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EMERGING LITERACY AND FAMILY RITUALS

by

Melanie Williamson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development

Approved:

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Utah State University
Logan, Utah

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ABSTRACT

Emerging Literacy and Family Rituals

by

Melanie Williamson, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2008

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Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

The purpose of this study was to extend the research on children's early literacy development by examining the practice of daily family rituals. The assumption was that the predictability and affective meaning that rituals provide would create an environment that fosters the development of literacy skills and motivation to learn. Measures included the PALS Prek, PPVT-III, and Family Ritual Questionnaire. Although there were no significant positive relationships between regular family rituals such as dinnertime and reading aloud practices and literacy outcomes, negative correlations were found between the assignment of roles on weekends, the routine of vacations, mother's work hours, and children's literacy scores. These findings may indicate some inflexibility among family members and not enough time spent in a variety of spontaneous literacy-building activities.

(77 pages)

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Melanie Williamson

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The reading abilities of children in America have long been a concern among educators (Rush, 1999). Many would agree that this interest in literacy is one of the highest priorities among legislators, administrators, teachers, and others (Faires, Nichols, & Rickelman, 2000). However, despite the interest, educators have seen an increasing number of children failing to demonstrate sufficient basic reading skills (Rush). Although much of the responsibility has fallen upon teachers and educators, research has shown that literacy development is a dynamic process that occurs early in life. Many educators would agree that early literacy is a prerequisite for school success (Wright, Diener, & Kay, 2000)

The International Reading Association [IRA] and The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC; 1998) have stated that one of the best predictors of whether a child will be successful in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level to which the child has progressed in reading and writing. Even before children begin formal instruction, they exhibit differences that tend to be stable over time and reflect divisions in our society (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001). In essence, early literacy development is a key foundation for children's success not only in school, but throughout their lives. As such, it is important to study how children acquire these skills.

Family rituals, which are highly valued, symbolic social activities that occur within the family (Shuck & Bucy, 1997), are thought to create a sense of belonging that fosters child adjustment (Fiese & Marjinsky, 1999). As such, family rituals may have promise for supporting the development of early literacy skills.

Development of early literacy skills can be seen as the result of children's involvement in reading activities with others who are more literate (Teale, 1982). This reflects Vygotsky's theory of development that suggests that all knowledge is derived from social contexts. Social experience shapes the ways of thinking and interpreting the world for individuals and children. The Vygotskian view is that thinking is not confined to the individual mind, but it extends to other persons as well (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Thus, early social interaction with language and reading activities is essential to children's literacy development. Literacy experiences not only teach children the functions of reading, but they also connect reading with enjoyment that increase children's desire to participate in literacy activities (Morrow, 1999).

Because children acquire important literacy skills beginning at birth (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001), parents and early home environments have a large influence on children's achievement. DeBaryshe, Binder, and Buell (2000) believe that the home environment is particularly important in the development of such skills because children have opportunities at home to become familiar with literacy materials, to interact in reading activities with family, and to observe literacy activities of others.

Family rituals may provide some of these types of opportunities for children to engage in literacy activities and may also provide a stable environment where learning can flourish. Family rituals are repetitious, symbolic social activities that provide

organization to the family and allow the family to transmit its goals and values (Shuck & Bucy, 1997). Family rituals occur in many different settings. The most relevant to this study are patterned, daily rituals. These occur on a regular basis and are the least consciously planned (e.g., dinnertime, bedtime rituals). Family rituals, however, can be distinguished from family routines which include repetitious family interactions, but which lack the symbolic and affective meaning that rituals provide. While routines may provide structure to the family, rituals may provide the stability, warmth, and belonging that foster literacy development and motivation. Family rituals can also be viewed through several dimensions. Fiese and Kline (1993) have proposed eight different dimensions that are central to family rituals. These include occurrence (how often ritual takes place), roles (assignment of parts and duties), routine (regularity in how activity is conducted), attendance (expectation about whether presence is mandatory), affect (emotional investment in the activity), symbolic significance (attachment of meaning to the activity), continuation (perseverance of activity across generations), and deliberateness (advance preparation and planning associated with activity).

Although rituals have been found to enhance family cohesiveness, psychological health, and well-being, and to serve as a protective factor during times of transition and stress (Fiese et al., 2002), little research has examined their influence on academic achievement. However, because the family's ability to provide an environment in which the child can become a good learner is founded in the interpersonal relationships and stability the family provides (i.e., Olsen, 2000; Snow, Dubber, & Deblauw, 1982), it is feasible that family rituals may be linked with early literacy development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to extend the research on children's early literacy development by examining the practice of daily family rituals. The assumption is that the predictability and affective meaning that rituals provide will create an environment that fosters the development of literacy skills and motivation to learn.

Only one study has examined rituals and their relationship to literacy. In a study of 66 children enrolled in pre-kindergarten through third grade in public elementary schools in Baltimore, Serpell, Sonnenschein, Baker, and Ganapathy (2002) examined parental orientation towards literacy (entertainment orientation versus skills orientation), the frequency of the child's participation in literacy-related recurrent home activities, the families' routines, and how these relate to the development of children's literacy competencies as measured by the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery--Tests of Achievement, Revised (Woodcock & Johnson, 1990).

