of the study, it was announced that the new senior leadership team at the high school would not have a Hmong staff member. This caused Hmong parents, students, and community leaders to mobilize to demand inclusive leadership. Ngo (2013) called this “mobilizing under culture,” in which Hmong community members united under a collective identity to express their frustration with the lack of Hmong perspectives and experiences in the school district.

Ngo (2013) suggests five implications for educators and researchers as a result of her study. First, she suggests that more research needs to be done on school experiences of immigrant groups, and that it must move beyond oversimplified explanations of culture. Second, Ngo proposes more research illuminating the voices of immigrant adults, who are often cast as uniformly traditional. Third, Ngo highlights the need for pedagogical practices that confront dominant culture. Fourth, she argues that more studies need to be conducted in order to allow for

a better understanding of the role that cultural essentialism plays in the lives of different immigrant groups. Last, Ngo suggests that more work should be done to investigate immigrant groups' ideas of academic success.

It was essential to consider Ngo's (2013) findings in my own work with Hmong students and parents. For example, it was important to understand that parents may be critically aware of curricular gaps that exclude Hmong students' experiences. Further, Ngo's findings about parent alienation from the school were essential to consideration of my own identity as a cultural and linguistic outsider and the implications this may have on my relationships with parents. Similar to Ngo, I employed semi-structured interviews to highlight the voices of Hmong parents to gain an emic perspective on home-school relationships as well as HLEs. Also like Ngo, I coded interviews thematically to identify emerging themes.

To learn more about Hmong American student identity, Lee (2005) examined the ways in which Hmong American high school students created their identities as "new Americans" in the context of school experiences. In doing so, she highlighted the complexity and diversity of Hmong American experiences, differentiating her work from the body of literature that presents an essentialized portrait of Hmong Americans.

Lee's (2005) study took place in a midsized city in Wisconsin, which she calls Lakeview. Her study site was a prestigious high school, where a majority of students were from a White middle-class and upper-middle-class background. Most Hmong American students came from low-income families living in the poorer areas of the mostly affluent Lakeview. Many reported that their parents worked low-skill jobs and some reported that their families received public assistance. Many students also explained that their parents sold vegetables at local farmer's markets. Most Hmong American students were second-generation, having been born in the U.S.

There was a smaller population of students who had been living in the U.S. for three to eight years, who were classified as 1.5-generation students.

Data were collected through participant observation of Hmong American students, interviews with Hmong American students and staff, and document analysis. After analyzing her data, Lee (2005) found that cultural racism was reflected at the school through the discourse of “cultural difference” and “cultural deficiency.” While cultural difference was supposedly non-hierarchical, it reflected an “us” and “them” view. Discussion of culture at the school reflected hegemonic ideas about race and American-ness, and cultural deficiency made explicit judgments of Hmong culture. Both cultural difference and cultural deficiency views were used to relieve the school from responsibility for serving the needs of Hmong American students and reinforced the White middle-class experience as the norm. Hmong American students knew that their culture was not truly respected at their school. This was evidenced in student complaints about staff viewing their culture as inferior to American culture.

Lee (2005) found that adults in the Hmong American community categorized their youth into two groups—“traditional” and “Americanized.” Both traditional and Americanized students received messages about their race from home, school, and society at large and had to negotiate their identities in this context. Traditional students highlighted the uniqueness of Hmong culture, embraced Hmong language, and highlighted the aspects of Hmong culture that are valued by dominant society.

Americanized students attempted to distance themselves from tradition and from their more traditional peers in order to not appear foreign. Americanized students embraced a hip-hop style and searched for new ways of being Hmong. Both traditional and Americanized Hmong students negotiated the meaning of “Americanization,” “being American,” and “America.”

Lee (2005) found that Hmong American students received many, often contradictory, messages about their gender from home, school, and society at large. Hmong American boys at the school struggled with messages from larger society that told them that they were not “real men,” since whiteness is key to hegemonic masculinity in the school and in society at large. Most Hmong American girls, like Hmong American boys, viewed America as being dominated by Whites. Yet, Hmong American girls saw America as having greater gender equality for girls. Their beliefs about opportunities for females in American culture were strengthened by their school experiences, where teachers are dedicated to helping young women they often see as victims of a patriarchal culture.

Lee’s (2005) study concludes with several recommendations for multicultural education, improved family-school communication, and partnerships with local immigrant organizations. Most relevant to the present study are her recommendations for improved family-school communication and that teachers make an effort to learn more about the lives of their students. Throughout the course of my study, it was important to consider Lee’s work as I communicated with parents to learn more about their relationship with the school and my students’ home literacy activities.

As I conducted the current study, it was important to consider Lee’s (2005) illustration of the current context for Hmong American students. In general, Hmong American students in her study were not respected by staff at their school and teachers did not understand their lives and backgrounds. Parents lacked the social capital to advocate for their children. As Lee suggests, I sought to learn more about my students and their backgrounds in order to teach them in culturally relevant ways. Learning about my students’ HLEs through parent interviews allowed me to connect their literacy experiences at home with what they learn at school and helped me

build relationships with parents. Furthermore, I encouraged parent participation at school, as Lee suggests, and sought to understand ways of engaging parents by documenting parents' reasons for not participating in the classroom and by learning more about parent participation from Hmong staff members.

The studies summarized in this section illustrate the challenges immigrant families face in the American school system (Adler, 2004; Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2013; Panferov, 2010; Rah, 2013). Language barriers can make communication between home and school difficult and create confusion for parents (Panferov, 2010). Further, many students, parents, and staff recognize that Hmong American students' backgrounds are not integrated into U.S. curricula (Lee, 2005; Matoba, 2004; Ngo, 2013). Yet, these studies yield powerful implications for school practices. For example, schools should work to organize clear lines of communication between home and school (Lee, 2005; Panferov, 2010). Additionally, schools should incorporate students' backgrounds into curriculum (Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2013). Parent participation in the classroom can foster cultural competence in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (Mitchell, 2010). Coordination with community organizations can also strengthen the support that schools are able to provide to immigrant families (Lee, 2005; Rah, 2013). Parent-teacher relations are central to the present study of parent participation in my own classroom. As I investigated the relationship between students' HLEs and their reading achievement data, it was important to gain an understanding of equitable and culturally competent ways of assessing ELLs. Accordingly, the next section will focus on ways in which assessments account for diversity in students' language abilities and how students' funds of knowledge can be incorporated into assessment.

Linking Funds of Knowledge and Equity of Assessment

In addition to HLEs, motivation, cultural contexts, and the importance of home-school relations, assessment is another area that warrants examination from a cultural lens, as it relates to the current study. In the context of Globalization, American classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse (Rodriguez, 2013). One powerful illustration of this growing diversity is the increasing linguistic diversity in the United States (Frisby, Geisinger, Grenier, Sandoval, & Scheuneman, 1998). From 1985 to 1998, the population of students without English language proficiency grew by about 70% (Frisby et al., 1998). As the student body becomes more diverse, there is a growing need for teachers to create more responsive and inclusive classroom settings so that all students can connect to instruction. Additionally, the “racial/ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences that continue to exist between student populations and teachers in many educational settings” (Rodriguez, 2013, p. 87) challenges to teachers to embrace new forms of practice.

One arena where growing student diversity must be addressed is assessment. Assessments that require background knowledge may be problematic if they do not match the background knowledge of all populations of test-takers. ELLs are one population who face an additional challenge, as they may lack the decoding skills necessary to take tests that are above their language levels. For example, if a science test is given in English to an ELL, it may become an assessment of the student’s literacy skills, not just science knowledge. Further, assessments of reading comprehension that are administered in English may measure reading comprehension, as well as decoding skills, when given to ELL students. Because I included standardized assessment data in the current study, in the following section, I present studies that examine the value and validity of assessments given to ELL students.

August, Francis, Hsu, and Snow (2006) considered the challenges of assessing comprehension in second-language (L2) readers and reported on three studies conducted to develop and validate a new measure of reading comprehension called the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading Comprehension (DARC). The DARC was designed to assess four main comprehension processes: (a) remembering newly read text, (b) making inferences licensed by the test, (c) accessing relevant background knowledge, and (d) making inferences that require integrating background knowledge with the text. The first study was designed to determine whether the DARC items were at an appropriate reading level for students with limited English proficiency. The second study was designed to determine whether Spanish-speaking ELLs who scored very poorly on a standardized reading comprehension assessment would show a range of scores on the DARC. The second study also aimed to assess the validity of participants' yes-no responses and compare their performance on Spanish and English versions of the DARC. The third pilot study was conducted to estimate developmental sensitivity, reliability, and validity of the DARC subscales using a larger sample. August et al. compared students' spring scores on the Stanford-9 (a test of reading comprehension) with their scores on the DARC, in order to determine whether the DARC was measuring comprehension skills differently than the standardized reading assessment.

There were three samples in this study, correlating to the three pilot tests and purposes mentioned above. The first sample was composed of 16 ELLs who were part of a dual-immersion Spanish-English bilingual program in Washington, DC. Teachers selected two to four students from each of grades two through six. Students were specifically selected to represent differing levels of English proficiency. All but one of the students spoke Spanish as a first language. In the second sample, participants were 28 fourth graders who were all native Spanish

speakers and received instruction in all-English. This same sample was part of a larger longitudinal study investigating the transfer of literacy skills from Spanish to English. These students were selected because they had scored in the lowest third of the 168 students who took part in the larger study, which used the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery reading comprehension subtest (Woodcock, 1991). The third sample was composed of 521 Spanish-speaking bilingual students ranging from kindergarten through third grade living in Houston and Brownsville, Texas.

For the assessment of all three sets of participants, August et al. (2006) re-wrote texts to ensure that most children at the second-grade level could read them using vocabulary that they were likely to know, simple syntactic structures, and embedded relational propositions. The researchers made these changes to minimize differences between children with different levels of decoding skills, linguistic sophistication, and vocabulary in order to reveal skills that are more central to reading comprehension (e.g. text memory, ability to make inferences).

The final version of the assessment contained a short narrative passage that described relations among five entities. Three of the entities were unknown to all readers because they were represented by nonsense words. The remaining two entities were likely to be known by all children. The entities were compared and contrasted in a way that was meant to be familiar to all children. The narrative text was divided into three sections to minimize the demands on memory for young children. Each new section was composed of two new propositions and questions. During the assessment, students read the passage one section at a time and then were asked a series of yes-no questions after reading each section. For sections two and three, students were permitted to re-read before answering the questions. Sections included questions relating to material presented in previous sections. August et al. (2006) developed two passages in English

and then translated them into Spanish. In Study One, one of the two passages was administered in English only. In Study Two, one passage was administered in English and the other was administered in Spanish. In Study Three, students received an English and a Spanish passage with random assignment (although, no child could receive the same passage in both English and Spanish).

August et al. (2006) took the appropriate steps to pilot the assessments with participants and did not include participants who struggled to decode passages. Students of all age levels were able to complete the DARC assessment using texts that were easy to decode but challenged them to make inferences and required them to integrate material across idea units. Many students received different results on the DARC than they did on the Stanford-9, suggesting that the DARC measured different skills than the Stanford-9. Based on responses from the clinical interviews, which were conducted to gather more information about test questions during the pilot, August et al. changed a couple of questions in order to ensure questions were prompting students to use a given reading comprehension skill. In the second pilot test, some students performed well on the test in English, despite lower scores on the previously administered WLPB passage comprehension measure. Some students performed inversely, scoring poorly on the DARC in English but well on the WLPB. For students who were tested in both English and Spanish ($n = 25$), there was no significant difference between the two languages. Students scored an average of 20.16/30 in English and an average of 19.40/30 in Spanish. This comparison assumes that the tests are equally difficult, and August et al. note that they did not carry out psychometric analysis to demonstrate that the two tests were fully equivalent. Further, the authors note that the participants' Spanish ability at the time of testing was not independently assessed and may have impacted the outcome of this comparison.

The overall scores across all three groups on the DARC show a wide range, indicating that there were both relatively poor and strong readers across groups. Six of the 25 bilingual students earned the same score in English as in Spanish, 11 scored higher in English, and eight scored higher in Spanish. There was a significant correlation between Spanish and English total scores although this falls into the low-moderate range. August et al. (2006) conducted psychometric analysis to establish reliability of the test.

August et al. (2006) also correlated subtests from the WLPB with the DARC. There was a high correlation with measures of decoding, but the DARC was less highly correlated with WLPB passage comprehension. This discrepancy suggests that performance on the WLPB passage comprehension was much more dependent on decoding skills than performance on the DARC, meaning that reading comprehension measured by the DARC was less influenced by decoding ability.

Background knowledge as measured by the DARC correlated most highly with the WLPB passage comprehension score. The WLPB passage was more highly correlated with letter-word identification than any of the four DARC subscales. Further, DARC subscale scores correlated moderately to strongly with listening comprehension and oral language, while WLPB passage comprehension correlated with decoding as strongly as it did with these two measures.

Interlanguage correlations for the DARC and the WLPB were different, revealing that the DARC correlated less with word reading than the WLPB in English. The DARC in Spanish correlated positively with the DARC in English for oral language proficiency, word reading, and reading comprehension. In contrast, the DARC in Spanish had a negative correlation with reading comprehension and word reading in Spanish and had a negligible correlation with oral language proficiency in Spanish. Word reading and reading comprehension on the WLPB in

Spanish had a negative correlation with oral language proficiency and reading comprehension in English as measured by the DARC.

This study demonstrates the feasibility of using a new diagnostic assessment of reading comprehension. Overall, this study also revealed multiple factors that can impact scores on measures of reading comprehension. It shows that students' yes-no responses demonstrate their thinking after reading a passage on the DARC, the DARC can be used for assessment of children as young as kindergarten, different aspects of reading comprehension can be isolated (e.g., text memory vs. text inferencing), and that the DARC measures reading comprehension, which is often hidden behind students' lack of decoding skills. This test may be particularly useful for assessing ELLs, as they may have limited vocabulary, which could hinder their performance on a more traditional reading assessment.

August et al.'s (2006) study was integral to my investigation of the relationship between students' HLEs and their reading achievement data with a similar age group. Their study demonstrates that reading tests intended to measure students' reading comprehension may in fact measure their vocabulary, background knowledge, and decoding skills. Therefore, I was when making generalizations about my students' performance on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010).

In another study that investigated reading assessment of ELLs, Houser, Lefly, and Scheffel (2012) studied the extent to which subtests on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) were effective in predicting student success on a summative, state criterion-referenced measure, the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). The DIBELS are a set of measures and procedures that are used for assessment of early literacy skill

acquisition in students grades K-6 (University of Oregon DIBELS Data System, n.d.). The CSAP exclusively measures reading comprehension in third grade. Houser et al. also examined whether the DIBELS were an effective predictor of reading comprehension for ELLs as measured by the CSAP.

Participants were 2,649 elementary school students in a western state in the United States. These students attended schools that received grant money as part of a literacy reform movement aimed to assist schools serving students from low-income backgrounds who struggled academically. Participants had received two or more years of reading interventions prior to the study and were assessed for reading achievement using the state assessment at the end of the 2006 school year. The population was composed of 29.7% ELLs, and 4.2% did not have a known English Language Learner status.

DIBELS data were downloaded from the University of Oregon data repository. Data were retrieved for 2,649 students for fall, winter, and spring of the 2003-2004, 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 school years. These data were matched to CSAP data using students' birth date, school, last name, first name, and gender. The researchers merged the CSAP and DIBELS data and erased any unique identifiers. Using the Department of Education database, Houser et al. (2012) determined that 2,492 students had valid CSAP reading scores and matched 515 DIBELS scores from first grade, 1,378 from second grade, 1,378 from second grade, and 2,134 from third grade.

Houser et al. (2012) utilized descriptive and analytic statistics for all variables for both ELLs and non-ELLs as well as for the total respondent groups. One of the relationships they were investigating was the nature of the relationship between group classifications on DIBELS and the group classifications on CSAP. Houser et al.'s study supports the findings of previous

research demonstrating the predictive utility of the “at risk” and “low risk” categories from DIBELS. The “some risk” category from DIBELS is just as likely to predict proficiency as limited proficiency on the CSAP. Between 51% and 64% of students at risk and 92% to 93% of low risk students were correctly classified as proficient or lacking proficiency on the CSAP as with the DIBELS tests.

The Pearson’s correlation coefficients for the relationship between DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) scores for fall, winter, and spring and the CSAP readings scale score indicated a moderately strong to strong relationship for both ELLs and non-ELLs. There was a high correlation in fall, winter, and spring, suggesting that each period possesses roughly the same amount of predictive utility. For this study, the relationship between DIBELS ORF scores in three third grade time periods and the CSAP reading score was moderately strong to strong, indicating a linear relationship between the two.

In general, DIBELS more accurately predicts students as “low risk” than it does “at risk.” Yet, it categorizes children as “at risk” better for ELLs than for non-ELLs in third grade, for the majority of time periods in second grade, and approximately the same in first grade. This study demonstrates the effectiveness of DIBELS at identifying ELLs as “at risk” for underachieving in reading. When taken in combination with the findings by August et al. (2006), this study further strengthens the the notion that it is possible to create assessments that isolate ELL students' reading comprehension. In addition, the research by Houser et al. (2012) suggests that it is important to differentiate between students who are “at risk” and “low risk.”

In addition to the background knowledge, decoding, and vocabulary skills required for assessment, it is also important to consider whether ELL students’ cultural knowledge is incorporated into assessment. Funds of knowledge refer to the historically accumulated and

culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being (Gonzalez & Moll, 1992). Several scholars have argued that traditional assessments ignore children's differing funds of knowledge. The funds of knowledge framework was created in response to this need in the late 1980s by researchers Luis Moll and Norma Gonzalez, along with teacher Cathy Amanti (2009). The funds of knowledge framework was intended to counteract prevailing views of students from economically, socially, and linguistically diverse backgrounds from a deficit-based to a strength-based view. Further, its creators sought to create a line of inquiry that would allow teachers to learn from and about their students' home lives in order to connect students' learning from home to school. The goal of the funds of knowledge framework was to improve students' academic outcomes and future life prospects (Amanti et al., 2009). The funds of knowledge framework was important to the current study because students in my class were likely to possess strengths in literacy that were not measured by classroom assessments. Additionally, parents were likely to report cultural literacy practices (e.g., oral story-telling) that are not yet acknowledged in research as components of a positive HLE. These were important considerations as I analyzed my data.

To improve equity of assessment for Native children, Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) led a professional development course for teachers. In doing so, they investigated teachers' efforts to create change in assessment practices in rural Alaska in order to highlight the community's funds of knowledge. Charles and Coles-Ritchie wanted to improve practices that were disadvantaging certain students. They desired to help teachers create assessments that would more accurately portray their students' academic growth. They also wanted to prepare teachers to confront local and national discourse about standardized tests. The researchers were guided by two leading questions: (a) How and in what ways can a teacher training course for

inservice teachers support a collective process for developing indigenized assessments for use in Yup'ik immersion and English dominant schools in a high stakes testing environment? and (b) What are the relevant themes surrounding assessment in the K-12 environment for Yup'ik immersion and English language development teachers in rural Alaska?

Participants included six Yup'ik female teachers and one non-Yup'ik female teacher, who were all part of the Assessment Graduate Research Collaborative and the Policy and Planning Graduate Research Collaborative. These participants were chosen because of their enrollment in a professional development course focused on culturally relevant assessment. The researchers, Charles and Coles-Ritchie, were also participants in the study.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the professional development course, Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) employed the following methods of qualitative data collection: teacher classroom dialogue, researchers' journals and observation notes, memos of classroom and course planning activities, teachers' academic work, teachers' evaluations of the course, and informal interviews in person and by email. The researchers analyzed the data together by reading and re-reading the data, constructing themes, and coding the data for emerging themes.

Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) employed a Critical Teacher Action Research (CTAR) framework (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998; Tripp, 1990) for their study, which includes the following elements: participation, direction, consciousness, constraints, and outcomes. The teachers who participated in this study were all working in similar contexts in southwestern Alaska teaching Yup'ik youth. The instructors, Charles and Coles-Ritchie, both wanted to work with teachers to create authentic and culturally appropriate assessments. They wanted to create a counter-dialogue to the current standardized testing climate. Next, the researchers had a direction—they wanted to improve the assessment practices in a particular context. Through

their study, Charles and Coles-Ritchie worked to understand the embedded values of the participants with regards to assessment. They also needed to have a realistic understanding of the constraints of their study, which included time (this was a four-week study) and the reality of state-mandated testing. Last, the outcomes of the study were essential to the CTAR framework.

Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) co-designed a course for the seven teachers, Linguistics 612: Assessment for Language Learners. Coles-Ritchie led the course, because she had taught a similar course before. The co-teachers held a meeting before each class session in order to determine the tasks and direction for the day's activities. Participants were encouraged to actively participate in session activities. Through the Assessment for Language Learners course, teachers were able to share their knowledge of the values and contributions of their home communities and develop assessments that they believed would accurately represent their Indigenous students' learning. The following themes emerged from Charles and Coles-Ritchie's research: (a) developing a classroom community, (b) re-contextualizing concepts to reflect Indigenous local practices, (c) developing ways to challenge the dominant standardized assessment practices, and (d) authentic assessment measures developed by teachers using community funds of knowledge. As the class progressed, participants began to think of themselves as a collective community in which each person contributed to the goal of the class. Participants directed the course of the class rather than simply looking to the course instructors for direction. Teachers in the class viewed one another as both teachers and learners and demonstrated mutual respect for one another.

Throughout the course, participants used Yup'ik language and cultural knowledge to make sense of academic concepts. Teachers expressed frustration with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), which they viewed as forcing them to

move away from a culturally competent curriculum to “teaching to the test” (Charles & Coles-Ritchie, 2011). Through the course, they developed a pamphlet advocating for Indigenous language programs that outlined the weakness of a standardized test-driven curriculum and the strengths of teaching local language and culture. Teachers in the course all voiced the importance of incorporating community funds of knowledge into curriculum and brainstormed ways to fight against the dominant system that values standardized testing. Through the course, participants were able to develop authentic assessments that reflected student learning, achievement, perspectives, and ideologies. Assessments included portfolios and student/peer self-assessments that aligned with real world tasks. In order to help teachers create the assessments, Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) facilitated several small-group sessions, in which they provided the teachers with a set of Alaska state standards and asked them to create a culturally congruent assessment. By allowing teachers the space to draw on Indigenous knowledge systems, the creation of practical and culturally congruent assessments was made possible. Co-teaching and co-constructing a course with both a Yup’ik and non-Yup’ik teacher gave teachers ways of negotiating and addressing course content and giving feedback to class members.

As I integrated Charles and Cole-Ritchie’s (2011) work into the current study, it was important to consider the funds of knowledge that my students possess and how they were reflected through assessment. For example, if an assessment required background knowledge that my students did not have, this could skew their scores and result in disproportionately low scores. Further, such an assessment would not accurately convey the strengths that my students possess. In considering the implications of Charles and Coles-Ritchie’s (2011) research on the present study, I recognized that the QRI-5 (Calwell & Leslie, 2010) and MAP Reading

(Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) assessments used in my study might privilege dominant funds of knowledge.

When assessing ELL students' in reading, it is important to consider the differing background knowledge, vocabulary, and decoding skills that they possess. An assessment intended to measure reading comprehension for first language (L1) learners could inadvertently measure these other skills when administered to ELLs (August et al., 2006). Yet, scholars have proven the success of certain reading assessments for measuring ELLs' reading skills (August et al., 2006; Houser et al., 2012). Further, some researchers argue for the importance of considering the types of funds of knowledge that are valued in traditional assessments so that students' cultural knowledge can be incorporated into assessment (Charles & Coles-Ritchie, 2011).

As I analyzed my own student reading assessment data, August et al.'s (2006) and Houser et al.'s (2012) studies were central to my consideration of the extent to which the ELLs' background knowledge, vocabulary, and decoding skills impacted their reading achievement data. Further, Charles and Coles-Ritchie's (2011) study caused me to consider the ways in which my students' funds of knowledge were represented or not represented on their reading assessments. Together, the literature on assessment of ELL students made me cautious about generalizing my students' reading assessment data.

Conclusion

Several scholars have investigated HLEs in relation to student motivation (Baker & Scher, 2002; Brown & Byrnes, 2013; Mata, 2011). There are multiple dimensions to student reading and writing motivation, and parental literacy values can be transferred to their children as a function of the HLE. Therefore, parents who enjoy reading for pleasure may transfer this enjoyment of reading to their children. As I explored my students' HLEs, it was important to

consider these findings in order to determine the relationship (if any) between parents' literacy values and their child's literacy success. Parent interviews allowed me a lens through which to identify literacy activities and parent values present in students' home environments. Comparing interview data to reading achievement data allowed me to understand emerging patterns and potential relationships between particular aspects of students' HLEs and their performance on measures of reading achievement.

Studies have examined family-school relations with first- and second-generation immigrant families (Adler, 2004; Panferov, 2010; Rah 2013). Scholars have also shown how schools and first- and second-generation immigrant parents can have difficulty communicating and may have differing views on how children should be educated (Adler, 2004; Ngo, 2013; Panferov, 2010). Yet, several themes emerge from the body of literature that can inform future studies as well as classroom practices. Schools should do more to open up lines of communication with parents so that parents may better advocate for their children's education (Lee, 2005; Ngo, 2013; Panferov, 2010). Additionally, parents and community members should be viewed as sources of knowledge that inform curricula (Lee, 2005; Mitchell, 2010). Further, community leaders should partner with schools to assist immigrant families in acclimating to school expectations (Ngo, 2013). In my own investigation of parental involvement in the classroom, these studies were essential as I considered ways in which I could partner with parents and families in the future.

Several scholars have also examined the validity and usefulness of reading assessments for ELLs (August et al., 2006; Ford, Huang, & Invernizzi, 2014; Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001; Houser et al., 2012). Researchers have modified assessments in order to ensure that the required background knowledge, vocabulary, and decoding skills are appropriate for the student

population (August et al., 2006; Houser et al., 2012). Such studies have shown that accurate assessment of ELLs' reading in English is possible (August et al., 2006; Houser et al., 2012). Yet, others have argued that accommodations for ELL students' language abilities do not do enough to make students' cultural knowledge a part of assessment (Charles & Coles-Ritchie, 2011). For example, Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) posit that authentic assessments should be created in order to incorporate students' funds of knowledge. In view of what is known about HLEs and reading motivation, it is important that future research connects particular aspects of the HLE to reading achievement. Furthermore, the current body of research on home-school relations suggests the need for further investigation of school relationships with immigrant families and communities and potential barriers to parent participation at school. The present study extends the literature by addressing such gaps in research.

Chapter Three: Methods

In this section, I describe the participants, setting, research design, procedures, and methods of data collection and analysis in my action research study. This was an action research study that aimed to answer the following questions: (a) What is the nature of students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs)?, (b) What is the relationship between students' home literacy practices and their reading achievement data?, and (c) What are barriers and supports to parent participation in the classroom?. I employed a mixed-methods approach (Bernard, 2006; Greene, 2007) and obtained qualitative data through parent and staff interviews as well as quantitative reading achievement data from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010).

Using parent interviews, I aimed to understand the types of literacy activities children and their family members practiced, the various text-types with which children engaged at home, parents' reasoning for wanting their children to be literate, and parents' own relationship with literacy. I compared the interview data to archival reading achievement data from the 2014-2015 school year to explore the relationship between particular home literacy practices of Hmong families and student performance on reading assessments. Through a complementary line of thinking (Greene, 2007), I sought to understand factors that influenced parents' decisions to participate or not participate in school activities, since a family-centered literacy unit had originally been the focus of my research. I collected information regarding parents' own reasons for declining to participate in this literacy unit, and I used interviews to gain further information about parent participation from the perspective of Hmong staff.

Participants

This study focused on a classroom of first grade students at a public elementary school in a large Midwestern city. Participants included 20 first- and second-generation Hmong American parents of 18 students. For two of the students, I interviewed both parents but only analyzed achievement data for the 18 students whose parents consented to the project. In addition, participants included four Hmong American staff members. Of the parent participants, nine were English-speaking, and ten parents spoke Hmong as their preferred language. All staff member participants were fluent in both Hmong and English. Staff member participants included two elementary teachers, a family coordinator/high school academic coach, and a Hmong curriculum development coordinator/enrollment specialist.

Setting

The setting of this study was a charter school located in an urban Midwestern city. The school population was composed of 99% Asian students, and 100% of participants in the present study were “Asian” according to school data. As in Lee’s (2005) study, this categorization did not specify whether all participants were Hmong American. However, from conversations with parents, I concluded that all participants in my study were Hmong American. In the 2014-2015 school year, 73.7% of students’ families were considered economically disadvantaged. According to the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WIDA) Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS) assessment, 16.1% of students in the school were considered to be English Language Learners (ELLs) (Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2014).

Procedures

This section describes the initial and later study foci of this action research project. While the study initially centered around a multicultural literacy unit, it later focused on understanding

parent participation and the relationship between students' HLEs and their reading achievement data. Also in this section, I describe efforts to protect participants' safety and anonymity.

Initial study focus: The impact of parent participation in the classroom. In the beginning stages of this study, I invited parents in my first grade classroom to participate in a new multicultural literacy unit focused on Cinderella stories from around the world, including several stories from East Asian countries. Modeled after Mitchell's (2010) action research study, the context of this unit provided an opportunity for students and their families to share examples of their cultural and familial literacy practices. Parents of all 28 children in my classroom were invited to participate through a consent form sent home in March which explained the project (see Appendix A). I also explained the project to parents in person during parent teacher conferences in March. While some parents expressed interest in the project, no parents were able to volunteer.

Understanding parent participation. To explore limited parental participation in the multicultural literacy unit, I collected responses about why they were unable to participate. In addition to recording parent responses, I interviewed four Hmong staff members to learn more about why they believed these parents were unable to participate and ways of improving parent participation in my classroom. I viewed Hmong staff members as community experts as they represented members of both the Hmong community and the school.

HLEs and reading achievement. Although parents could not physically come to school to participate in the study, I continued to want to research parents and literacy. Therefore, I turned to students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs), knowing that I could collect this data without parents' physical presence. To build on the work of Baker and Scher (2002), Mata (2011), and Brown and Byrnes (2013), I collected data about students' HLEs through parent

interviews and compared this interview data to archival student reading achievement data from the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and scores on the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010).

For parent interviews regarding HLEs, “literacy” included activities such as reading, writing, talking, and story-telling. This broad definition of literacy was used in order to highlight the diverse literacy activities my students’ families practiced and to account for my students’ funds of knowledge (Amanti et al., 2009). I believed it was important to create space for components of literacy that were valued by my participant population, since ordinary conceptions of literacy (i.e., to read and write) often do not capture the oral storytelling traditions central to Hmong culture.

Teachers at the school were required to enter scores for the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 (QRI-5) (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). Thus, to collect the archival reading achievement data for this study, I accessed the Excel file that was shared by instructional coaches and myself. I analyzed data for only those students’ whose parents had consented to participation in this study ($n = 18$).

Protecting participants and informed consent. I took several steps to ensure my participants’ safety and anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms and informed consent forms. English informed consent forms were first sent home with students in April 2015. I chose not to include a written translation in Hmong, because Hmong staff informed me that most parents could not read Hmong and that it would be more culturally appropriate to call them at home. Therefore, a hired translator, who worked as a paraprofessional in another first grade

classroom, called Hmong speaking parents to read the informed consent form to them in Hmong and explain the project over the telephone. It was initially difficult to reach some parents, because many of the telephone numbers listed by the school office were disconnected. However, my translator, as well as the school dean, assisted me in finding parents' numbers. For example, often times, my translator or the dean would know someone on staff who had the parents' cell phone number. By utilizing such connections within the school community, I was able to make contact with parents.

The initial informed consent form related to the first research question and invited parents to participate in my project about parent participation in the classroom during a new literacy unit. Because no parents were able to volunteer in the classroom, I recorded reasons why they were unable to participate. A second round of consent forms was sent home with students in May 2015 that related to my new research question and invited parents to participate in interviews about their HLEs. Similar to the first consent forms, these consent forms also were written in English, and a translator called parents who did not speak English in order to explain the project to them. All staff participants were able to read in English and were given informed consent forms in English at the time of the interview.

Data Collection

Data were primarily qualitative and collected through parent interviews, staff interviews, accessing reading achievement data, and anecdotal parent responses. This section explains methods of data collection in further detail.

Parent responses related to classroom involvement. In relation to the initial study focus on a multicultural literacy unit (inviting parents into the classroom), I initially asked parents if they would be willing to volunteer in the classroom over the course of a two-month

period (April thru May). I spoke with parents about this project at parent-teacher conferences in the month of March, 2015. I employed the help of a translator for parent-teacher conferences with Hmong-speaking parents. When parents were unable to participate, I recorded their responses and the reasons they could not participate, which led me to conduct staff interviews to find further information.

Staff interviews related to parent participation. In response to parents' inability to volunteer in the classroom, I conducted staff interviews with two elementary teachers, a family coordinator/high school academic coach, and a Hmong curriculum development coordinator/enrollment specialist in order to understand factors affecting parent participation. In response to parents' inability to volunteer in the classroom, staff interviews were conducted in-person on the school campus after school in May and June 2015. These interviews were conducted by myself in English, were recorded, and later transcribed. After receiving consent, I used a staff interview guide to conduct the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). Interview questions addressed topics such as reasons parents were able to participate, reasons parents were unable to participate, ways of improving parent participation, and staff members' own communication with parents. Parent and staff responses to these interview questions led to my investigation of HLEs.

Parent interviews related to HLEs. All parent interviews were conducted via telephone in May 2015. I employed semi-structured interviews so that interviews would be comparable but would still allow participants to explain concepts thoroughly (Bernard, 2006). I interviewed English-speaking parents myself, and a hired translator assisted with interviews of Hmong-speaking parents. For English-speaking parents, I first called and reminded them of the purpose of the study and asked them if they would still be willing to participate. I then asked them

whether they would prefer to come into the school for an interview or participate in a phone interview. All parents elected to participate in phone interviews. After receiving consent, I used a parent interview guide (see Appendix A) to conduct semi-structured telephone interviews with parents made from the school campus after school in May and June 2015. Interview questions covered topics such as parent-child talk, oral storytelling, importance of reading, frequency of reading, and types of reading material. After conferring with the Hmong translator, the first two questions on the interview guide were eliminated after the first few interviews, because the term “literacy” created confusion for parent participants. Interviews with English-speaking parents were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

The same procedures were followed for interviews with Hmong-speaking parents. However, rather than audio-recording interviews, I typed as my assistant translated parent responses. After each interview with a Hmong-speaking parent, the translator and I discussed whether there was anything said during the interview that I did not understand, and he elaborated on the parent’s meaning. Interviews with Hmong-speaking parents were often shorter than interviews with English-speaking parents.