However, this study failed to examine rituals exclusively as they relate to literacy skills and how different dimensions of rituals relate to the development of emergent literacy. In addition, research has shown that children acquire these skills early on, even before school entry, however; there is no research documenting the relationship between rituals and literacy development for young children under the age of 5. This study extends the research by addressing these issues.

Research Questions

The specific research questions are as follows:

Question One: Is there a relationship between a family's overall ritual score and children's scores on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS PreK)?

Question Two: Which family settings, as measured by the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ) are more closely related to children's literacy scores as measured by the PPVT-III and PALS PreK.

Question Three: Which dimensions of family rituals, as measured by the FRQ, are more closely related to children's literacy scores as measured by the PPVT-III and PALS PreK?

Question Four: Which factors of family rituals, affect or routine, are more closely related to children's literacy scores?

Question Five: Given family rituals and family demographics, what are the best predictors of children's early literacy skills?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following section will review the literature regarding children's early literacy development and the practice of family rituals. First, emerging literacy will be defined and placed within a theoretical context. Children's literacy development and specific family practices such as storybook reading and mealtime practices will be reviewed. Emphasis will be placed on looking beyond single indicators of children's early literacy environments and incorporating multiple components of the home environment. The review will move to more qualitative aspects of children's emerging literacy development, including quality of interactions and parental beliefs. Finally, family rituals and their potential to affect children's early literacy learning will be reviewed.

Emergent Literacy

Neuman and Dickenson (2002) define emergent literacy as the "developmental precursors of formal reading that have their origins early in the life of a child" (p. 12). Thinking of the development of literacy in terms of emerging skills is a shift from earlier approaches that defined literacy as beginning with formal instruction. Children become readers through experiences with various forms of reading, writing, and language as well as through supportive environments that foster learning and experimentation with print (Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001).

Neuman and Dickenson (2002) propose three components of emergent literacy that are most strongly linked with conventional literacy. These are phonological

processing skills, which refer to the use of sounds in words; print awareness skills, which refer to letter knowledge; and oral language skills. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) further categorized these early literacy skills into two different domains; outside-in and inside-out. The outside-in domain entails the sources of information from outside the printed word that influence the child's understanding of the meaning of print (such as vocabulary and conceptual knowledge). The inside-out domain entails the information within the printed word that supports children's ability to translate print into sounds (phonemic awareness and letter knowledge; Neuman & Dickenson).

Development of these skills can be viewed from a Vygotskyian perspective. According to Vygotsky, children first learn through socially mediated instruction from others. Higher mental processes, such as literacy, are acquired as a function of social interactions (Kadravek & Rabidoux, 2004). Learning takes place when others who are more competent give the child the needed support to accomplish a task that would otherwise be too difficult for the child's developmental level (Herb, 1997). Thus, learning and mastery occurs first through socially guided interactions. Because children acquire important literacy skills beginning at birth (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001), the interactions that the child has with the family early in life become the foundation for the development of literacy skills.

Shared Book Reading

Much of the early research on the home environment and literacy development has examined the practice of joint-book reading between parent and child and its influence on literacy outcomes. "Shared book reading speaks of love, the importance of

the family unit, and parental commitment to a child's future" (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, p. 848). Several reasons have been suggested as to why this activity is associated with the development of early literacy skills. First, exposure to books prepares the child for literacy and familiarizes them with print. Furthermore, the activity of book reading, done with affection and warmth, may lead a child to develop a love of books. In addition, children may learn from what is added to the text such as conversations, questions, and comments between parent and child (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001).

Wade and Moore (1996) indicate that book sharing may be important to introduce at very early ages. Their pilot study included a cohort of urban families with young babies from Birmingham that were given a book gift-pack along with information about book sharing. A follow-up study at 3 years of age was conducted using 29 families randomly selected from the pilot study. These families were matched with a comparison group who had not received the book gift-pack. Results showed that children who had received the intervention exhibited more behaviors that are foundations for literacy development such as turning pages, pointing, joining in with the parents reading, asking frequent questions and showing more concentration and genuine interest. Children in the comparison group appeared less interested, less engaged in pointing and joining in with the text, and less able to concentrate. Parents who received the intervention also gave higher priority to book reading, and visited libraries more often.

Kuos, Frank, Regalado, and Halfon (2004) emphasize the importance of book reading because the vocabulary and syntax of written language differ from familiar verbal language. Their study examined data from a national phone survey of 2068 parents of children aged 4 to 35 months. The survey questioned parents about how often they read

to their children. The results indicate that approximately 52% of children are read to on a daily basis by a parent. Predictive factors include older age of children, mother's education beyond high school, and a greater number of books in the home. Because book reading promotes not only literacy development but also strengthens a child's emotional attachment to the parent, these findings have significant implications since both cognitive and emotional development are necessary factors for school entry. Shared book experiences provide children with an opportunity to not only develop literacy skills, but to build emotional and social ties as they interact closely with parents and caregivers