Reading achievement data. Student reading achievement data were collected throughout the school year and included the MAP Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). At the time of this study, the data were collected archivally, meaning that the data already existed as a part of school-wide assessment. I did not conduct extra assessment for the purpose of this study.

The MAP Reading assessment is a computer-based adaptive assessment that measures student reading achievement in relation to the Common Core Standards and provides an instructional level for each child (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016). The QRI-5 is a

reading inventory that includes both narrative and expository passages correlated to each grade level (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). The QRI-5 measures reading comprehension through the use of implicit and explicit questions as well as retelling passages (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). It also provides measures of word identification and fluency (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). The MAP Reading was administered in the fall, winter, and spring of the 2014-2015 school year. The QRI-5 was administered once in the fall and once in the spring of the 2014-2015 school year. To organize the data for this study, student scores for both assessments were recorded into an Excel spreadsheet and were separated by testing period.

Data Analysis

Overall, data were analyzed using qualitative methods of analysis. Parent and staff interviews were coded thematically. Students were grouped based on their reading achievement data, and relationships between achievement data and home literacy practices were explored and analyzed. Parent responses were recorded at the time of parent-teacher conferences and were later categorized and analyzed for themes.

Analyzing HLE and parent participation interview data. Although the content of the parent interviews (regarding HLEs) and the staff interviews (regarding parent participation) were different, I used the same qualitative method to analyze the data. I familiarized myself with the interview data by reading and rereading all interview transcriptions a minimum of three times. All interviews were coded thematically using Johnny Saldaña's (2013) First and Second Cycle coding (see Table 1, below). Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles' (1994) suggestions for inter- and intra-rater reliability were also used as a guide. As preparation for more detailed coding, an Early Childhood Education faculty member and I coded 17% ($n=4$) of parent and staff interviews using holistic coding (Saldaña, 2013). The faculty member and I independently

bracketed data into sections and identified basic themes. This allowed me to grasp the basic themes and categories present in the interviews by ‘chunking’ units of data together.

Discrepancies were discussed via telephone until consensus was reached.

Table 1

Phases of Interview Coding

Phase 1	Holistic Coding- bracket data into sections; identify basic themes; ‘chunk’ units of data together
Phase 2	Initial Coding- break data into smaller parts; develop mutually exclusive categories
Phase 3	Pattern Coding- find major themes; develop causes, rules, and explanations

First Cycle Coding. I began First Cycle Coding using Initial Coding (Saldaña, 2013). This is an open-ended coding method that allowed me to break the data into smaller parts. A fellow graduate student was selected to verify the validity of coding. She had previously been trained in Saldaña’s (2013) method of coding and had experience employing it. The graduate student and I then coded 30% ($n=7$) of the interview data. We developed mutually exclusive categories so that bracketed responses could only fit into one category (see Appendix B). Any discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached.

Second Cycle Coding. In the next stage of coding, a second colleague (who was not connected to the study) and I engaged in Pattern Coding, which allowed me to find major themes

and develop causes, rules, and explanations (Saldaña, 2013). This colleague was trained in Saldaña’s (2013) coding methods and practiced coding interview data. My colleague and I independently coded 20% ($n=5$) of the data. Following Huberman and Miles’ (1994) suggestions for inter- and intrarater reliability coding, inter-rater agreement was 80% (see Table 2 for reliability coding). After coding all parent interviews, I isolated a subset of the codes that myself and a second individual identified as “home literacy practices” (see Appendix C for selected home literacy practices).

Table 2

Results of Reliability Coding of Interviews

	Interviews Coded	Agreement
Initial Coding	37%	69%
Pattern Coding	20%	80%

Analyzing student achievement data. I utilized unity-normalized student change values (spring score-fall score) on the QRI-5 and the MAP assessments in order to measure student progress over the course of the school year. Two student change values on the QRI-5 were “winsored” to eliminate outliers that would have skewed the distribution. I then grouped students into the following groups based on the percentile of the unity-normalized change score on both the MAP and the QRI-5: below average, average, and above average. On both assessments, students with a percentile score of 0-0.33 were categorized as making “below average” progress. Students with a percentile score of >0.33-0.67 were categorized as making “average” progress.

Students with a percentile score of >0.67-1.0 were categorized as making “above average” progress (see Tables 3 and 4) .

Table 3

Groups of Students for MAP Reading Assessment

<i>Group</i>	<i>Students (n)</i>	<i>Percentile score</i>
Below Average	6	0-0.33
Average	6	>0.33-0.67
Above Average	6	>0.67-1.0

Table 4

Groups of Students for QRI-5

<i>Group</i>	<i>Students (n)</i>	<i>Percentile score</i>
Below Average	9	0-0.33
Average	4	>0.33-0.67
Above Average	5	>0.67-1.0

After grouping students according to amount of progress made on each assessment, I recorded the home literacy practices of the families in each category. I then analyzed the home literacy practices of each group of students to determine whether any relationships or patterns existed between home literacy practices and amount of progress made on the respective assessments. Finally, I analyzed the home literacy practices associated with student progress across both assessments to explore any possible relationships.

Analyzing parent responses regarding classroom involvement. At the time of parent-teacher conferences, I recorded in writing parents’ reasons that they could not volunteer in the

classroom during the multicultural literacy unit. For parents who could not attend parent-teacher conferences, the Academic Dean called parents and relayed parents' reasons for being unable to participate, which were recorded in writing. After all parent responses were recorded, I categorized parent reasons into themes and analyzed across the themes.

Conclusion

The primary means of data collection in this study were semi-structured interviews of 20 Hmong American parents relating to students' HLEs. As shown in the next chapter, several themes emerged from parent interview data related to the nature of the at-home reading environment, parent-child talk, importance of reading, and oral storytelling. In addition, I accessed and recorded archival student achievement data. Parent interviews were analyzed in order to learn more about students' HLEs and were compared to individual student achievement data of 18 students on the MAP Reading assessment (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010). Interviews of Hmong American staff members relating to parent participation were analyzed to determine whether there were common reasons why parents were unable to participate in a multicultural literacy unit. Staff interviews supplemented parent responses in order to determine reasons why parents could not participate and to find ways of encouraging parent participation in the future. A variety of barriers and supports to parent participation were identified across staff interviews, as well as suggestions for improving parent participation. Several of these themes were echoed in parent responses, as shown in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Results

I employed a mixed-methods approach to answer the following questions: (a) What is the nature of students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs)?, (b) What is the relationship between students' home literacy practices and their reading achievement data?, and (c) What are barriers and supports to parent participation in the classroom? Qualitative results include interview data from parent interviews related to HLEs and staff interviews related to HLEs and parent participation, as well as parent responses related to classroom involvement. Quantitative results include reading achievement data from the 2014-2015 school year using scores from the MAP Reading (Northeast Evaluation Association, 2016) and QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2010) assessments. I will begin this chapter by describing my findings regarding the nature of students' HLEs and then transition into a section detailing the findings about the relationship between students' home literacy practices and their reading achievement data. The last section presents findings related to barriers and supports to parent participation.

Home Literacy Environments

Understanding students' HLEs is central to understanding their literacy development (Haneda, 2006). Several themes emerged from parent interviews related to students' HLEs, including: nature of at-home reading environment, parent-child talk, importance of reading, and oral storytelling.

At-home reading environment. Through interviews, parents reflected on the reading environment in their homes. Parents commented on who reads with their children at home, what material children read, sources of stories, frequency and length of reading, and book selection.

Who reads. Parent responses indicate that children read alone, with a parent, or with a sibling. Ten out of sixteen responses related to *who reads* indicate that children were encouraged

to read by themselves at home. Some children were encouraged to read alone to help them further develop their reading skills. For example, one parent participant reported:

Um, no I mean I try, because I know that he's a little below average for his reading, so I try to have him read to me rather than reading to him. [...] But, whenever he comes up with a word that he has trouble with, I do tell him that he has to try to sound it out his best. I do give him clues how to sound out the right word. (Participant #7).

This parent's response indicates that she was there to support her child when he ran into trouble reading, but she encouraged him to try reading on his own first. Her comment illustrates a collaborative process of reading in which neither the child nor the parent is solely responsible for reading. Similarly, another parent commented:

And just try to explain to them what some of the words mean and stuff, instead of just looking at the pictures, which she likes to do. But, I try to get them more involved in the words, like the meaning of the words, instead of looking at the actions of the pictures (Participant #5).

This parent attempted to create a more rigorous reading experience for his child by encouraging her to understand the words rather than relying on the pictures. Other parents reported that their children preferred to read without parent help. For example, another parent participant said:

I read to him once in a while whenever he asks me, or wants me to read to him. But then, really he just wants to read by himself, because he keeps saying that he's big now. He can do it himself. (Participant #12).

This parent's comment suggests that the child felt that he was mature enough to read on his own and did not need parent support.

Thirteen out of 16 parent responses related to *who reads* indicate that they either read to their children or helped them read at home. Six out of sixteen parents reported that older siblings help their children read at home. All parents who indicated that older siblings helped their children read at home also spoke Hmong as their preferred language. A similar, collaborative process was reported by many of these parent respondents. For example, one parent reported:

If it's simpler, she reads it. If it's more difficult, her siblings read it. (Participant #1, translated).

Another respondent explained an analogous process:

They said that the child does read the book. If it's too complicated, the older brothers are the ones who are helping out. (Participant #17, translated).

Similar to earlier responses about parents reading with their children, reading with older siblings was often described as a collaborative process. One parent indicated that this collaboration sometimes took place between the child, sibling, and parent:

The dad reads it to the child. He has the child read to him, and then if the child doesn't understand, he might try to help out the best he can or have the older siblings help out too. (Participant #21, translated).

Overall, responses suggest that most parents help their children read, and a majority of parents who speak Hmong as their preferred language also employ the assistance of older siblings to help their younger children read.

Types of reading material. Types of reading material at home reported by parents include: homework books, storybooks, cartoon books, short stories, chapter books, the Bible, internet articles, and other books found at the library or Good Will. Twelve out of seventeen parents who reported on types of reading material read at home indicated that children read books sent home for homework. These books were either Open Court decodable books (McGraw-Hill, 2015) or leveled books from Reading A-Z (fiction or non-fiction) ("Leveled Books," n.d.). For five out of seventeen parents, homework books were the only reading material for children reported at home, and three parents explicitly stated that homework books were the only type of literature read at home (see Table 5). Four out of five parents who indicated homework books were the only type of reading material at home spoke Hmong as their preferred language.

Table 5

Homework Books as Only Reading Material

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
The stuff he brings home.	Participant #13
They read the books that are sent home.	Participant #21, translated
They do read the stories that they bring home. That's the only thing that they read.	Participant #19, translated
They just read the books that are brought home from school. [...] They don't read any other books.	Participant #15, translated
She said the only stories that they tell are the stories that they bring home.	Participant #17, translated

Some parents indicated other types of reading material read at home (see Table 6).

Table 6

Other At-home Reading Materials

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
They do read school books, and they also do read books that they have at home and at libraries.	Participant #1, translated
Oh, they're little pony princess books. Ya know, little Disney Books and stuff. [...] All her school books.	Participant #2
Like, um, fiction books, like um Cinderella stories. And yeah, <i>Three Little Pigs</i> .	Participant #11
Like kid books. [...] Um, we have <i>Benny the Bear</i> . And then We have like um...a chapter book. I forget what they're called.	Participant #12

They read the books that we send home. They do have little cartoon books at home that they do read to the child.

Participant #20, translated

Four parents reported reading storybooks, three parents reported reading cartoon books, and two parents reported reading short stories. Additionally, one parent reported reading the Bible, one parent reported reading internet articles, one parent reported a chapter book as reading material. Two parents indicated reading various text types from home or the library.

Several parents indicated that they read a combination of text types with their children.

For example, one parent reported:

They do read the books that are sent home three times. It's either the mom or the older sibling. They read cartoon books sometimes. They might read the gospel, because they go to church. (Participant #14, translated).

In this household, cartoon books and the Bible are read in addition to homework books. Another parent explained that she reads material related to what is being taught in school:

Like, when she comes home, and she learned about a president or who this person was, she comes explains to me, so we'll Google it, and then I'll read about that person or about that word to her. (Participant #8).

Internet articles are another text-type in this family's HLE. Overall, homework books were the most frequently reported reading material in families' homes. More parents who spoke Hmong as their preferred language reported homework books as the only reading material, compared to parents who spoke English as their preferred language. In addition to homework books, several parents reported additional reading material read at home.

Sources of stories. Parents reported that their children's reading material came from a variety of sources, including: school, home, the Internet, the library, and Good Will. Fifteen out of seventeen parent responses coded for *sources of stories* indicate that their children read books

from school. Of those parents, seven named school as the only source of their children's stories (i.e., Open Court or Reading A-Z books sent home from school). Five of the seven parents who reported school as the only source of their children's reading material spoke Hmong as their preferred language.

Eight of the seventeen parent responses coded for *sources of stories* indicate that children's reading material came from home. Additionally, four parents reported that students read material from the local library. Eight parents explained that books in their home came from multiple sources. For example, one parent explained:

Participant #3: It's mainly more in the summer, because in the summer, we go to the library like once a week, and every evening I'll read them a book or two that they pick up from the library. Just in the summer, since we go to the library so often, and they get a chance of reading different types of books, instead of reading the same books all the time.

A: When you're not able to go to the library, what do you usually read?

Participant #3: Just the books that we do have at home. So again, those are books that they've heard before or read before.

This participant's comment indicates that her child reads material from a variety of sources, including books from home and from the public library. However, sources of stories fluctuate throughout the year in this household (i.e., they visit the library more frequently in the summer than during other times of the year).

In addition to school, home, and the library, two parents indicated that their children's reading material comes from sources of technology (see Table 7).

Table 7

Sources of Stories- Technology

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
I have him read the books he takes home, reads, and there are times when there's like the Ipad with the reading, he could read those, too.	Participant #7
Like, when she comes home, and she learned about a president or who this person was, she comes explains to me, so we'll Google it, and then I'll read about that person or about that word to her.	Participant #8

One parent explained that her child reads short stories from apps on her Ipad, while another parent said that she helps her child look up articles on the internet. Still, another parent explained that his children's reading material comes from Good Will:

We try to read like, whatever books we have laying around. I usually get them a lot of books from Good Will or whatever. It's better than buying a brand new book. You can get it for a lot cheaper. (Participant #5).

Overall, school was the most frequently reported source of reading material for children at home. Additionally, parents reported reading material from home, the library, sources of technology, and Good Will.

Frequency and length of reading. Fifteen of sixteen parent responses coded for *frequency of reading* reported that their child reads every day at home. Yet, many parents indicated that they did not read to their children as frequently as their children read independently. For example, the father of one parent explained that he read to his child infrequently but that she read her homework books every night:

A: When her mom reads to her, how often would you say that she reads to her?

Participant #2: I would say not too long. More like three or four times a month.

[...]

A: How often would you say that she reads her school books?

Participant #2: Every night. Yeah.

Six out of sixteen parent participants indicated that their children read to themselves every night, while the parents read to their children on occasion. Two parents reported that they tried to read to their children every night or almost every night (see Table 8).

Table 8

Parents Read to Child Every Night

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
I read with [my child] almost every day.	Participant #11
Uh, I try to read to her as much as I can, but sometimes, with the situation I'm going through now, it's a little harder. I try to do at least a little a day.	Participant #5

Of the parents who indicated a particular amount of time their child spends reading at home in a given sitting, one parent reported her child reads for 15-20 minutes, one parent reported reading for 20 minutes, and another reported reading for 30 minutes (see Table 9).

Table 9

Amount of Time Spent Reading at Home

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
They spend about 20 minutes a day.	Participant #15, translated
They do read the books, they spend about 30 minutes reading the books and going over the questions.	Participant #16, translated
It usually takes 15-20 minutes to get through.	Participant #17

Of the parents who indicated a particular number of times spent reading the homework book at home in a given sitting, one parent reported her child read the book two times, one parent reported her child read the book three times, and another parent reported her child read the book three to four times.

Book selection. Parent responses indicate that some parents allowed their children to choose the books they read at home, some children only read the homework books at home, and one parent chose the books her child read at home. Four of nine parent responses coded for *book selection* indicate that the child selected the books she or he read at home (see Table 10).

Table 10

Child Selects At-Home Reading Material

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Um, well I let them pick out whatever books they want. So, whatever she picks. [...] She just kind of looks at the pictures on the cover, and then if she likes that, she thinks that she'll like the book.	Participant #3
Oh, like um cartoon books, the one she chooses.	Participant #8

I just tell him to choose whatever he wants to read, and then he sits in his corner and he just starts reading. Participant #12

As discussed earlier, five parents indicated that their children only read their assigned homework books at home, and therefore did not choose their at-home reading materials (see Table 5).

Additionally, one parent indicated that she guided her child's decision-making when choosing a book to read at home:

There are words that are still a little too complicated for him. So, I try not to pick the stories that are too long or words that are too complicated for him. But, whenever he comes up with a word that he has trouble with, I do tell him he has to try to sound it out his best. I do give him clues how to sound out the right word. [...] It's probably rare that I would read to him, but I do let him choose the books he wants to read. (Participant #7).

This parent's comment suggests that she allowed her child to choose the books that he read at home but she guided his decision-making so that he chose books that were at an appropriate reading level for him (i.e., words are not too difficult or complicated). Overall, parent interviews coded for *book selection* indicate that at-home reading material was selected primarily by students, unless families did not have reading material other than that provided by the school (in such cases, the school was responsible for book selection).

Child reading motivation. Several parents reflected on the level of their child's interest in reading and how this impacted reading at home. For example, one father commented:

And I mean, she was doing good for a bit, and then she just kind of fell off. But, I think it's more like when I motivate her and I praise her, like, 'Oh you're doing a good job. You know that word!' and then she tries harder. Ya know, other than that, if she doesn't have that motivation, then she kind of loses interest and wanting to read, ya know. (Participant #2).

This parent's comment suggests that his child loses interest in reading at times but responds well to parent encouragement. Further, the mother of this same child explained that her child's interest in reading fluctuates depending on the ability of a text to capture her attention:

She used to always be complaining that she didn't want to read or anything. But now, sometimes, she does want to read on her own, or pick up a book that she likes, and know that she's read before and knows that she likes and wants me to read it for her. I think she's picking up on it. [...] I think it's more about the subject of the book. If it's something that she knows she likes, then she will want to read it. But, again, at the same time, if it's something she knows she doesn't like or it's something that she doesn't want to read, like if it's something for school, then she doesn't really want to read it, but she knows she has to read it. [...] Yeah, so I think it's more subject-wise. If it's something that captures her attention, then she'll want to read it. But if it doesn't, then she'll kind of pass it by. (Participant #3).

This parent's comment suggests that her child enjoys reading texts that are tied to her interests, but is more reluctant to read books that are for school or that she knows she will not enjoy.

Additionally, two parents explained that their children would rather be doing something else than reading at home. For example, one parent explained that his child has difficulty paying attention to his reading when his parents are not present:

They try their best to tell stories to their child. The thought that the child has is that he always wants to play games and do other things than reading because he doesn't like doing it. So they can't really tell or read the stories to the child, because his mind is somewhere else. [...] The moment the mom or dad leaves, he goes off to do other things. (Participant #20, translated).

While this parent tries to read with his child, his comment suggests frustration with his child's limited reading motivation. Similarly, another parent noted:

For the child, she feels like from time to time, they don't want to do it. They just want to chill and watch movies and play games. (Participant #14, translated).

This parent sees her children's desire to play games and watch movies as competing with their desire to read. Similarly, another parent explained that her child has difficulty focusing, making it difficult for him to read at home:

No I mean, his focus...it's just hard for him to focus. I think if he just stays focused, he'll be able to stay on task and be able to get his work done a lot quicker (Participant #7).

Overall, parent responses coded for *child reading motivation* indicate that children were more motivated to read texts that were tied to their interests. Additionally, children's desire to do other things (e.g., play games, watch TV) was a barrier to children's reading motivation.

Other barriers to reading. In addition to limited child motivation, other barriers to reading at home reported by parents include other parent responsibilities and homework assigned by the school in other subjects. Two parents expressed that things going on in their own lives made it difficult to read with their child at home. For example, one parent explained that it was difficult to read texts other than the assigned homework books:

A: Do you ever tell stories that aren't his homework books?

Participant #13: Uh, I'm pretty busy, so I leave to him.

This parent's other responsibilities made it difficult for him to read other text-types with his child. Another parent explained that his current situation made it difficult to read with his child as much as he wanted to:

Uh, I try to read to her as much as I can, but sometimes, with the situation I'm going through now, it's a little harder (Participant #5).

In addition to circumstances in parents' lives that made reading at home with their children difficult, one parent expressed that school-assigned homework was a barrier to reading at home with his child:

They do read the books, they spend about 30 minutes reading the books and going over the questions. It's usually the books that you read and they try to read it every day. If there's a lot of math homework, then they kind of push the reading homework to the side and do the math homework first. After he does the math homework, then he usually just falls asleep. (Participant #16, translated).

This parent’s comment suggests that, on some days, school-assigned homework in other subjects was a barrier to reading at home with his child, and that this child sometimes did homework until he fell asleep. Overall, in addition to struggles with child reading motivation, barriers to reading include other parent responsibilities and homework in other subjects.

Parent-child talk. Parent responses indicate that parent-child conversations centered around school, child behavior, family, friends, and child interests. Nine out of sixteen parent responses coded for parent-child talk suggest that parents talked with their children about school. Talk about school ranged from discussions about what the child had learned that day to what homework the child needed to complete (see Table 11).

Table 11

Parent-Child Talk Related to School

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
The father asks the child, “What are you learning at school? What’s challenging? What have you been learning today?”.	Participant #1, translated
[...] and then she’ll tell me about gym, and then I’ll ask her, “What happened in gym?” or what did she do, ya know what did they play in gym? Or, what kind of sport? [...] she usually tells me a little bit about Hmong culture, gym, and then [...] a little bit about recess. And recess, she’ll tell me what kind of games they’re playing, and I’ll ask about her friends, who she played with on the playground. Um, if she’s hanging out with her friends from school or if she’s hanging out with her cousins and them in recess. So she’ll tell me a little about that. And sometimes, like, whenever certain things she’s doing in math, I’ll ask about the teachers and what they do with the teachers. Or, like in gym, who’s her gym teacher. Ya know, stuff like that.	Participant #8
They just talk about what kind of food they’re eating, the kind of stuff they do at home, and the homework. They ask, “How was school?” and things like that.	Participant #14, translated

They talk about school in general, education.	Participant #15, translated
They do talk to the child about, “How was school?” about the homework, what does he need to get done.	Participant #16, translated
The mother does talk about the homework. They ask the child, “How was your day at school?”	Participant #17, translated
They don’t talk about much, just telling their child to do their homework.	Participant #18, translated
They do talk about stuff at school, what is learned, how is the Child doing. She didn’t go into specifics.	Participant #19, translated
Ask him how he’s doing in school, what he’s learning in school, stuff like that.	Participant #21, translated
When they’re at home, they communicate about homework...	Participant #22, translated

Five of sixteen parents reported talking with their child about homework. Eight parents also reported talking about behavior with their child (see Table 12).

Table 12

Parent-Child Talk Related to Behavior

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
We pretty much try to cover...I don’t know, it’s something for me. I kind of want my kids to grow up with that. I want them to be more mature than their actual age. So, I teach them. We talk about cooking, cleaning, about like tradition. And they could lead everyday life, but like for older kids, not their age. I don’t...I honestly don’t really like to baby them too much, or they get too comfortable and they’re not as responsible. So, I just pretty much just try to get them to know more about how life is as an adult at an earlier age.	Participant #5
Oh um, like okay. Like today, I’ll ask her how her day was, and then she’ll tell me about gym, and then I’ll ask her, “What	Participant #8

happened in gym?" or what did she do. Ya know, what did they play in gym. Or, what kind of sport. And then she'll tell me about [her cousin] (another student in the class). How she was acting, or how she was acting. Well, first she'll tell me how [her cousin] was acting up, and then I'll go on and ask, "Okay, how about you? Are you acting up?". Then, she'll say, "No." But I know when she laughs, she's kind of lying to me. So, I'll be like, "I know you're lying 'cause you're smiling." So, then she'll say a little bit to me.

Whenever I go to pick him up at my mom's house, I will ask him, "How was your day?". And he will tell me that it was okay. And then I always ask him what he got at school and was he bad. And then he tells me, "I do good, and I got blue." And then, he tells me he got blue, and he gets to go to Noah's Ark. So, I always tell him that if he gets blue by the end of the year, we'll take him to Noah's Ark. [...] When we get home, we do homework, and then we usually just play. And then, we don't really talk much after that. Unless he has questions, then he will come ask me. Participant #12

They do talk to the child about what are the good things you should be doing, bad things that you shouldn't be doing. Participant #15, translated

They ask the child [...] "Were you good? Were you bad?". They do correct their behavior. "You're not supposed to be doing this, you're not supposed to be doing that." Participant #17, translated

They talk about what's the right thing to do, what are bad things you shouldn't do. You know, always help the child to grow up to be better. Participant #18, translated

They do ask him, "Were you good today?" "Were you bad today?". They correct his behavior. Participant #20, translated

They don't really talk about school or anything. More of a simple talk, kind of like more like correcting. Participant #20, translated

Talk about behavior often centered around whether the child was "good" or "bad" at school. One parent referenced the color card behavior management system used school-wide in elementary classrooms. Other parents described how they "corrected" their child's behavior. Still, another

parent explained that he does not want to “baby” his children, and that he tries to teach them to act more “adult.”

Four parents also indicated that they talk with their children about family, including conversations about family members at school or other relatives outside of the school. Four of sixteen parent responses coded for parent-child talk indicate that they talk with their child about food. Two parents explained that they talk to their children about their friends. Four parents also indicated that they talk with their children about child interests. Overall, parent talk related to school, child behavior, family, friends, and child interests. The topics most frequently reported by parents were school and child behavior.

Importance of literacy. Parent participants reflected on their own relationship with literacy, as well as the role that they see literacy playing in their child’s life. Overall, most parents viewed literacy as important to their own occupations and to their daily interactions. All parents explained that literacy is important for their child, and several parents expressed their hopes for the child’s literacy in light of their own schooling experiences. In general, parents indicated that literacy is important for their child’s future success, career success, and development of basic life skills.

Parents’ own relationship with literacy. When asked why reading and writing is important to them, most parents indicated that they read as a function of their jobs or to perform daily tasks (e.g., shop at the grocery store, communicate with friends). Only a few parents, all of whom spoke English as their preferred language, expressed an interest in reading and writing for pleasure. One parent was passionate about reading and writing, but only liked to read material that she was interested in (i.e., not reading she was assigned):

I actually read and write a lot, and they are always saying how I’m reading. And I like writing a lot, too. So, I think they kind of pick up on that. [My child’s] older sister likes

to read a lot, too, and she's actually becoming a really fast reader with it, too. So, I'm not sure about [my child], because she's kind of in the early stages, so I don't know how she'll pick up on it. But, I'm hoping she'll pick up on it and read a lot, too [...] For me? Really it's just a pass-time. I guess it's a past-time for me, but at the same time, it can become a burden, too. Because I'm actually going to school right now, too, and reading for school and for class...I can never get that done. It's really hard for me, and the books are always so dry and boring. But, if it's just like me reading for entertainment, then I can do that, and I can read for a long time, ya know? (Participant #3).

This mother enjoys reading and writing for pleasure and hopes that her passion for reading and writing will allow her children to "pick up on it" as well. Similarly, another parent enjoys reading, but time does not allow her to read frequently:

I do read just for fun, like here and there. But, I'm really busy, so I just read like here and there (Participant #12).

Because of this parent's busy schedule, she is unable to read often. Another parent explained that she prefers writing to reading:

I'm not really into reading. Writing, I'm more into. Um, for reading, if it's something with a story that's very interesting, or I would say an article, I would be into it. But, like, reading a book's not really my thing (Participant #8).

Overall, most parents explained that they believe reading and writing is important for their jobs and daily interactions, while only a few parents expressed an interest in reading for pleasure. Even among these parents, their busy schedules made it difficult for them to read with frequency.

Parents' schooling experiences tied to desires for children. When asked about the importance of reading and writing for their child, six parents expressed hopes for their children in light of their own experiences with reading and writing. Embedded in these comments were parents' regrets about their past choices or inability to become literate. For example, one father explained:

Well, it's important cause uh, nowadays, if you can't read and write, you can't really do anything. Reading and writing is just the main point of any job nowadays and now, I'm still trying to learn. I'm still in the process of trying to read and write in my own

language. Which, I know that right now, I have failed as a father if I can't even read and write in my own language, which is kind of a shame (Participant #5).

This comment signals his father's regret that he was unable to become fluent in Hmong and his belief that this did not set a good example for his children. Another parent expressed that he did not want his child to face the same hardships as he did because of his limited reading and writing fluency in English:

Reading and writing is important to him. He wants the best for the child, but it's up to the child to take it in and use it. It's important because it's for the future and to better themselves in the future. It's important because it's for their own good in the future. When they're older, the parents won't be able to help them, because they won't be the ones who can read and write in English. So, it's up to the child to get better now so they can get through the things in life that they need to. The job he has now, he has to communicate with people who do speak English. He wants [his child] not to suffer like he does when he's working, because he doesn't speak English. He wants the child to be able to communicate better when he has a job in the future (Participant #20, translated)

By learning English, this father hopes that his son will not have to face the same hardships he did in the workplace. In comparison to his father, the child will be able to communicate with ease in business interactions. Similarly, another parent commented:

Reading and writing is very important to them, although they don't speak or write in English. They want their children to be able to read and write in English. They don't want their child to be in the same place that they are now, because they can't read and write in English (Participant #19, translated)

One can see the importance of literacy for these parents in relation to the past struggles they have faced due to limited English literacy skills. Amidst their future hopes for their children, several parents also expressed a desire for their children to become more independent than themselves by employing their literacy skills:

Like, for me, nobody helped me when I was younger, because my parents didn't really know English or anything. So, I had to teach myself. But, [my child] has me and his dad, and we know English. We know how to write and read. So, for his future, whatever he needs for anything, he could just go do it himself instead of waiting and asking what to do and how to do it (Participant #12).

This parent's comment reflects her own experience with literacy and the difficulties she faced as a first-generation student who could not rely on her parents to teach her English. It also reveals how her hopes for her child's independence connects with her own childhood. Another parent expressed her desire for her child's future in relation to her own experience with schooling and conveyed her regret about not paying attention in school:

I guess I would want him to increase his vocabulary and his spelling a lot more than me when I was his age, just cause with our Hmong culture, with our parents coming into America, we're the second generation. They're the third generation right now. We want our kids to learn a little more than we did. I mean, I know with my husband, he had a lot of regrets with not focusing in school. And you kind of learn those stuff as you grow older. You kind of regret not focusing as much in school and wish you could go back in time to learn those so it can help your future. So, yeah, I would like [my child] to learn more than what I did when I was younger (Participant #7).

This parent's comment also suggests that her future goals for her child are connected to her desires for the future of the Hmong community. As a second-generation student herself, this mother hopes that her child will continue the progress that the Hmong people have made in America. Like most parents, this mother hopes that her child will surpass her own success in school. Similarly, a father expressed his desire for his children in terms of furthering the greater Hmong community:

Well, with reading and writing, I want them to actually, because they're bilingual, you know what I mean...I want them to know both languages, too. How to read and write both languages. Or, even a third language, you know what I mean? I mean, it's always a plus to have more. And like even myself, I feel like I could have been somebody more and helped out the community a little bit more if I knew how to read and write in my own language. Cause like, a lot of older generations, they want me to write down documents and stuff in our language. And, 'cause I don't know how to do any of that stuff, I'm kind of pretty much useless to them (Participant #5).

This father's response echoes the previous participant's comments about improving the Hmong community through literacy. Here, Participant #5 explains that he regrets his inability to help Hmong community members (i.e., by writing documents in Hmong), and his hope that his

children will become fluent in multiple languages, so they can help their community in the future. Overall, while many parents expressed regret or disappointment in their own literacy acquisition, they also placed great hopes in their children’s future ability to read and write.

Why we read. Every parent interviewed expressed the belief that reading and writing is important. There were several reasons that parents reported for why reading and writing important for their child, with the largest themes being: future success, career success, and basic life skills. Five of twenty parent interviews coded for *why we read* indicate that parents believe reading and writing is important for their child’s future success, broadly speaking (see Table 13).

Table 13

Literacy Important for Future Success

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
It’s important for him, because it can help him improve his speaking and writing better. Like, right now, he’s in the process of learning, so he’s getting better. And um, it will help him a lot in the future, too.	Participant #12
It’s important for her child, because she wants him to be able to do all the things that we do as English-speaking people. She wants her children to be successful in the future, and she doesn’t want her children to be in the same boat as her, where she can’t communicate.	Participant #17, translated
It is important for her, for her child’s future, so she can succeed.	Participant #18, translated
He wants [his child] to be able to read and write just to be successful, so he won’t have trouble in the future.	Participant #21, translated
Reading and writing is important for her. She wants [her child] to be good at it, so that he can be successful in the future.	Participant #22, translated

An additional five parents (including two parents of the same child) framed future success in terms of career success, and their comments reflect a belief that literacy will help their children to hold promising careers in the future (see Table 14).

Table 14

Literacy Important for Career Success

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
It would help her a lot in her career, I would say, without reading and writing, she's not gonna really push herself to the max.	Participant #2
I think it's important to grow, like, education-wise, career-wise, because when you get older, it's important for you to read and write proficiently, you know?	Participant #3
Reading and writing is just the main point of any job nowadays.	Participant #5
You have to learn to read when you're little and all the careers that you get into, you have to be able to read and write.	Participant #7
Because I don't want her to not have a job and not be able to read and write.	Participant #8

Five parents also described literacy as a basic skill that children will need when they are adults (see Table 15).