In another national survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, parents were asked questions about frequency of book reading, trips to the library, teaching about letters and numbers and other literacy activities. The survey also asked parents about children's emerging literacy such as whether the child could write their name, how many letters of the alphabet they could recognize, and if they read or pretended to read. In 1999, the survey found that 26% of children who were read to three or more times per week were able to recognize all letters of the alphabet compared to 14% of children who were read to less frequently. In addition, children who were read to frequently were also more likely to be able to count to 20 or higher (61% versus 43%), write their own names (54% versus 41%), and to read or pretend to read (77% versus 57%). Children whose families also taught them letters or numbers and who visited the library frequently were also more likely to show signs of emerging literacy (Nord, Lennon, Liu, & Chandler, 1999). It is important to note that because these were phone surveys, parents may have overestimated their involvement in literacy activities and their

children's emerging literacy skills because of the tendency to give socially desirable responses.

Dickinson and Tabors (2001) propose that interactions between parent and child during book reading can be categorized into two different types of talk. The first is immediate talk in which the topic of focus during reading interactions is most closely tied to the illustrations or words in the text. Non-immediate talk uses the text or illustrations as a springboard for personal experiences, comments, or questions about general knowledge. In a study of 54 low-income children and their families from eastern Massachusetts, Dickinson and Tabors found that the mothers' use of non-immediate talk was most strongly and positively related to children's literacy outcome measures. In the study, researchers observed mothers and children reading several books together in their home and conducted an interview with the mother about the family's book practices. Mothers and children were asked to read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar, What Next Baby Bear*, and *Elephant*. Children's language and literacy skills were measured by the School-Home Early Language and Literacy Battery (SHELL-K; Snow, Tabors, Nicholson, & Kurland, 1995). The children who had higher scores on the literacy measure were the children whose mothers used a larger percentage of non-immediate talk. This may be because the non-immediate talk typically involves longer utterances, more complex language, and models more abstract extension of ideas. In addition, Dickinson and Tabors also found that children who had greater home support for literacy, as measured by the quantity of books owned, frequency of reading, and variety of reading activities, demonstrated greater proficiency on the literacy measures.

Family Mealtime

Another, albeit much less researched opportunity for literacy development occurs during family mealtimes. Dickinson and Tabors (2001) suggest that children can learn a lot from listening, watching, and participating in conversations with their families. Family mealtimes can provide the comfortable, natural, and unplanned conversations that create important teaching moments. Using the same sample in the aforementioned study, Dickinson and Tabors analyzed recorded audio-tapes of the families' mealtimes. The authors found the children who were exposed to more extended discourse at mealtimes– in the form of narratives or explanations– were children who performed better on the literacy measure (SHELL-K; Snow et al., 1995). During mealtimes, children have the opportunity to participate in stories and explanations about everyday life. Children who hear discussion around a variety of topics show higher scores on vocabulary, definitions, and listening comprehension measures (Dickinson & Tabors).

It is important to note that although shared book reading, and mealtime experiences make important contributions to children's emerging literacy skills, measures of these practices may indicate overall levels of caregiver-child participations in a variety of mutual activities. Families who participate in a high degree of shared book reading may also be more involved in other language and literacy activities as well (Rush, 1999).

Furthermore, findings have also suggested that the amount of hours a mother works out of the home, the less prepared children are prepared for school. In a longitudinal study of 1,364 families at ten different sites around the nation, Brooks-Gunn, Han, and Waldfogel (2002) conducted home visits and phone interviews to track maternal employment and child care use. The authors also conducted cognitive

assessments using the Bayley MDI (Bayley, 1993) at 15 and 24 months, and the Bracken School Readiness Scale (Bracken, 1984) at 36 months. Their findings showed that maternal employment was linked to lower Bracken School Readiness scores, and the effects were more pronounced if mothers worked more than 30 hours a week. These findings suggest that maternal employment may limit the opportunity for involvement in a variety of literacy activities.

This emphasizes the importance of looking at multiple components of the home literacy environment, as well as multiple measures of child literacy and language outcomes. Scarborough and Dobrich (1994) contend that research needs to move beyond single indicators of literacy environments and outcomes to examine how aspects of the home literacy environment are associated with a variety of child outcomes. For instance, Roberts, Jurgens, and Burchinal (2005) found that scores on the HOME scale, a measure of the caregiving environment, can be a strong predictor of many literacy skills including receptive vocabulary and expressive and receptive language. Study participants were 72 low-income African American children and their primary guardians. Annually, between 18 months and 5 years of age, the children's primary caregiver was interviewed about the frequency they read to their child and the overall quality and responsiveness of the home environment was observed. Children's receptive and expressive language and vocabulary were assessed annually between 3 years of age and kindergarten entry using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R; Dunn & Dunn, 1981). Emergent literacy skills were assessed at four years and kindergarten entry using the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals—Preschool (CELF-P; Wiig, Secord, & Semel, 1992) and the Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA; Reid, Hresko, & Hammil, 1981). Although there

were some significant findings between home literacy practices and children's literacy outcomes, the authors found that the measure of the overall quality of the home (the HOME scale) was the strongest and most consistent predictor of children's language and literacy skills. This may be because the HOME is known to measure the general educational and social setting of the home environment that the child is exposed to. The HOME measures several aspects of the environment such as primary caregiver's emotional and verbal responsiveness, acceptance, organization of the surroundings, academic stimulation and maternal involvement that combined appear to have a greater impact on the child's developing literacy than do isolated literacy practices (Roberts et al.).