Table 15

Literacy Important as a Basic Life Skill

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Reading and writing is important to him, because it's a tool you use daily. When you're able to read and write, you can read at the groceries and read and understand. When you're meeting with friends, he's able to talk to them. When it's an important event, he's able to write things down and talk to people.	Participant #1
There's really nothing she can do without knowing how to read and write. Or, read a contract before she signs it, like anything like that. So, for her, I think it's important for her to get as far as she can get, and as far as she wants to get, in her life.	Participant #3
Well, it's important cause uh...nowadays if you can't read and write, you can't really do anything.	Participant #5
So he can acquire the skills he needs to accomplish stuff in his life.	Participant #13
Reading and writing is important to him, because being able to write and read in English in priority #1 here in the United States. It's one of the things that you have to have in the U.S., because if you can't read or write in English, then you're out of luck.	Participant #16, translated

In addition to ensuring future career success, one parent also cited college access and preparation as a reason for the importance of reading and writing:

If [my child] was to, you know, when he grows up if he wants to go into a specific career, he'll be able to use his writing and reading and his knowledge. And especially getting into college, as well. It will be easy for him to write papers. It wouldn't be such a struggle (Participant #7).

This parent's comment reflects the belief that her child's literacy skills will increase his chances of college admittance. It will also help him to be successful in college by making it "easy for him

to write papers” and ease his transition to college because it “wouldn’t be such a struggle.”

Other responses coded for *why we read* indicate that parents believe literacy will help students to achieve a “100% level,” help students spell and read correctly, and ensure that students would not fall behind (see Table 16).

Table 16

Other Reasons for Important of Literacy

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Um, to understand more and to be able to read, like, at a 100% level.	Participant #6
So she can remember and use them correct [...] I want her to know to be good at what she’s reading and writing. It’s important in life, so you don’t forget, you know. Cause if you don’t do that stuff, you forget. It’s just the words and things that you read in the English language is different. So, you don’t want to put it into an incorrect sentence, and things like that.	Participant #11
She doesn’t want the child to fall behind. It’s a comparison between the kids who do read and write at home compared to her kids who just come home and relax. She wants them to be better at reading and writing.	Participant #14, translated

Oral storytelling. Fourteen of eighteen parent participants indicated that they told oral stories to their children. In general, parents’ choices to tell stories to their children were not as routine as reading, because it was more situational (i.e., parents would tell a story when a given topic arose rather than having a set time for oral storytelling).

Topics for oral storytelling. Topics for oral storytelling include stories related to parents’ past, make believe stories, and stories parents were told as children. Other story topics include

Bible stories and stories that explained a given phenomenon (e.g., why some kids have to work). Eleven of fourteen interviews coded for *oral storytelling* suggest that parents told stories relating to their past. Several parents explained that these stories are meant to teach their children about the opportunities that they have that their parents did not have. For example, one parent said:

I don't tell stories out of a book. But, more like stories about how I grew up and ya know...just stuff that happened in life with me and stuff like that. [...] It was stories of like me, how I grew up, how we didn't have what they have now. And about teaching not to take it for granted, and how I did my best to make life better for them. Yeah, it's just all stories from my experience (Participant #2).

This father explained that stories about the way that he grew up showed his children “how we didn't have what they have now” and not to “take it for granted.” Similarly, another father explained:

I usually tell them stories of...these are more like the real stories, not fiction that I make up. Like, I'll tell them about our childhood and how we grew up and try to relate the way they are now to how we were back then. Just so they have a better idea of how things have changed. Just so they have a better idea of what they need to really work on to be more like how I was back then (Participant #5).

By telling his children stories about his childhood, this father showed them “how we were back then,” so that they would know “what they need to really work on” to be more like him. This comparison between the past and the present was used to show children how hard their parents had to work in the past and provide them with perspective.

Another parent explained that she tells her children scary stories, including a real-life ghost story she experienced:

P: Oh, okay. Well, I told [my child] about back then, when I was little, I was sleeping in a tiny room with my mom and dad and all my brothers and sisters. So, my mom and dad were sleeping on the bed, and then me and my siblings...we were sleeping on the floor. So, in the middle of the night, we were all asleep. But, I really had to go to the bathroom. So, when I got up, I see blue lights under the door. I thought maybe a TV was on. But, when I open the door, it look like pitch black, it look like nothing.

A: You said you thought there was a TV under the door?

P: I thought maybe a TV was on. Cause you know, I could see the lights under the door, and I thought the TV was on. And my mom would wake up in the middle of the night and watch TV. So, then I would wake up, and open the door, and I would see nothing, it was pitch black. So then, I kind of got scared, so I didn't want to leave the bedroom no more, so I just went to sleep. So then, my sister woke up, too. And she told me that she kept hearing, like hearing things, and she said wanted to try to open the closet door. Cause I was sleeping there, in the closet. And then the phone started ringing, like out of nowhere. And nobody wanted to pick up, because...well, I didn't want to pick up because I was already scared. My sister, she didn't want to pick up our phone, and my mom didn't wake up, my dad didn't wake up. Nobody woke up to pick up the phone. So, we just left it ringing. So, the next day, I told my mom. And she said maybe we just eat too much, and then we're just having a dream (Participant #12).

In comparison to the previous parents' explanations of storytelling, the purpose of this story seemed to be primarily for entertainment rather than teaching the child about work ethic or opportunity in America. Yet, the story was based on her real experience of believing there was a ghost in her home. Similar to the previous parents' comments, this parent's story provided context for the parent's childhood (e.g., she shared a small room with her siblings, her mother liked to watch TV at night).

Another parent explained that she told stories about the past in order to explain her family history. For example, she told her daughter a story about why her grandfather had missing fingers:

She'll ask about her grandpa, and my family likes to go visit the grandpa for Memorial Day. He was a soldier. There's a picture of him dressed in his outfit. She'll ask me about it, and I'll explain what type of person he was, and why was he a soldier. Or, ya know, I'll go into a little bit of details, I don't go too much with her when she'll ask me like questions about my dad and stuff like that. So, I'll say like who he was, how he was a good person, what did he do, and ya know like um...So, like my dad, he had a few missing fingers. So, I tell them about that like, "Yeah, he lost some of his fingers in war, because when you go out there, it's pretty dangerous. You mess with bombs and guns and stuff like that." So, I kind of explain stuff like that to her to make her understand why he was missing some fingers. Too, why did he have to go out there. He was chosen to be out there to help, so that grandpa and grandma and mommies, ya know, or brother

or sister, could fly and come to the U.S. And yeah, I kinda explain that stuff to her (Participant #8).

While this mother goes into “a little bit of details,” she doesn’t “go too much with her,” perhaps because of the violent nature of war. Yet, she does explain aspects of her grandfather, such as his personality and the reason for his missing fingers. She also explains why her grandfather went to war in a way she believes the child will understand.

In addition to telling stories related to their past, three parents indicated that they tell their children make-believe stories. For example, one mother explained that in addition to stories about her childhood, she also tells other types of stories:

Like, this past weekend we were outside grilling. They wanted to hear stories. So, we were telling scary stories, funny stories, stories of what we used to do as kids and what happened to us. And then, it’s kind of funny, because they’ll talk about movies and shows and stuff, and they’ll tell those stories to us. You know, we have just told stories like this before (Participant #3).

In this household, stories are told by the parents and the children. They include stories about parents’ past, as well as “scary stories” and “funny stories.” The children will tell parents stories about things they have seen in TV shows and movies. Another parent explained that he makes up stories in the moment:

Participant #5: [...] make up stories as I go along. Just stories that kind of will put some humor into the kids. Which, they like it when you tell stories using them as like a character.

A: Oh, you kind of make it up with them as a character?

Participant #5: Yeah yeah yeah, make up stories using them as a character. They just love it. They think it’s funny or whatever. But, once in a while there will be like scary stories or whatever. And, it’s something that the kids enjoy, and they get a laugh out of.

This father likes to tell make-believe stories using his children as characters, because they find it entertaining and humorous.

In addition to stories relating to parents' past and make-believe stories, two parents also reported that they tell oral stories they were told as children:

Participant #12: For him, whenever I tell him stories, he likes ghost stories. So, I have a lot of ghost stories for him, so he always listens. Even though he gets scared, he still wants to listen.

A: Where do your stories come from?

Participant #12: It come from like my parents, like back when we used to live in Laos and stuff like that. And then how there are ghosts and little witch and stuff like that. So, that's how they told me and that's how I told [my child].

This mother's comment indicates that she tells her child ghost stories that she was told in Laos when she was younger and that she has an abundance of these stories she can tell to her son.

Similarly, another parent indicated that her husband tells stories he was told as a child. However, her husband has difficulty remembering the stories:

I don't really remember stories from when I was younger. My husband kind of has stories that he remembers, but he doesn't remember them like all the way. But he would just tell them what he doesn't remember and then make up the rest (Participant #3).

While this father remembers some oral stories he was told when he was younger, he has to "make up" what he does not remember when telling these stories to his own children. As shown in the next section, several parents reported having difficulty remembering the oral stories they were told as children.

Barriers to oral storytelling. When asked about oral storytelling with their children, seven parents reported barriers to oral storytelling. Three parents indicated that their children are too young to hear oral stories. An additional three parents reported that they have difficulty remembering stories they were told as children themselves. One parent explained that it is difficult to tell his child oral stories, because he has difficulty paying attention.

It is unclear what parents meant when they said that their children were “too young” to hear oral stories, and particularly those oral stories they were told as children. Perhaps some parent participants understood oral storytelling to mean stories about their past or their parents’ past. Because many parent participants and their families had experienced war, they may not have been comfortable sharing such stories with their children until they were older.

HLEs and Reading Achievement Data

After analyzing individual home literacy practices as described above, I analyzed the home literacy practices of each group of students as described in the previous chapter (below average, average, above average) to determine whether any relationships or patterns existed between home literacy practices and amount of progress made on the QRI-5 and MAP assessments. Below, I describe the home literacy practices of each group of students and analyze the home literacy practices associated with student progress across both assessments to explore any possible relationships or emerging patterns.

Students making “above average” progress. I recorded the home literacy practices of students who were categorized as making “above average” progress on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading assessments (see Table 17).

Table 17

Above Average Progress on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading

<i>Home literacy practice</i>	<i>QRI-5</i>	<i>MAP</i>
Total Students	5	6
Book selection		
Adult selects	0	0
Child selects	1	1
School selects	2	3
Length of reading		
15-20 minutes	0	1
20 minutes	1	1
30 minutes	0	0
Number of times story is read		
2 times	0	1
3 times	1	0
3-4 ties	1	0
Oral storytelling		
Tells oral stories	4	5
Does not tell oral stories	1	1
<i>Topics for oral stories</i>		
Make-believe	0	0
Stories relating to parents' past	1	2
Stories parents were told as children	0	0
Variety of oral story topics	2	3
Sources of stories		
School only	2	3
Home	0	1
Internet	0	0
Library	1	0
Good Will	1	1
Multiple sources (home and library)	1	0
What we read		
Homework books	1	3
Storybooks	0	0
Cartoon books	0	0
Short stories	0	0

Chapter books	0	0
Bible	0	0
Internet articles	0	0
Multiple text-types	3	1
Who reads		
Child reads with a parent	2	3
Child reads with a sibling	0	1
Child reads with a parent and a sibling	3	0
Child reading motivation		
Parent reported child struggles with reading motivation	2	0
Parent-child talk		
Talk related to school	2	4
Talk related to homework	2	1
Talk related to behavior	2	4
Talk related to family	1	0
Talk related to friends	0	0
Talk related to food	0	0
Talk related to child interests	0	0
Importance of literacy		
Parent reads or writes for enjoyment	1	1
Child reads for enjoyment	0	0
Child reads for future success	2	2
Child reads for career success	2	1
Child reads for basic life skills	2	1

For students in the “above average” group for both the QRI-5 and the MAP, adults did not choose their children’s books. Rather, parents reported that their children or the school made these choices. Parents indicated that their children read anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes per evening; no parents reported their children reading for 30 minutes per evening. More parents reported telling oral stories to their children than did not. Parents told their children stories about a wide range of topics; however, no parents of students in this category reported telling make-believe stories alone or stories they were told as children (however, these story types may fall in

the “variety of text-types” category if parents tell them in conjunction with other story types). Children’s texts largely came from school, and no parents reported texts from the Internet. Homework books were the most commonly read text-type for students in this group, while four parents of students in this group reported reading a variety of text-types. Children in this category most frequently read with a parent, while three parents in the QRI-5 group reported that their children read with a combination of sibling and parent support. Parent-child talk for students in this group most often focused on school and behavior. While one parent in both the “above average” groups for the QRI-5 and MAP indicated that she reads or writes for enjoyment, no parents reported that it was important for their children to read for enjoyment.

Students making “average” progress. Home literacy practices were recorded for students who made “average” progress on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading assessments (see Table 18).

Table 18

Average Progress on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading

<i>Home literacy practice</i>	<i>QRI-5</i>	<i>MAP</i>
Total students	4	6
Book selection		
Adult selects	0	0
Child selects	1	0
School selects	2	2
Length of reading		
15-20 minutes	0	0
20 minutes	1	0
30 minutes	0	1
Number of times story is read		
2 times	1	0

3 times	0	1
3-4 times	0	0
Oral storytelling		
Tells oral stories	2	4
Does not tell oral stories	2	2
<i>Topics for oral stories</i>		
Make-believe	0	0
Stories relating to parents' past	1	2
Stories parents were told as children	0	0
Variety of oral story topics	1	0
Sources of stories		
School only	2	4
Home	2	0
Internet	0	0
Library	0	1
Good Will	0	0
Multiple sources (home and library)	0	1
What we read		
Homework books	2	1
Storybooks	0	1
Cartoon books	1	0
Short stories	0	0
Chapter books	0	0
Bible	0	0
Internet articles	0	0
Multiple text-types	1	3
Who reads		
Child reads with a parent	3	1
Child reads with a sibling	0	3
Child reads with a parent and a sibling	0	2
Child reading motivation		
Parent reported child struggles with reading motivation	1	1
Parent-child talk		
Talk related to school	1	3
Talk related to homework	0	3
Talk related to behavior	3	2
Talk related to family	0	1
Talk related to friends	0	1

Talk related to food	0	1
Talk related to child interests	0	0
Importance of literacy		
Parent reads or writes for enjoyment	1	0
Child reads for enjoyment	0	0
Child reads for future success	1	2
Child reads for career success	0	0
Child reads for basic life skills	1	3

School and child-selected books were most frequently reported by parents of children in the “average” category on the QRI-5 and MAP. Similar to students in the “above average” group, adults did not select children’s texts. Parents who reported a given amount of time that their children read per evening indicated that they read for 20 to 30 minutes per evening. Two parents also reported that their children read a given text more than once per evening. As in the “above average” group, oral storytelling was a strong strand for this group. However, in contrast to the “above average” group, an equal number of parents reported telling oral stories as did not in the “average” group on the QRI-5. Oral stories most frequently focused on parents’ past or a variety of oral story types; no parents reported telling their children make-believe stories alone or stories they were told as children. Texts most frequently came from school and home for students in this category. Parents reported that their children most frequently read homework books, storybooks, and cartoon books. Parent-child talk most often focused on school, homework, and behavior. Parents most frequently indicated that reading is important for future success and basic life skills; no parents of students in the “average” category reported that reading is important for career success.

Students making “below average” progress. I recorded home literacy practices of students categorized as making “below average” progress on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading assessments (see Table 19).

Table 19

Below Average Progress on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading

<i>Home literacy practice</i>	<i>QRI-5</i>	<i>MAP</i>
Total students	9	6
Book selection		
Adult selects	0	0
Child selects	2	3
School selects	3	0
Length of reading		
15-20 minutes	1	0
20 minutes	0	0
30 minutes	1	0
Number of times story is read		
2 times	0	0
3 times	0	0
3-4 times	0	1
Oral storytelling		
Tells oral stories	7	4
Does not tell oral stories	2	2
<i>Topics for oral stories</i>		
Make-believe	0	0
Stories relating to parents’ past	5	3
Stories parents were told as children	0	0
Variety of oral story topics	1	1
Sources of stories		
School only	4	1
Home	0	1
Internet	2	2
Library	0	0

Good Will	0	0
Multiple sources (home and library)	2	2
What we read		
Homework books	2	1
Storybooks	1	0
Cartoon books	0	1
Short stories	1	1
Chapter books	0	0
Bible	0	0
Internet articles	1	1
Multiple text-types	2	2
Who reads		
Child reads with a parent	3	4
Child reads with a sibling	4	0
Child reads with a parent and a sibling	0	1
Child reading motivation		
Parent reported child struggles with reading motivation	0	2
Parent-child talk		
Talk related to school	5	1
Talk related to homework	3	1
Talk related to behavior	3	2
Talk related to family	2	2
Talk related to friends	2	1
Talk related to food	3	2
Talk related to child interests	3	3
Importance of literacy		
Parent reads or writes for enjoyment	1	2
Child reads for enjoyment	0	0
Child reads for future success	2	1
Child reads for career success	2	3
Child reads for basic life skills	2	1

Adults did not select books for students in this group. Books were most frequently selected by children in the “below average” category, according to parent interview data. School-selected books were also reported by three out of nine parents for students in the “below average” group

on the QRI-5. For those parents who reported a given time their children spend reading per evening, one parent indicated that his child reads for 15 to 20 minutes, and another parent indicated that her child read for 30 minutes per evening. The only parent who reported a given number of times that her child read per evening indicated that her child reads a text three to four times per sitting. Parents reported telling oral stories more often than they did not. Notably, a relatively large number of parents ($n=7$) of students in the “below average” group on the QRI-5 reported telling oral stories, while two reported that they did not. Similar to students in the “above average” and “average” categories, parents reported that oral stories most frequently related to parents’ past or a variety of topics. No parents indicated that they told their children make-believe stories or stories they were told as children. Parents of students in the “below average” category most frequently reported that texts came from school, the Internet, and from multiple sources. Homework books were the most frequently reported text-types children read, while storybooks, cartoon books, short stories, and Internet articles were also reported. Children in this group most often read with a parent or with a sibling. While parents of students in the “below average” group reported reading for enjoyment, no parents indicated that reading for enjoyment was important for their children. Rather, parents reported that literacy is important for their children’s future success, career success, and basic life skills.

Across group comparison. Several emerging patterns arose from my analysis of student achievement data and home literacy practices. First, students across all three groups (above average, average, and below average) read school-selected texts or selected their own reading material; no parents reported that their children read adult-selected reading material. Also of importance to the present study, oral storytelling was a strong strand across all three groups, with relatively large numbers of parents indicating that they told their children oral stories. Yet, oral

storytelling did not translate to a clear relationship with school reading assessment. There was variation in length of reading across groups. Students in the “average” and “below average” groups had the longest reported time spent reading per evening—30 minutes. The “above average” and “average” groups had parents who reported that their children read for 20 minutes per evening. The “above average” and “below average” groups had parents reporting that their children read for 15-20 minutes per evening. While homework books were a strong strand across all three groups, there was variation in other texts read at home. Interestingly, the “below average” group had the most reported variety in texts read at home, including storybooks, cartoon books, chapter books, and Internet articles. However, all groups had relatively large numbers of parents reporting that their children read multiple text-types at home, and some of the variety in the “above average” and “average” groups may have been included in this group. Finally, there was variation between who read with children at home (e.g., with a parent, sibling, or both a parent and sibling) across groups. While this does not point to a clear relationship between who reads with a child and her progress on reading assessments, it may point to the importance of this factor in the HLE, overall.

Parent Participation in School

In relation to the initial study focus, parents’ reasons for not participating in a multicultural literacy unit were recorded in writing at the time of parent-teacher conferences. These responses were categorized into themes and analyzed across themes. Interviews with four Hmong staff members yielded information about why staff members thought parent participation was important, factors that may impact parent participation, and suggested ways of encouraging parent participation in the future. Staff members included two elementary teachers, a family

coordinator/high school academic coach, and a Hmong curriculum development coordinator/enrollment specialist.

Parent responses. When invited to participate in new multicultural literacy unit, some parents expressed interest, but no parents were ultimately able to volunteer. Thus, I recorded their responses in writing at the time of parent-teacher conferences, as well as those responses relayed to me by the Academic Dean (see Table 20).

Table 20

Parent Responses Regarding Classroom Involvement

<i>Response</i>	<i>Participants (n)</i>
Works during school hours	1
Interested, but works during school hours	7
Not interested, works during school hours	2
Interested, but does not have access to transportation	1
Not interested, does not have access to transportation	5
Not interested, shy	2
Not interested	1

Parent responses fell into three primary categories, including: works during school hours ($n=10$), lacks access to transportation ($n=6$), and too shy to participate ($n=2$). As evident in the next section, these themes were mirrored in staff members' explanations of why parents may be unable to participate.

Staff insight regarding parent participation. Staff participants reflected on the importance of parent participation in their interviews. One elementary teacher, in particular, saw parent participation as central to her students' academic success. She expressed her desire for parents to come into her classroom to see the high level of academic rigor her students were able to achieve, in order to challenge their own child:

I feel like our parents...I'm going to speak for the Hmong parents. I feel like a lot of us are not like, um, doesn't have formal education. And I feel like some of the parents, or some of us are thinking, "Oh man, the school is just like challenging the kids." But, they don't see what other students can do. So, that's um...and so I feel like it's important for them to come and take a look at what other people's kids can do to um, to challenge their own child. Because I remember one of the moms came in and said, "I don't understand why my child is doing multiplication in first grade." And I'm saying, "Other kids in this class are able to do it, ya know." And she's like, "This is way too hard." And so, they need to come in and see that, like I said, education right now is different, and they cannot compare their education with their child's education anymore, because of the rigor and the standards...everything is changing. And so, I think that it is valuable for them to come in and see that. And just to see like the materials that are being used, ya know. Because I feel like if I wasn't a teacher and I was to go to the library, I would totally get books that are just way too easy for my daughter, who was going to be in first grade (Participant #4).

This teacher's comment reflects frustration with parents' misunderstanding of the level of academic rigor currently being expected in schools and her desire for parents to realize that other children are able to meet these standards. She also expressed that parent participation is important for parents to meet one another:

I feel like it's good for parents to meet other parents, too. And to see that um, there are parents who are challenging their kids. Um, there are parents who are well-educated, as well. And just to ya know...get to meet other parents and talk to other parents (Participant #4).

Similar to this teacher's previous comment, this excerpt shows a desire for parents to understand the level of academic rigor some students are able to achieve. Her comment also reflects her desire for well-educated parents to meet one another.

Factors impacting parent participation. Staff participants reflected on barriers and supports for parent involvement, including availability of child care and transportation, work schedule, language abilities, and confidence. These findings reflected earlier findings from parent responses (as seen in Table 20, shown above).

Childcare. When reflecting on factors that may encourage parent participation at school, two teachers expressed that the availability of childcare could shape this decision. For example, one teacher explained:

Because I know that like a lot of our parents, they're younger, and so they work, and they have younger kids, too. And so, work schedule and maybe there's a babysitter for them. So, with those, I think yeah. Just with work schedule and having someone to watch your kids [...] Another reason is because of kids, too. Because big families are...it's common in the Hmong culture to have a big family. And so, maybe they still have younger kids at home that they need to watch. (Participant #4).

In addition to work schedule, the availability of a babysitter was central to this teacher's understanding of why a parent may or may not be able to participate. Similarly, another teacher explained:

Or, for day care, if they have younger children that they would have to find day care for in order just to come. Or, it's more of a hassle just to bring all the rest of the kids to come (Participant #23).

This teacher's comment also shows the connection between child care and parents' ability to participate. If parents have young children, they may have the ability to send their children to day care. If not, it may be "more of a hassle" to bring all of their children to school with them.

Work. Three staff participants expressed that parents' work schedule could be a factor impacting parent participation at school (see Table 21).

Table 21

Factors Impacting Parent Participation

<i>Representative Quotes</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Because I know that like a lot of our parents, they're younger, and so they work, and they have younger kids, too. And so, work schedule and maybe there's a babysitter for them. So, with those, I think yeah. Just with work schedule and having someone to watch your kids.	Participant #4
The other factor could be time. Yeah, because if they're working 10-12 hours a day...It's important to them, but they may not have the time or support.	Participant #9
A lot of them are probably working during the day. [...] So, occupation and not having that time to come participate. [...] I think it's hard, like financially. Like, it's hard for them to take off. [...]and plus like if they're struggling financially or not, I think that plays a big factor with it, too.	Participant #23

If parents were unable to take time off of work, then staff members believed it was unlikely that they would be able to participate. If parents were facing financial hardship, it was particularly unlikely that they would be able to take time off of work to participate at school, in one teacher's view (see Participant #23).

Transportation. One teacher explained that parents' ability to participate at school was likely affected by their access to transportation:

Um, I think one is because they can't drive, because I know some of our moms are still...in the Hmong community, the mom is...this is how it is. It's more of the mom's job to make sure that the kids are at school doing what they're supposed to do. And then the dad's role is to go to work. So, the mom is still the housewife and the dad is ya know, the person who works and brings the money home. So, for many of our moms, especially the older generations, they can't drive (Participant #4).

Because of traditional gender roles in many Hmong families, and the likelihood that mothers are unable to drive, this teacher believes it may be difficult for Hmong mothers to travel to school to participate.

Language. All four staff participants indicated that parents' language abilities may impact their desire or ability to participate at school. The family coordinator/high school academic coach explained this in terms of parents' comfort level speaking with the teacher:

Um, I think language is also an issue, whether they feel comfortable talking to the teacher, or if they feel the teacher is able to understand them or not (Participant #10).

If parents felt that the teacher could not understand their speech, this staff member's comment suggests that they may not feel inclined to come to the school. Similarly, another staff member explained:

Some of the factors could be the language barrier, the parents don't know English. They would not feel they would have the skills to communicate with you or help the students (Participant #9).

As is evident in the following section, staff members viewed parents' limited English-language skills as contributing to a lack of confidence in interacting at school.

Confidence. As described above, limited English language skills were seen as contributing to parents' lack of confidence in participating at school. One teacher explained:

They can't speak the language. They can't speak English. And they feel like, it's also that confidence. They feel like they don't...they're not able to help. And so that's why the lack of confidence of ya know helping. You know, when they think about coming to school, their main thoughts are, "Oh, reading and writing." And therefore, it's like, "If I can't read and write, what am I gonna do?". And so, I think that's holding them back (Participant #4).

According to this teacher, parents did not feel confident participating at school, because they assumed that their participation would require an ability to read and write (in English). This led to a feeling that parents who were not literate in English had little to contribute to the classroom:

A: Ok. Um, are there any other reasons you think parents might not want to participate in the classroom?

Participant #23: Um, I know for a fact that like some of my sister-in-laws and friends like, they feel uneducated.

A: Mhm.

Participant #23: Like, they're not schooled enough to come and help and to be there in the classroom, even if it's just to be there helping prep. homework or things like that. But, a lot of them feel uneducated, like they're not good enough to come teach a class or help in the classroom.

This teacher's comment reflects a belief that parents may feel uneducated and feel that they have little to contribute at the school, "like they're not good enough to come teach a class or help in the classroom." Such an attitude may lead parents to avoid school participation.

Overall, factors impacting parent participation reported by Hmong staff members include availability of childcare and transportation, work schedule, language skills, and confidence. Having access to childcare and transportation, as well as a flexible work schedule, was seen as a support to parent participation, while lacking these things was seen as a barrier to parent participation. Parents' limited English-language skills was viewed as contributing to their limited confidence in their ability to positively contribute to the classroom setting, in addition to limited education.

Encouraging parent participation. Staff members reflected on factors that may encourage parent participation in the future. Factors related to teacher-level and school-level change, and included an understanding of students' families, good communication, a welcoming environment, and manageable tasks for parent volunteers.

Understanding families. Both a teacher and the Hmong curriculum development coordinator/enrollment specialist indicated that having a better understanding of parents would

likely lead to increased parent participation at school. The Hmong curriculum development coordinator/enrollment specialist expressed the view that all parents think school is important:

I don't think there is a parent out there who would say, "I don't care about school, and I don't care about how my child does." I don't think there's a parent like that out there.

In this staff member's view, all parents care about their child's school success. However, they may have barriers (e.g., limited English-language skills, lack of childcare) that impede their participation at school. According to one teacher, understanding students' families may support their participation:

A: Okay. Is there anything I should know about students' families that could help me increase participation?

Participant #23: I think just their background and where they come from. Like whether they're...and plus like if they're struggling financially or not, I think that plays a big factor with it, too. Or, even like family sizes. Like if they have a small family or a big family. Ya know, that all factors into what they...how they participate, I guess. Yeah.

According to this teacher, understanding the supports or barriers that families face (e.g., if they're struggling financially or not) can help the teacher to support their participation in the classroom.

Communication. Staff members expressed the belief that teacher and school communication with families is key to increasing parent participation. Staff members had several suggestions for improving communication with parents. A teacher and the Hmong curriculum development coordinator/enrollment specialist both cited phone calls as a culturally appropriate means of contacting parents:

I would say, don't be afraid to ask them to come, even if they feel like they can't do anything. Don't be afraid to like invite them to come. Um, they are also good at like phone calls, like responding to phone calls instead of letters, because half our parents can't read. So, with the Hmong culture, um, this is gonna be interesting...like, written letters and notes, it's not as important as like making a phone call. And so, I don't know if you know this, but like a lot of parents don't have emails. Or like, they don't have text

messaging, just because they value more phone calls, like to talking to them, hearing their voices, hearing their words (Participant #4).

This teacher's comment reflects her understanding that phone calls are a highly valued form of communication in Hmong culture, because parents appreciate when teachers are "hearing their voices, hearing their words." Similarly, the Hmong curriculum development/enrollment specialist explained:

Participant #9: Newsletters would be good, and sometimes if it's really important, I just make that phone call.

A: Mhm.

Participant #9: Because when you call home to the parents, it means that it's important. So, whether it's good or bad, it's important. So, yeah.

While a class newsletter could be a beneficial form of communication with parents, this staff member articulates her belief that when something is really important, it is best to call parents on the telephone.

It may seem counterintuitive to suggest phone calls as a means of communication for an English-speaking teacher and Hmong-speaking parents. However, the Hmong curriculum development/enrollment specialist suggested:

I think the presence of a translator would definitely help support that barrier, and um, get across what the parent is trying to address to the translator. That way you understand where they're coming from, some of the difficulties, or how to implement strategies/skills that you might have that could work, um, at home with the students and the parents (Participant #9).

In this staff member's view, the presence of a translator could allow for better communication between parents and teachers by allowing teachers to understand where parents are "coming from," difficulties they might face, and also to make suggestions for strategies/skills parents can implement at home.

A teacher explained how she communicates with parents, and what she finds to be most helpful:

Mhm. Okay, well I know that at our school, we have a lot of events for parents. You know, like those Saturday events, like the Winter Festival and the Fall Festival. And ya know, we have those Honor's Day. So, I think that really encourages parents to want to be involved. Um, also like with conferences, too. You can explain to parents like what their child is at. I mean, sometimes conferences. Well, I shouldn't say sometimes. Conferences...during conferences, there can be good and bad reports. And I feel like the good reports also motivate parents. Like, "Oh, wow. My child is doing well, so I have to keep going, doing what I'm doing, so that he or she is on grade level or is advanced." Um, another thing is, um, I use that homework sheet to just to like with their box to see how they are doing, because I know some parents really like to check on that. And I have some parents call and ask why so-and-so is on this color, or like, during conferences. "I noticed that so-and-so is constantly on yellow. And so, can you help explain that to me?" (Participant #4).

This teacher finds that school-wide events, such as Winter Festival, encourage parents to be involved. She also expresses the belief that parent-teacher conferences are a good time to communicate with parents regarding their student's progress, and that they are especially encouraging for students who get "good reports." Additionally, this teacher explains that she sends home a list of students' daily homework with an area to record their behavior in terms of the "color" that they earned for the day according to the school-wide color-card behavior system (e.g., blue, yellow, red). Overall, suggestions for improving communication between the school and families included making phone calls home and the presence of a translator. School practices that already incite good parent-school communication that were reported include school-wide events, parent-teacher conferences, and daily homework/behavior sheets that are sent home.

Welcoming environment. Staff members explained that creating a welcoming environment for parents was central to parents' desire to come to school:

I think the environment and how welcome they feel, in terms of coming to the school and feeling like they're welcome to come and just participate or just to come and find out information (Participant #10).

According to this staff member, making parents feel that they are welcome to come to the school involves making them feel welcome to ask questions and to participate. A similar sentiment was reflected in another staff member's comment:

Some of the things I've seen from parents, um, at this school in particular, is that they like when they enter a building, and we make them feel welcomed. And I think it's not just for Hmong parents, I think that's any school. If I walk into a Hispanic school and the office staff is very friendly, I feel like, "Okay, this is a place where I belong" (Participant #9).

According to this staff member, all parents like to feel welcome at their child's school, including Hmong parents. One way of exhibiting a welcoming environment is by having an office staff that is "very friendly." According to this staff member, the school has already made many parents feel welcome by accommodating their needs:

Um, but I think [our school] has done a great job of providing accommodations. Home visits, extended staying until six o'clock just so we can meet with parents or help them with something. And so, I think with those um, advantages, parents are taking them, they're using them. They see that, "Okay, they really want me there, because they're making all these accommodations for me" (Participant #9).

By staying late so that parents are able to meet with their child's teacher and making home visits, this staff member expresses her belief that parents feel welcome and think that teachers and staff "really want me there." Overall, staff members agreed that a welcoming environment would lead to increased parent participation.

Manageable tasks. According to staff members, teachers could also make parents feel welcome by providing many different options for participation. Because some parents might feel self-conscious about their limited education or English-language skills, one teacher explained that teachers could make them feel welcome by ensuring them that participating in small ways is important:

I think even doing the littlest things, too. You know, letting them know if you come in, there's other things that you can do. Like, even if it's just reading one-on-one with your

child, or with another child, so it's not so intimidating for the parent to come. And making it very open and nothing judgmental or anything like that. Cause a lot of times I feel like parents are...they feel judged if they're not being asked or the way the teacher presents themselves and asks them, too [...] So yeah, just being very humble about it and very...I don't know...more, I guess like how I was just saying, like giving them tasks they can, that they think...that they can do. I guess you could say (Participant #23).