Quality of Interactions

Not just specific practices, but the quality of early parent child-interactions may also influence literacy development. Dodici, Draper, and Peterson (2003) have found that measurements of parent-child interactions for responsiveness, emotional tone, amount of language and joint attention are significantly correlated with children's literacy skills at 36 months of age. The sample for their study consisted of 27 families who were enrolled in the Early Head Start National Evaluation. Parent-infant/toddler interactions were videotaped during a session structured to elicit teaching, play, and frustration behaviors at 14, 24, 36, and approximately 54 months of age. These tapes were coded using the Parent-Infant/Toddler Interaction Coding System (PICS; Dodici & Draper, 2001). Children's literacy abilities were measured using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Third Edition (PPVT-III; Dunn & Dunn, 1997), the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of

Achievement-Revised (WJ-R; Woodcock & Johnson, 1990) and the Test of Language Development-Primary: Third Edition (TOLD-P:3; Newcomer & Hammill, 1997). Results of the study indicated that there was a strong relationship between the PICS scores and children's receptive vocabulary, and phonemic awareness scores.

This broadens our understanding of early literacy development, indicating that it is not only literacy related activities such as book reading, but also the quality of everyday interactions that relate to a child's early language and literacy skills. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Early Child Care Research Network (NICHD ECCRN; 2002) suggests that a sensitive, responsive and supportive style by mothers during literacy activities supports positive mother-child interactions. A responsive style also provides the child with the motivation to participate in literacy-related activities and influences language and cognitive development. The NICHD ECCRN (2000) found that sensitive caregiving from birth to age three years is related to children's language and cognitive development. Families (1,364) enrolled in the study across 10 different cities in the U.S. The children's primary care environment was visited at 6, 15, 24, and 36 months and language skills were assessed at 15, 24, and 36 months. Caregiving quality was measured using the Observational Record of the Caregiving Environment (ORCE; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1996). Language measures include the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory (CDI; Fenson et al., 1994) and the Reynell Developmental Languages Scales (RDLS; Reynell, 1991). Children who experienced more positive caregiving scored higher on both language scales at 15 and 36 months and CDI scores at 24 months. In addition, follow-up analysis of outcomes at 4 ½ years shows that such maternal behaviors were also related to

children's academic skills at entry to kindergarten (NICHD ECCRN, 2002). These findings support the assumption that the more positive and supporting the caregiving environment is, the better children's language and reading abilities will be.

Parental Beliefs and Attitudes

Recent research has focused on the influence of parental beliefs and attitudes in relation to children's emerging literacy skills. Attitudes that are supportive and nurturing, accepting and motivating promote feelings of security for children as they gradually develop these skills. High involvement, low-stress, and hands-on activities encourage learning (Lawhorn & Cobb, 2002). Parents who express positive attitudes about reading and actively engage their children in literacy activities create an atmosphere of enthusiasm for literacy. On the other hand, parents who express negative attitudes about reading and who refrain from engaging children in reading activities create on atmosphere of interest or even disdain for reading (Weigal, Martin, & Bennett, 2006).

Additionally, Sonneschein et al. (1997) found that parents' practice of holding more of an entertainment orientation toward literacy is associated with children's achievement. Children (41) and their families from Baltimore were involved in the study. Parents kept a diary of children's week which was coded for print related activities. Several interviews were also conducted after completion of the diary. Children were given a battery of tasks to measure their print knowledge and phonological awareness in the spring of their pre-kindergarten and kindergarten years. The authors found that parents who had a more balanced perspective towards literacy and stressed the role of the child's own experience and interests showed a positive relationship with

children's literacy outcomes. In contrast, parents' practice of holding a more skills-based orientation showed no relationship to children's literacy achievement. Parents who hold an entertainment view may provide children with a variety of literacy activities in a casual, warm environment that enhance their development. Research suggests that it is best to consider literacy development not as isolated practices but as a set of practices mediating other activities (Teale, 1986). Helping children learn literacy through a variety of activities is important.

Family Rituals

Serpell et al. (2002) stated that what matters most for a child's literacy is the parents' particular socialization practices and the beliefs informing them. Family rituals may be a valuable way to examine such socialization practices. Family rituals can be defined as repetitious, highly valued, symbolic social activities that transmit the family's enduring values, attitudes, and goals (Shuck & Bucy, 1997). The practice of meaningful family rituals is thought to create a sense of belonging that fosters child adjustment and regulates family practices (Fiese & Marjinsky, 1999).

It is important to distinguish family rituals from family routines. Although routines are repetitious family behaviors that are important in structuring family life, they lack the symbolic content and the compelling, anticipatory nature of rituals (Shuck & Bucy, 1997). Routines typically involve instrumental communication conveying that "this is what needs to be done" and occupy only momentary time commitment and little afterthought. Rituals on the other hand, involve symbolic communication conveying "this

is who are we are," and involves affective commitment that provides a sense of belonging (Fiese et al., 2002, p. 382).