Rather than making parents feel intimidated by the school setting, this teacher explains that teachers can be humble and let parents know that they are not judging them. Additionally, teachers can provide “smaller” tasks that parents feel they can accomplish. The Hmong curriculum development/enrollment specialist suggested a similar way of capitalizing on parents' strengths:

Well, maybe do a needs assessment of how they can help you in the classroom. So, maybe some parents, they might be better at providing food, or maybe chaperoning if they feel like they have enough skills to communicate back-and-forth. Um, some of them, maybe they can make things at home. Some of the parents might have sewing machines. If you need caddies, they could probably make that for you. So, I guess it depends what kind of support you want from the parents. Is it academic involvement? Or, is it just anything you can provide would really help me. And these are some of the things that you can do or help with in our classroom. So, I would say, lay out what are the goals of the involvement, and then they can assess and say, “Okay, I can help with that.” And then maybe event take like an interest survey of their skills and what they're good at, so they can help you, too (Participant #9).

Instead of expecting a one-size-fits-all form of parent participation, this staff member explains that some parents will feel more welcome if they can use their strengths in the classroom. For example, some parents might feel more comfortable sewing something than reading a book to the class. Similarly, some parents might prefer to chaperone a field trip than sew something. By offering parents options and perhaps even conducting a needs assessment or interest survey, this staff member suggests teachers can increase parent participation. Overall, staff members suggested that providing parents the opportunity to participate in many different ways would be beneficial to parent participation.

Conclusion

This study illuminates several aspects of students' HLEs as well as barriers to parent participation in the classroom. Regarding HLEs, children most frequently read alone, with a parent, with a sibling, or in collaboration with both a parent and a sibling at home. A majority of parents who spoke Hmong as their preferred language also employed the assistance of older siblings to help their younger children read. This finding may have important implications for future research and school practice, as discussed in the next chapter. Children read a variety of text-types at home, including: homework books, storybooks, cartoon books, short stories, chapter books, the Bible, internet articles, and other books found at the library or Good Will. However, children whose parents spoke Hmong as their preferred language often only had homework books available to them at home. Parent access to texts will be discussed further in the next section. Stories read at home also came from a variety of sources, including: school, home, the Internet, library, and Good Will. Again, parents speaking Hmong as their preferred language most frequently reported that school was the only source of stories for their child. Most children read at home every night. Texts were most frequently selected by the school (when homework books were the only text-type available), in addition to books chosen by children and adults. Several parents indicated that their children struggled with reading motivation. As discussed in the next chapter, children's limited text-choice may be related to reading motivation.

Children conversed with their parents about a variety of topics, including: school, child behavior, family, friends, and child interests. Literacy was important to all parents. Most parents read for their jobs and to complete basic daily tasks, rather than for enjoyment. Parents often understood the importance of their child's literacy as tied to their own schooling experiences. Parents expressed that reading is primarily important for their children's future success, career

success, and basic life skills. A majority of parents told their children oral stories, with topics such as: stories relating to parents' past, make-believe stories, and stories parents were told as children. When parents reported that they did not tell oral stories to their children, it was often because they believed their children were too young to hear them or because they could not remember the stories.

Analysis of relationships and patterns between home literacy practices and student performance on the QRI-5 and MAP Reading assessments revealed several emerging patterns. Parents across all three groups indicated that children most frequently read school-selected texts or selected their own reading material; adults did not choose children's reading material. Oral storytelling was a strong strand across all three groups throughout my analysis; however, oral storytelling did not present a clear relationship to progress on reading assessments. Further, there was variation in who read with children at home (e.g., parent, older sibling, or combination). These relationships need to be investigated further with a larger sample size to draw reliable conclusions.

The most common reasons parents indicated that they were unable to participate in the multicultural literacy unit because of their work schedules, limited access to transportation, and shyness. Interviews with Hmong staff members supplemented parent responses by providing an additional picture of supports and challenges facing parent participants. Staff members viewed parent participation as central to students' success. They believed that the presence or lack of childcare, work schedule flexibility, transportation, English-language skills, and parent confidence impacted parents' ability to volunteer at school. In order to facilitate increased parent participation, Hmong staff members suggested gaining a better understanding of students' families (i.e., understanding background, barriers to participation they may face), employing

culturally responsive forms of communication (e.g., phone calls), and providing a welcoming environment, as well as manageable tasks that parents could feel confident completing. These recommendations will be analyzed in the next chapter, as they relate to future research and practice.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Few studies of students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs) have investigated the home literacy practices of a particular school community in-depth. Further, research on Hmong American students' HLEs is limited. This study employed mixed-methods to explore three questions: (a) What is the nature of students' Home Literacy Environments (HLEs)?, (b) What is the relationship between students' home literacy practices and their reading achievement data?, and (c) What are barriers and supports to parent participation in the classroom? Research methods include parent and staff interviews, parent responses, and analysis of reading achievement data from the 2014-2015 school year in relation to students' home literacy practices. Three primary findings emerged from the data and will be discussed in this chapter: (a) nature of students' HLEs, (b) emerging patterns between students' home literacy practices and progress on reading assessments, and (c) barriers and supports affecting parent participation.

Nature of Students' HLEs

In contrast to previous studies of child reading motivation and HLEs that surveyed a large number of participants (see Baker & Scher, 2002; Brown & Byrnes, 2013; Mata, 2011), this study employed semi-structured interviews of a small number of parents to explore the nature of their HLEs in-depth. While some parent interviews conducted for this study were more extensive than others, several themes emerged across the interviews in relation to students' HLEs.

Older siblings help with reading. Although parent interview data indicate that children most frequently read with an adult at home, six parents also explained that their children read with an older sibling at home. In fact, all parents who spoke Hmong as their preferred language reported that their child reads with an older sibling at home. This reading process was sometimes collaborative, involving both parent and older sibling support of the child reading.

This finding adds to the body of literature surrounding young children's reading motivation and HLEs (Brown & Byrnes, 2013; Mata, 2011). Such studies investigate the role that parents play in students' literacy acquisition at home but fail to explore the role that other family members and adults may play in the home. This finding of the current study echoes a finding of Baker and Scher's (2002) study, which showed that children from low-income households are more likely to experience shared reading with another child than with an adult. In a related study, Munsterman and Sonnenschein (2002) found that the quality of reading was poorer when shared with an older sibling rather than an adult, which may have important implications for the present student population, as discussed later in this chapter. This finding also extends the knowledge base on HLEs of first- and second-generation immigrant families (Eppie, Farver, Lonigan, & Xu, 2013; Iddings, 2009; Gallimore & Reese, 2000), and particularly the limited research on Hmong American families' HLEs (Kirton & Trueba, 1990; Lor, 2012).

A majority of students' reading material comes from school. While every parent reported that his or her child reads every night, parent interview data indicate that most students read books assigned by the school. These books were either Open Court decodable books (McGraw-Hill, 2015) or leveled books from Reading A-Z (fiction or non-fiction) ("Leveled Books," n.d.). Five parents indicated that school-assigned books were the only reading material at home. Four out of five of these parents spoke Hmong as their preferred language. While research has shown that reading on-level texts supports students' literacy acquisition (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), school assigned texts limit students' choice of books. This is significant, given that child book selection may be connected to child reading motivation, which has important implications for inter-generational transmission of literacy (Burns et al., 1998) and is particularly important for early readers (Csitzkzentmihalyi, 1991).

The finding that a majority of students' reading material were basic skill books from school is consistent with Baker and Scher's (2002) study, which found that basic skill books are more likely to be found in low-income households than in middle-income households. Research has shown that young children's reading motivation can be negatively impacted when they interact with basic skill books alone (Baker & Scher, 2002). Significantly, the National Association for the Education of Young Children has recommended that preschool age children and children in the primary grades should engage in activities that "make academic content meaningful and build on prior learning" rather than focusing on isolated skills (NAEYC, 1998). Thus, this finding has implications for school-level practice, as discussed below.

This finding also connects to the body of research surrounding low-income communities' access to books (Constantino, Krashen, & Smith, 1996; Krashen, 1996, 1998; Madrigal, 2005). Constantino et al. (1996) found that there are great disparities between library access between low-income and high-income communities. This is relevant to my findings, given that 73.7% of the school population was considered economically disadvantaged at the time of study. Claude Goldenberg (1989) built on Constantino et al.'s (1996) findings and determined that in the homes of Latino children from low-income backgrounds, families only had zero to four books in their households. Such limited access to books may result in poor academic achievement, avoidance of reading, and limited exposure and understanding of print (Neuman, 2001). Yet, research has shown that low-income communities take advantage of increased access to texts when they are given adequate supports, a finding that contests deficit-based framings of low-income communities (Madrigal, 2005).

Students struggle with reading motivation. Perhaps related to limited access to a variety of text-types, several parents reported that their children struggle with reading

motivation. Parent interview data indicate that several children avoided reading at home because they would rather be doing something else (e.g., playing games, watching TV) or had difficulty concentrating.

This finding may be connected to families' limited access to a variety of texts, particularly those families with parents who spoke Hmong as their preferred language. This is important to note when considering past research that has shown a connection between limited exposure to a variety of text-types and difficulties with child reading motivation (Baker & Scher, 2002). This finding relates to studies of child reading motivation and HLEs, which have found that reading motivation remains relatively consistent across sociocultural groups (Baker & Scher, 2002; DeBaryshe, 1995; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986).

While I found that parents struggled with limited child reading motivation, it is important to note that previous studies have found that what parents say and do is a stronger indicator of child reading motivation than sociocultural background (Baker & Scher, 2002; DeBaryshe, 1995; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Neuman, 1986). Further, although immigrant students generally perform less well than their native counterparts on standardized tests, they tend to have greater academic motivation (Christensen, Segeritz, & Stanat, 2010). These studies rule out cultural and deficit-based explanations for limited child reading motivation.

Parent beliefs about literacy. Parent interview data indicate that all parents believe literacy is important for themselves and for their children. This is evident in parent reports that their children read at home every evening. A majority of parents explained that they believe reading and writing is important for their jobs and daily interactions, while only a few parents expressed an interest in reading for pleasure. Even among these parents, their busy schedules made it difficult for them to read with frequency.

Similar to Leslie Reese's (2000) study of immigrant Latino's HLEs, I found that parent participants often expressed hopes for their children in light of their own experiences with reading and writing when speaking about the importance of literacy for their children. Several parents expressed regret about their past choices or inability to become literate in English or in Hmong. Parents viewed literacy as important for their children's future success, career success, and basic life skills.

Parental beliefs about literacy are important when considering that what parents believe literacy is and does can have important implications for how they structure literacy experiences for their children (Reese, 2000). While research has shown that children who engage in literacy-relevant activities at home are likely to have greater literacy success in the future (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 2001; McGillivray, Rowe, & Yaden, 2000), less research has been conducted on the effect of parents' beliefs about literacy (Baker & Scher, 2002). Yet, Baker and Scher (2002) and Burns et al. (1998) have shown that parents who read for pleasure may convey a positive attitude toward reading to their children, perhaps leading them to become intrinsically motivated readers. This provides a challenge for immigrant families, who may not possess the English literacy skills to "read for pleasure," and may also face significant obstacles (e.g., work schedule, economic pressures) to spending time at home reading with their children.

Oral storytelling. A majority of parents reported telling oral stories to their children at home. However, oral storytelling was less routine than reading, because it was more situational (i.e., rather than having a set time for oral storytelling, stories were told as a given topic arose). Topics for oral stories included stories related to parents' past, make-believe stories, and stories parents were told as children. When parents did not tell oral stories, it was often because they thought their children were too young to hear them or had forgotten the stories themselves. It

was difficult to discern why parents thought their children were too young to hear oral stories. Because many of these students' families have experienced war, parents may have avoided telling violent stories to their children at such a young age.

Similar to Guadalupe Valdés' (1996) study of Mexican immigrant families' home literacy practices, my research shows that Hmong American parents value oral storytelling. However, in contrast to the participants in Valdés' study, participants in the current study read texts to their children with frequency, suggesting that they do not believe formal education is the job of the teacher and school alone. In connection with Reese's (2000) study of immigrant Latinos, I found that parents were adaptive to American cultural norms and values. While parents told oral stories, which are central to traditional Hmong culture, they also read texts to their children, which is increasingly emphasized by research on early literacy experiences of young children and the American school system, broadly speaking.

Parent-child talk. While not the central focus of my study, it is worth noting that a majority of parents reported talking with their children about behavior and homework. This may be reflective of values these parents hold about discipline and schoolwork. However, it could also be indicative of what parents believe is valued by the school and myself. My positionality as teacher in this study made this finding difficult to analyze, but this finding provides a starting point for future research.

Emerging Patterns Between Students' HLEs and Reading Achievement Data

Analysis of potential relationships and patterns between home literacy practices and progress on the QRI-5 and MAP during the 2014-2015 school year revealed several emerging patterns. Parents across all three groups (above average, average, and below average) indicated that their children primarily read school-selected texts or selected their own reading material;

adults did not make these choices. Oral storytelling was a strong strand across all three groups of students. However, oral storytelling did not translate to a clear relationship with progress on reading assessments. There was variation across all three groups with regards to who reads with children at home (e.g., older sibling, parent, or combination). These relationships need to be investigated further with a larger sample size to draw reliable conclusions.

As discussed above, child book selection has been connected to high levels of child reading motivation (Bang-Jensen, 2010; Bauserman & Edmunds, 2006; Guthrie, Hoa, Perencevich, Tonks, Wigfield, 2006). Thus, the finding of the current study that adult participants rarely select children's reading material is important. Yet, because a majority of parents reported that their children reading school-selected reading material (i.e., leveled reading and basic skill books), this finding may have negative implications for child reading motivation (Baker & Scher, 2002). These findings are relevant to Charles and Coles-Ritchie's (2011) work, which argues that school assessments do not often reflect students' funds of knowledge. Like the participants in Charles and Coles-Ritchie's (2011) study, my participants practiced literacy activities that are central to their culture but are not reflected in school assessment. The prevalence of oral storytelling in participants' homes also connects to Valdés' (1996) work with immigrant families in Mexico. Similar to my study, Valdés (1996) found that while parents did not engage in reading activities that were recognized as valuable by their school, they engaged in meaningful and culturally specific literacy activities at home (e.g., oral storytelling).

Factors Impacting Parent Participation In School

Through parent responses and interviews with Hmong staff members, I found several factors that create supports and barriers to parent participation, including work schedule, availability of child care and transportation, language abilities, and confidence. Further, staff

members had many suggestions for improving parent participation in the future, including developing an understanding of students' families, communicating in culturally relevant ways (e.g., making phone calls rather than sending written notes), creating a welcoming environment for families, and providing parents with opportunities to participate in numerous ways (i.e., not a "one-size-fits-all" form of parent participation).

My findings about barriers to parent participation created by work schedules is consistent with research by Chin and Newman (2003). Further, this research corroborates previous studies on parent participation, which have found that parents' inability to participate in school is rarely a sign of lack of interest, and is more often due to misunderstandings due to language barriers, cultural beliefs, financial issues, and prior negative experiences with school (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2003; Ogbu, 1982; Valdés, 1996). While immigrant families have historically had poor attendance at school events and limited access to school resources, this is likely because they are unfamiliar with the American school system (Children Now, 2004; Lee, 2005).

Strengths and Limitations

It is important to discuss the strengths and limitations of this study. This study adds to the body of knowledge surrounding Hmong American students' HLEs, an area of limited research. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with parents and Hmong American staff members allowed me to elicit stories and explanations from participants, particularly those who spoke English as a first language. Thus, students' HLEs and parent participation were analyzed from the viewpoint of parents and staff members. Reading achievement data were analyzed in relation to codes found in parent interviews, which allowed my analysis to emerge from the data and ensured that codes were relevant. Finally, because of my position as teacher, I was able to use the

relationships I had developed and my understanding of the school context to collect and analyze the data.

This study had several limitations. First, the number of parent and staff participants was small. While the purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of a small number of students' HLEs, a study with a larger sample could have yielded more statistically significant findings. Further, a larger sample size may have revealed variation across households, in terms of home literacy strategies practiced outside of school, other responsibilities held by parents (e.g., work, child care), and child age and ability. Additionally, interviews with more staff members could have provided greater depth to my findings about factors impacting parent involvement.

My positionality as a teacher and ethnic outsider may have affected parents' responses. While my position as a teacher in the school gave me insight into the school context, it may have also contributed to an unequal power dynamic between myself and my participants. For example, although I ensured parents that I was not evaluating them or their answers to my interview questions, they may have still tried to answer in ways they thought I would see as desirable. For example, parents may have over-reported the amount that they read to their children because they thought I would see this as desirable. Further, while my status as ethnic outsider may have drawn my attention to cultural aspects taken for granted by ethnic insiders, it also may have limited my understanding of participants' responses and contexts. A study of Hmong American students' HLEs by a native researcher may have provided more insight into the Hmong American context as it relates to literacy practices and parent participation.

Data were primarily collected through interviews. These were effective in revealing variation in home literacy practices across households. However, in retrospect, an additional

parent survey may have provided more comparable quantitative data. These data would have been useful when exploring relationships between home literacy practices and student achievement data, as home literacy practices would have been more defined. For example, if parents had to choose whether their children primarily read by themselves, with an adult, with a sibling, or another reader on a survey, this may have provided a clearer analysis of *who reads* in relation to student achievement data.

Interviews with parents who spoke Hmong as their preferred language were generally shorter than interviews in English. The Hmong translator may have summarized parent responses in interviews, which may have led to less detailed accounts for interviews in Hmong. Further, some terms related to literacy may have been difficult to translate into Hmong, which could have confused some parents. Thus, the voices of parents who speak Hmong as their preferred language were not heard as clearly as English speaking parents in this study. Future interviews conducted by Hmong speaking researchers could serve to elevate the voices of Hmong speaking parents.

The implications of my analysis of student reading achievement data and home literacy practices is limited, given the other factors that could have affected student progress on reading assessments (e.g., learning in school, students' beginning reading level, differing levels of ability). While descriptive statistics were used, it was not possible to identify significant relationships given the small sample size. Further, interview codes did not always isolate a particular home literacy practice that could be compared to reading achievement data (i.e., a parent might have described a collaborative process in which both he and an older sibling read with the child). Thus, a survey may have been useful in having parents identify which reading

activities they practiced at home and with what frequency (i.e. identifying whether they read with their children more often than they read with an older sibling).

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study provide a springboard for future research. A study that includes parents of children in other classes would control for teacher effect on student achievement data and parent engagement. Further, research on a larger number of staff and parents would provide insight into the HLEs of a more diverse group of learners; however, such a study would require consent from more participants. Gaining consent from participants in this study required developing close relationships with parents, which may be difficult for a future researcher who is an “outsider” to the school and Hmong community. Additionally, such a study may require more researchers, due to the time consuming nature of in-depth interviews.

Research by a native Hmong-speaker could provide important insights on this topic. A native Hmong researcher may have more insight into the Hmong American community and context that could illuminate aspects of families’ HLEs and parent participation. Further, a researcher with Hmong language skills might be able to better understand, translate, and analyze interviews with Hmong speaking parents. While a native researcher may have unique understandings of her community, she would have to be careful to “check” her insider status. For example, she might engage in “member checks,” consultation with colleagues about emergent findings, or searches for disconfirming evidence.

A study that includes parent surveys in addition to semi-structured interviews may provide more comparable answers that could make comparisons of survey data to home literacy practices more straightforward, while still allowing for the depth and contradictions to come through in interviews. If a similar study were to include a survey, it would be important to allow

parent participants more than one option for their answers, since many parents explained that they partake in a variety of literacy activities with their children at home (e.g., child reads alone, with a sibling, and with an adult).

Given my findings about the role older siblings played in the reading process, it is important that future studies research the role that older siblings play in the education of their younger siblings, especially in Hmong American communities. Such studies could examine families with and without older siblings, in order to explore literacy practices of children without older siblings. While older siblings are likely integral to the education of many first- and second-generation immigrant children, future research should also explore how these responsibilities affect the older siblings. If these older siblings already have their own homework and responsibilities, helping their younger siblings may place an extra burden on them.

Because I found that most parents reported reading books sent home from school, more research on immigrant families' access to texts outside of school is important. Studies such as Madrigal's (2005) research on immigrant families' participation in a preschool literacy program could provide important insight into the supports needed to provide all families with equitable access to literacy-rich environments for their children. Future studies could investigate places where immigrant and Hmong families already have access to children's texts, and how such efforts can be bolstered to provide wider access to a variety of types of reading material.

Given my findings about parent participation, it is important that researchers consider the role schools play in fostering positive home-school relationships. For example, my findings about barriers to parent participation indicate that there are several obstacles to Hmong American parents' participation in traditional U.S. formats (i.e., involving their physical presence during school hours). Further, staff members' suggestions about ways of improving parent participation

could provide an area of future research. Researchers could explore schools that implement positive strategies for supporting culturally relevant forms of participation with Hmong American parents, including providing parents and other adult family members with manageable tasks that they feel confident performing. Such research could provide a window into how such forms of parent participation function, and how they are able (or unable) to improve parent involvement in schools.

While not investigated in great detail in the present study, my findings about parent-child talk could provide an interesting area for future research. Most parent participants reported that they talk with their children about school, homework, and behavior. As stated previously, this finding could be indicative of familial or cultural values about schoolwork and discipline; however, they could also be reflective of what parents believe the teacher or school values. Thus, future research could explore the relationship between parent-child talk, other home literacy practices, and/or school and classroom culture.

Implications for Future Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for teacher and school practice. First, students' and parents' process of completing homework and assigned reading at home is significant to teacher and school practice. Several parents mentioned that homework in other subjects created a barrier to reading at home. For example, one parent mentioned that if his child had math homework (i.e., a worksheet), then he might read for less time with his child at home that night. Further, several parents' descriptions of the process of reading at home and completing other homework seemed exhausting for both children and parents. The homework process seemed particularly harmful for those parents who worked late hours and did not start homework with their children until they returned home late at night. Therefore, it is reasonable to

conclude that many students and parents were losing sleep in order to complete the assigned homework and reading each night. Given these findings, it is important that schools and teachers reconsider the amount of homework they assign each night and the value of assigning any homework at all. As Kohn (2006) points out, the costs of homework (e.g., stress and conflict) often outweigh the benefits, as homework often does not reinforce learning or improve achievement.

While homework has generally proven to be ineffective (Kohn, 2006), literacy-rich home environments have been shown to improve students' literacy outcomes (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 2001; McGillivray et al., 2000). Thus, my findings about families' limited access to a variety of text-types are important to examine in relation to teacher and school practice. If families are primarily reading school-assigned texts with their children, and all parents reported that their children read every night, this provides a powerful opportunity for schools to positively impact students' HLEs by providing them with rich texts. While the leveled books assigned by the school are important to student's literacy acquisition (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), it is also important that children are given the ability to choose their own texts, as child interest and book selection has been shown to be related to child reading motivation (Bang-Jensen, 2010; Bauserman & Edmunds, 2006; Guthrie et al., 2006). Thus, the school might consider providing each student a leveled reading and a high-interest reading (chosen by the student) to read each evening at home.

The issue of "who reads" with the child at home is important to teacher and school practice, particularly given the present participant population. Many of my participants did not read in English, and thus employed the help of older siblings to help their younger children read at home. While this shows that families value reading and provide support for their children's

reading, students also need scaffolding from a more experienced reader. Research has shown that the reading that takes place with an older sibling is often of lower quality than reading with an adult (Munsterman & Sonnenschein, 2002), and the responsibility of reading with younger siblings each night could place an extra burden on older siblings. Thus, it is important that teachers and schools consider the type of reading support that they are providing to families, and particularly the support they are giving to parents who do not read in English. Support for families could include an after school tutoring program. However, if school resources for tutoring are limited, schools might choose to focus on those students whose parents do not speak English and also do not have older siblings, as they may be at the highest risk for encountering literacy difficulties.

My findings about oral storytelling are also important to school and teacher practice. In particular, this study shows that parents support their children's literacy in important ways, including telling oral stories. Yet, there is not a clear relationship between oral storytelling and student progress on assessments. As Charles and Coles-Ritchie (2011) argue in their study, this could have important implications for the ways that schools measure student achievement. While traditional assessments often privilege dominant funds of knowledge, more culturally relevant assessments could be designed to measure literacy practices of Hmong American children.

The findings about parent participation also have important implications for teachers and schools. More specifically, it is important for teachers and schools to be cognizant of the barriers parents may face with regards to traditional participation (i.e., participation requiring parents' physical presence in the school). Work schedules, transportation, and child care are all factors that teachers and schools must keep in mind when asking parents to participate in school. Perhaps most importantly, open lines of communication must be strong in order for schools to

foster positive home-school relationships. As suggested by two of my Hmong American staff participants, phone calls are important for good communication and may be valued by Hmong American parents more than other forms of communication, such as written notes or letters.

Further, schools and teachers should broaden their notions of parent participation. Because many low-income and immigrant parents face barriers to participation, not all parents will be able to participate with their physical presence at school. Teachers and schools should find alternative ways for such parents to be involved with their children's education, keeping in mind that they may have added stressors due to long work hours and financial instability. Additionally, when parents are able to physically participate during school hours, teachers and schools should consider "participation" in a broad manner. For example, rather than expecting all parents to be willing to read a story to the class, teachers and schools should allow parents to choose how they would like to participate. Some parents may feel more comfortable making something for the class, tutoring a student one-on-one, or helping with other individualized tasks. Providing a needs assessment was one suggestion made by a Hmong American staff participant that could provide parents with an opportunity to communicate individualized ways they would like to participate. Finally, it is important that teachers and schools provide welcoming environments for parents and families. If parents feel self-conscious about their language skills and feel they have little to offer to their children's education, then they are unlikely to participate at school.

Conclusion

The findings of this study add to the body of research surrounding young children's HLEs and parent participation in urban settings. These findings are particularly important given the limited research on such topics in Hmong American contexts. This research has several

implications for policy and practice, including suggestions for school homework policies and support for non-English speaking families. My findings support the need for a broader understanding of parent participation and for culturally relevant modes of home-school communication and parent participation at school. Future research could build on the qualitative data in this study by including a larger sample and survey data.

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Appendix A

DATA COLLECTION FORMS

Parent Semi-Structured Interview for HLE

Introduction: *Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.*

1. When you think about literacy, what does it mean to you?
2. What types of activities constitute literacy? When you hear or think about literacy, what do you think of?
3. When you talk with _____ (child's name) at home, what types of things do you talk about?
4. Do you tell stories to your child? What stories do you tell? Where do your stories come from? (Your childhood? Other family members?)
5. Do you read to your child? How often? What do you read?
6. Is literacy important to you? Why is literacy important to you?
7. Why do you think literacy is important for your child?

Staff Semi-Structured Interview Protocol for Parent Involvement in School

Introduction: *Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.*

1. What factors may impact a parents' decision to participate in their child's school or classroom? When parents are able to volunteer, why are they able? When parents are not able to come in and volunteer, why are they not able?
2. Are there any other reasons you think parents might not want to participate in the classroom?
3. Is there anything I should know about my students' families that could help me increase parent participation?
4. How do you encourage parent involvement in your students' academics?

Appendix B

DEFINITIONS FOR CODING INTERVIEW DATA RELATED TO HLES

ASR Adult Self-Reflection: quotes in which the adult reflects on **her or his own school experiences and experiences or motivations as a child or adult**. Examples:

- Adult reflects on self
- Adult reflects on degree to which she or he was challenged in school
- Adult reflects on degree to which she or he was interested in what she or he read in school
- Adult reflects on degree to which she or he was interested in what she or he read at home
- Adult reflects on degree to which her or his own parents liked reading
- Adult reflects on types of books read as a child

B Behavior: quotes in which the adult reflects on the **behavior of her or his child**. Examples:

- Parent reflects on school behavior system (e.g., color card system)
- Parent reflects on misunderstandings about child behavior
- Parent reflects on how child acts at school
- Parent reflects on how child acts at home
- Parent reflects on how child acts like a “child” or like an “adult”

BOS Barriers to Oral Storytelling: quotes in which the adult reflects on **factors that may impede storytelling in the home literacy environment**. Examples:

- Adult cannot remember stories
- Lack of time
- Lack of child interest
- Pressure to read rather than tell oral stories
- Child is too young
- Child cannot understand stories
- Child is too old
- Opportunity does not arise

BR Barriers to Reading: quotes in which the adult reflects on **factors that may impeded her or his child from reading other than lack of child reading motivation**

. Examples:

- Lack of child care
- Demands of younger siblings
- Difficulties with transportation
- Lack of time
- Language barrier
- Work
- Child has difficulty paying attention
- Books are too difficult for child

BS Book Selection: quotes in which the adult reflects on **how he or she (or the child) chooses books for the child to read.** Examples:

- Adult chooses books
- Adult chooses books she/he thinks will challenge the child
- Adult chooses books she/he thinks the child will enjoy
- Child chooses books
- Child chooses books based on cover

CRM Child Reading Motivation: quotes in which the adult reflects on **what does or does not motivate her or his child to read.** Examples:

- Child is interested in book
- Child likes the cover of the book
- Child sees older sibling reading
- Child would rather do something else

FR Frequency of Reading: quotes in which the adult reflects on the **how often the child reads.** Examples:

- Every night
- Once a week
- As often as we can

HR How Long We Read: quotes in which the adult reflects on **the length of time the child reads.** Examples:

- 2 hours
- 20 minutes
- As long as we can

OS Oral Storytelling: quotes in which the adult reflects on the way that **oral storytelling is incorporated into the home reading environment.** Examples:

- Adult makes up stories with her/his child as a character.
- Adult tells stories from her/his past.
- Adult tells stories that she/he was told as a child.
- Adult tells stories from real life.
- Adult and child make up stories together.

PCT Parent-Child Talk: quotes in which the adult reflects on **what she or he talks to her or his child about.** Examples:

- Child interests
- Toys
- Family
- Friends
- School

- Something the child did
- About parents when they were little

SS Sources of Stories: quotes in which the adult reflects on **where the stories come from that her or his child reads.** Examples:

- School/Classroom
- Library
- Home
- Good Will
- Technology (e.g., Ipad/Ipad apps)

SR Supports for Reading: quotes in which the adult reflects on **factors that reinforce her or his child's reading.** Examples:

- Availability of books

WVER Why We Read: quotes in which the adult reflects on the **purposes of reading.**

Examples:

- For future success
- For career success
- For college access/success
- For adult success
- For enjoyment
- For creativity
- For independence
- For benefit of community
- To help others
- So children can be more successful than their parents
- To be able to read well
- To be able to spell well
- For success in every day life

WWR What We Read: quotes in which the adult reflects on the **types of literature read at home.** Examples:

- Storybooks
- ABC books
- Decodable books
- Non-fiction books
- Library books

WR Who Reads: quotes in which the adult reflects on **who reads with the child at home.**

Examples:

- Parent reads with the child at home
- Parents sit with child while child reads
- Other family member reads with the child at home

- Older siblings read with the child at home
- Child reads by her/himself at home
- Someone helps child sound out words
- Child points to words and parent helps
- Parent points to words and child help

DEFINITIONS FOR CODING INTERVIEW DATA RELATED TO PARENT PARTICIPATION

BPI Barriers to Parent Involvement: quotes in which the adult reflects on **factors that may impeded parental involvement at school**. Examples:

- Lack of child care
- Demands of younger siblings
- Difficulties with transportation
- Lack of time
- Language barrier
- Work demands
- Feeling unwelcome
- Feeling unhelpful
- Feeling self-conscious about language skills
- Feeling self-conscious about reading skills
- Feeling self-conscious about speaking skills
- Feeling like they have little to contribute

CP Contact with Parents: quotes in which the staff member reflects on **his or her own modes of communication with parents**. Examples:

- Staff member communicates with parents through homework recording sheet
- Staff member communicates with parents at parent-teacher conferences
- Staff member communicates with parents at school events (e.g., Hmong New Year)

RPI Reasons for Parent Involvement: quotes in which the staff member reflects on **reasons parents are involved or should be involved at school**. Examples:

- Desire to curriculum
- Desire to see child at school
- Desire more advanced students and what they are capable of
- Desire to observe child behavior
- Desire be helpful
- Desire to advocate for child
- Feel helpful
- Feel welcome
- Feel like they have something to contribute
- Feel like their language skills are adequate
- Feel like their reading skills are adequate
- Feel like their speaking skills are adequate
- Presence of a translator
- Presence of accommodations
- Good communication with school
 - Newsletters
 - Phone calls home
- Use of needs assessment

- Staff provide specific tasks according to parents' specific interests
- Presence of child care

Appendix C

DEFINITIONS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS OF HOME LITERACY PRACTICES AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

BS Book Selection: quotes in which the adult reflects on **who chooses books for the child to read**. Examples:

- Adult chooses books
- Child chooses books

CRM Child Reading Motivation: quotes in which the adult reflects on **what does or does not motivate her or his child to read**. Examples:

- Child is interested in book
- Child likes the cover of the book
- Child sees older sibling reading
- Child would rather do something else

HR How Long We Read: quotes in which the adult reflects on **the length of time the child reads**. Examples:

- 2 hours
- 20 minutes
- As long as we can

NT Number of Times: quotes in which the adult reflects on **number of times the story is read** in a given sitting. Examples:

- 1 time
- 2 times
- 3 times

OS Oral Storytelling: quotes in which the adult reflects on whether or not oral storytelling is a home literacy practice in his or her household. Examples:

- Oral storytelling is a home literacy practice in the household.
- Oral storytelling is not a home literacy practice in the household.

OST Oral Storytelling Topics: quotes in which the adult reflects on topics of oral stories. Examples:

- Make-believe stories
- Stories about parents' past

PCT Parent-Child Talk: quotes in which the adult reflects on **what she or he talks to her or his child about**. Examples:

- Child interests
- Toys

- Family
- Friends
- School
- Something the child did
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- Parent points to words and child helps

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- For creativity

- For independence
- For benefit of community
- To help others
- So children can be more successful than their parents
- To be able to read well
- To be able to spell well
- For success in every day life