Furthermore, rituals can be categorized into three types that are universal to all families: (a) family celebrations, (b) family traditions, and (c) daily rituals (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Daily rituals are the least deliberate, the least standardized across families, the most variable, and the most frequently enacted. These types of rituals occur as meaningful daily interactions and can include dinnertime customs, bedtime practice, and weekend leisure time activities (Shuck & Bucy, 1997), and may be the most applicable to this study.

Rituals are powerful organizers of family life and support its stability, especially through times of stress and transition (Fiese et al., 2002) Thus, rituals can serve as a vehicle for the development of literacy through its ability to create organization, stability, and positive affect. Although not speaking directly of family rituals, Snow et al. (1982) hypothesized that family activities can insulate against external stressors while still providing the time and attention necessary for fostering the development of language and literacy. The family can provide an environment within which the child can become a good learner. Furthermore, Snow et al. suggested that the family's ability to create an organized, predictable, and stable environment that enhances learning can be seen by the family's organizational style and interpersonal relationships among members. Levels of organization in the family include the presence of rules for behavior, some predictability in daily schedule of events, and reliability of family members in meeting responsibilities. Levels of emotional climate and interpersonal relationships include the children's

relationship with their parents, how nurturing the parents are, and how much opportunity the children have for enjoyment.

Since rituals include a prescription of roles and occur at a predictable times and places (Fiese & Kline, 1993), and because family rituals can be seen as providing togetherness and strengthening family relationships, emotional exchange and stability (features noted by Snow et al., 1982), they can be assumed to provide the type of positive environment that is linked to the development of a successful, and literate child.

Children's literacy development is embedded in the social relationships and interactions provided by their early environments. Previous research indicates that reading together, family conversations at mealtimes, parental warmth and positive attitude all may have a strong influence on children's early literacy development. The present study will attempt to examine further the relationship between early home environments and children's emerging literacy abilities by taking into account the importance of patterned, daily interactions. Daily family rituals may have the potential to combine both warmth and stability with literacy activities to create a healthy family climate where children's academic abilities can flourish. Looking at family rituals may allow us to gain a better understanding of how family practices alone influence children's literacy skills.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Sample

Participating children in this study included 15 girls and 18 boys. The average age of girls was 4 years and 3 months with ages ranging from 4 years to 5 years 3 months. Average age of boys was 4 years and 2 months with ages ranging from 3 years 11 months to 5 years 6 months. Almost all children were white with only 3 being of Hispanic origin. Twenty-three children came from two-parent married families, while eight came from divorced/separated families and one came from a remarried family. The majority of families had two or three children in the family (57.6%), seven families had only one child (21.2%), and seven families had four children (21.2%). Mean income of participants was between $22,000 and $30,000 (range < $5,000 to $60,000+). See Table 1 for other demographic variables.

Instruments

Children's literacy development was assessed using the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS Pre-K) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Third Edition (PPVT-III). The PPVT-III is designed as a measure of receptive vocabulary and as a screening test of verbal ability. The PPVT consists of two parallel forms (Form IIIA and Form IIIB). Each form contains test items grouped into 17 sets of 12 items each. The items sets are arranged in order of increasing difficulty. Each item consists of four black

Table 1

Means (Standard Deviations), Ranges and Percentiles for Demographics

Variable	Mothers	Fathers
Age	30 yrs, 5 mos. (4 yrs 6 mos.) 22-39 yrs	33 yrs, 6 mos. (5 yrs 4 mos) 26-49 yrs
Work Hours	32.3 hrs (12.2)[a] 0-60 hrs	37.9 hrs (8.9) 15-55 hrs
Education		
9-11 Grade	0 (0.0%)	4 (12.1%)
High School/GED	11 (33.3%)	6 (18.2%)
Vocational/some College	9 (27.3%)	8 (24.2%)
College degree	12 (36.4%)	8 (24.2%)
Graduate degree	1 (3.0%)	7 (21.2%)

a. 10 mothers in study did not work outside the home

and white illustrations. The examinee's task is to select the picture that best represents the meaning of the word presented by the examiner (Dunn & Dunn, 1997).

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III; Dunn & Dunn, 1997) is a carefully developed instrument that is easy to use and well documented. Administration and scoring instructions are spelled out very simply and logically (Wasyliw, 2001). Alpha and split-half reliability coefficients are in the range of .86 to .98 for both Forms A and B (Bessai, 2001).

Criterion validity is supported by correlations with the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition (Weschler, 1991) ranging from .82 to .92 for verbal IQ, Performance IQ, and Full scale IQ. PPVT-III scores are more highly correlated with Verbal than with Performance IQ on the WISC-III (Wasyliw, 2001). In addition, moderate correlations for the PPVT-III and the Oral and Written Language Scales (Carrow-Woolfolk, 1995) were found ranging from .63 to.83 for listening comprehension and oral expression. These moderate correlations are expected since the PPVT-III measures only one aspect of language, receptive vocabulary (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). Content validity of the PPVT-III as an achievement test of hearing vocabulary for standard English is provided by the item selection drawn from a pool of standard English words that could be depicted by an illustration and that represented twenty common content areas, such as animals, actions, and body parts (Williams & Wang, 1997).

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening

The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS-PreK; Invernezzi, Sullivan, Meier, & Swank, 2004) is a measure of young children's knowledge of literacy basics including: name writing, alphabet knowledge, beginning sound awareness, print and word awareness, rhyme awareness, and nursery rhyme awareness (Invernezzi et al.). The tasks included in the PALS Pre-K are designed to be developmentally appropriate and to reflect activities children would encounter in an everyday preschool setting such as interacting with books, talking about print, playing with language, and exploring with writing. Split-half reliability estimates for the PALS-PreK range from .71 to .94 for each of the scales (name writing, alphabet knowledge, and so forth). Inter-rater reliability

estimates, as measured by Pearson's correlations, are high at .99 for each of the scales. Criterion validity for the PALS-PreK is evidenced by correlations with the Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA-3). Pearson's correlation between the TERA and the PALS PreK is .67. In addition, the correlation between the PALS-PreK summed score and the Child Observation Record (COR; High/Scope, 1992) is .71.

Family Ritual Questionnaire

Measurement of family rituals was assessed using the Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ; Fiese & Kline, 1992; see Appendix A). The Family Ritual Questionnaire is a 56-item questionnaire. Participants choose between one of two statements that best reflects their family. Each statement is worded so as to maximize the possibility that neither is seen as more desirable than the other, (e.g., "In some families, there is little planning around dinnertime," but, "In other families dinnertime is planned in advance"; Fiese & Kline, 1993). The FRQ assesses rituals across seven different settings (dinnertime, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, special celebrations, religious holidays, and cultural traditions). An additional setting, reading aloud, taken from Serpell et al. (2002) will be added to measure family rituals during a reading aloud setting. Each setting measures eight different dimensions (occurrence, roles, routine, attendance, affect, symbolic significance, continuation, and deliberateness). Dimension scores are summed across all settings. For example, the occurrence dimension is measured by summing item 1 of dinnertime, vacations, weekends, and so forth. The roles dimension is measured by summing item 2 of dinnertime, vacations, weekends, and so forth. The FRQ has demonstrated good test-retest reliability with scores ranging from

.60 to .86 for each of the settings and dimensions and with a total score of .88 over a 4-week period. Internal consistency for each of the dimensions and settings has been evidenced with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .58 to .90 (Fiese & Kline, 1993). Furthermore, the FRQ has shown construct validity through significant correlations with the Moos and Moos (1981) Family Environment Scale (Fiese, 1992). Fiese et al. (2002) suggests that research endeavors on family rituals would be strengthened if researchers would adopt the use of the FRQ that has established reliability and validity estimates rather than relying on single-question or newly developed questionnaires.

Procedures

Participants were drawn from approximately 16 family home-childcare centers in Logan, Utah. Because the Logan area has only three center-based childcare facilities, home-based childcare facilities were used to maximize variability. Providers who were state-licensed and registered with the Bridgerland Child Care Resource and Referral were invited to participate. Children were invited to participate if they were 4 and 5 years old, English-speaking, had no known developmental delays, and were not already attending kindergarten.

Using a list of providers in the Logan area obtained from the Child Care Resource and Referral, postcards were mailed to providers informing them of the study and requesting their participation (see Appendix B). The postcard also indicated that they would be called in a few days to see if they were willing to participate (see Appendix C for phone script).

Once participating providers and children were identified, an approval letter was sent to the providers (see Appendix D) along with a packet for the parents. The packet for parents included an informed consent form (see Appendix E), a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F), and the Family Ritual Questionnaire. These packets were distributed to the parents via the childcare providers.

Once the informed consent forms were received, appointments were made to administer the literacy tests to the children at their childcare centers. Testing was done during self-selected activities so as not to take children away from other important activities. Half of the children received the PPVT first, while the other half received the PALS PreK first to help eliminate testing bias. In addition, although demographic and family ritual information was collected, this information was not viewed by examiners before administering the tests to avoid examiner bias.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This section will start by giving descriptive statistics for all dependent measures. Next, findings are given by research questions.

Data Analysis

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III)

The Mean Standard score of the PPVT-III for this sample was 104.52 (*SD* = 12.46; range 81 to 131). The mean PPVT score for boys was *M* =102.39 (*SD*= 11.81; range 83 to 122). The mean PPVT score for girls was *M* = 107.06 (*SD* = 13.14; range 81 to 131).

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS PreK)

Mean total score for the PALS PreK was *M* = 56.45 (*SD* = 34.77; range 4 to 117). For girls, *M* = 64.87 (*SD* = 37.41; range 8 to 117). For boys, *M* = 49.44 (*SD* = 31.75; range 4 to 110).

Reliability of Family Ritual Questionnaire (FRQ)

Initially, alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for each of the ritual settings. Alpha coefficients for this study were similar to past research, although estimates for the dinnertime, weekends, and vacations settings were much lower than past findings (Fiese, 1992). These initial alpha coefficients ranged from .40 to .86 and are listed in Table 2 as initial alphas. Although the dinnertime setting and reading aloud

setting both had low initial reliability (.53), we found that dropping item two for each of these settings resulted in much higher reliability estimates. In order to further reduce the number of variables, we found that combining both the special celebrations setting and annual celebrations setting into one celebration variable also resulted in a higher reliability score. Religious holidays and cultural traditions were also combined. Alpha coefficients for the final settings used are listed in Table 2 as final alphas.

Factor Analysis of FRQ

For the weekends and vacations settings of the FRQ that evidenced low reliability (.40), a principal components factor analysis was run in order to identify shared constructs. Three or four factors were identified for each of the settings. Results are listed in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alphas for the Family Ritual Questionnaire

Setting	Initial Alphas	Final Alphas
Dinnertime	.53	.70
Weekends	.40	.40
Vacations	.40	.40
Annual celebrations	.70	
Special celebrations	.81	
Celebrations		.86
Religious holidays	.83	
Cultural traditions	.81	
Religious/cultural		.86
Reading aloud	.53	.71

Table 3

Rotated Factor Analysis of Weekends

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Occurrence	.63	-.21	.55
Roles	-.25		.82
Routines		.82	.13
Attendance	.19	.62	.51
Affect	.84		-.14
Symbolic significance	.83		
Continuation		.69	-.26
Deliberateness	.45	-.52	
% Total Variance	26.1	24	16.1

Note. Underlined items indicate those items that were included in the factor.

For weekends, the first factor, named affect and significance, included the occurrence, affect, and symbolic significance scores. Factor 2, named routines and attendance, included attendance, routine, and continuation items. Factor 3, named weekend roles, included only one item, roles. For vacations, the first factor, named significance and deliberateness, accounted for the symbolic significance, attendance and deliberateness scores. Factor 2, named meaning and continuity, included affect and continuation scores. Factor 3 for vacations only included the roles item. Factor 4, accounted for the occurrence and routine items and will be named such.

A second factor analysis was conducted using the dimension scores of the Family Ritual Questionnaire as conducted by Fiese (1992). The dimension scores include occurrence, roles, routines, attendance, affect, symbolic significance, continuation, and deliberateness. Factors are shown in Table 5. The first factor, named personal meaning, was composed of symbolic significance, occurrence, and affect scores. This factor

Table 4

Rotated Factor Analysis of Vacations

Items	Factor 1	2	3	4
Occurrence	.38	.44	.35	-.62
Roles			.91	.14
Routines	.17	.19	.27	.90
Attendance	.65	-.11	.37	
Affect	.39	.62	-.19	
Symbolic Significance	.70	.41		
Continuation	.18	-.76		
Deliberateness	.77	-.12	-.31	.17
% Total Variance	26.5	16.8	15.2	13.7

Note. Underlined items indicate those items that were included in the factor.

accounted for 50% of the variance. Similar to Fiese, this factor seems to account for the personal meaning that is associated with the regularity of family rituals. The second factor, named regularity, which accounted for 16% of the variance was composed of attendance, continuation, and routine scores. This factor appears to account for the repetitive nature of how the rituals are carried out. The third factor, named family roles, included only one item, roles, but this item accounted for 13% of the variance.

Factor Analysis of the PALS PreK

A prinicipal components factor analysis was also conducted for the individual items on the PALS to identify shared constructs and to further reduce the number of variables. Results are displayed in Table 6. The first factor, letter recognition, included lower and upper case recognition, name writing, and letter sound items and accounted for over 61% of the variance. This factor seems to account primarily for letter recognition

Table 5

Rotated Factor Analysis of Dimensions

Dimensions	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Occurrence	.80	.27	-.11
Roles	.09	.11	.93
Routines	.14	.73	.44
Attendance	.46	.75	-.07
Affect	.80	.05	.34
Symbolic Significance	.90	.17	.13
Continuation	.04	.89	.09
Deliberateness	.62	.65	-.06
% Total Variance	49.9	16.0	13.6

Note. Underlined items indicate those items that were included in the factor.

and awareness. The second factor, print and rhyme awareness, accounting for 13% of the variance, included print awareness, nursery rhyme awareness, and rhyme awareness items.

Table 6

Rotated Factor Analysis of PALS PreK

PALS Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Name Writing	.66	.44
UpperCase Recognition	.92	.31
LowerCase Recognition	.94	.20
Letter Sounds	.89	.23
Beginning Sound Awareness	.56	.35
Print Awareness	.30	.84
Rhyme Awareness	.15	.83
Nursery Rhyme Awareness	.42	.74
% Total Variance	61.8	13.3

Note. Underlined items indicate those items that were included in the factor.

Research Questions

Question One: Is there a relationship between a family's overall ritual score and children's scores on the PPVT and PALS PreK? To address research question one, correlations between a total family ritual score, created from adding scores across the initial family settings (dinnertime, special celebrations, annual celebrations, religious holidays, cultural traditions, and reading aloud), the PALS PreK factors (letter recognition, print & rhyme awareness) and PPVT-III standard score were determined using a Pearson's *r* analysis. There were no significant correlations found between the FRQ total score and either the PALS PreK factors nor the PPVT standard score. Results are displayed in Table 7.

Question Two: Which family settings as measured by the FRQ are more closely related to children's literacy scores as measured by the PPVT-III and PALS PreK? To address research question two, ritual scores of each of the adjusted family ritual settings (dinnertime, reading aloud, religious/cultural traditions, celebrations) and the vacations and weekends factors were correlated with the PALS PreK factors and PPVT standard score. This analysis showed some interesting relationships. As shown in Table 7, weekend roles, was negatively correlated with children's rhyme & print awareness ($r = -.43$, $p < .05$). In addition, the occurrence & routine of vacations was also negatively correlated with both letter recognition ($r = -.35$, $p < .05$) and print & rhyme awareness ($r = -.42$, $p < .05$) as well as with the PPVT standard score ($r = -.47$, $p < .01$). There were no significant relationships found between children's literacy scores and any of the other settings.

Table 7

Correlations Between PALS PreK, PPVT, and Family Ritual Settings

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
PPVT	1. Standard score				save											
PALS	2. Letter Recognition	.44**														
	3. Print & Rhyme Awareness	.41*	.59**													
FRQ	4. Dinnertime	.19	.33	.22												
	5. Weekends Affect & Significance	.16	-.14	.10	.09											
	6. Weekends Routines & Attendance	.10	.33	.09	.12	.00										
	7. Weekends Roles	-.07	-.14	-.43*	.35*	.00	.00									
	8. Vacations Significance & Deliberateness	.04	-.11	-.22	.28	.31	.14	.12								
	9. Vacations Meaning & Continuity	.11	-.09	-.06	.32	.50**	-.08	.10	.00							
	10. Vacations Roles	-.09	-.04	.21	.17	.32	.21	.24	.00	.00						
	11. Vacations Occurrence & Routine	-.47**	-.35*	-.42*	-.05	-.10	-.11	.23	.00	.00	.00					
	12. Celebrations	.01	.09	-.10	.36*	.12	.44	.30	.33	.06	.18	.25				
	13. Religious /Cultural Traditions	.10	.18	.02	.26	-.11	.52**	.42*	-.04	-.06	.13	.08	.65**			
	14. Reading Aloud	.32	.22	.05	.31	.15	.28	.20	.19	.17	.01	-.24	.45**	.35		
	15. Adjusted Total Score	.16	.24	.02	.54**	.06	0.42*	.50**	.23	.10	.17	.07	.86**	.87**	.64**	

Question Three: Which dimensions of family rituals as measured by the FRQ, are more closely related to children's literacy scores as measured by the PPVT-III and PALS PreK? To address this question, Pearson *r*s were run between the dimension factors mentioned earlier (personal meaning, regularity, family roles), the PPVT standard score, and PALS PreK factors. As shown in Table 8, family roles was negatively associated with children's scores on the PPVT ($r = -.36$, $p < .05$).

Question Four: Which factors of family rituals, affect or routine, are more closely related to children's literacy scores? To address this question, two summary scores for ritual meaning and ritual routine were calculated for family linked settings (dinnertime, weekends, vacations, annual celebrations, reading aloud) as recommended by Fiese and Kline (1992).

Table 8

Correlations Between PPVT, PALS PreK, and Family Ritual Dimensions

Measure	Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6
PPVT	1. Standard score						
PALS	2. Letter Recognition	.44*					
	3. Print & Rhyme Awareness	.41*	.59**				
FRQ Dimensions	4. Personal Meaning	.27	.07	.01			
	5. Regularity	.18	.33	.10	.47**		
	6. Family Roles	-.36*	-.27	-.28	.23	.16	

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

ritual meaning scores were calculated by summing the occurrence, affect, symbolic significance and deliberateness scores across all family linked settings. ritual routine scores were calculated by summing roles and routine scores across all family linked settings. These two summary scores were correlated with children's scores on the PALS PreK factors and PPVT standard score. Pearson's *r* analysis showed that ritual routine scores were negatively correlated with the PPVT standard score ($r = -.35$, $p < .05$). These results are listed in Table 9.

Question Five: Given family rituals and family demographics, what are the best predictors of children's early literacy skills? To determine the best predictors for early literacy scores based on family rituals and family demographics, separate linear regressions were run for each of the PALS PreK factors and the PPVT standard score.

Table 9

Correlations Between PPVT, PALS PreK, and Family Ritual Routine and Ritual Meaning

Measure	Factor	1	2	3	4	5
PPVT	1. Standard score					
PALS	2. PALS Factor 1	0.44**				
	3. PALS Factor 2	0.41*	0.59**			
FRQ	4. Ritual Routine	-0.35*	-0.26	-0.26		
	5. Ritual Meaning	0.30	0.11	0.02	0.17	

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Items for each regression included demographic and family ritual variables that correlated significantly with PALS PreK factors and PPVT standard score, but were restricted to variables where correlations were < .60. Results are listed in Table 10 and Table 11. For PALS Factor One (letter recognition), vacations factor 4 (occurrence and routine) was included in the model for the independent variable. Results were as follows: R^2 = .12, Adj. R^2 = .09, *SE* of estimate = 27. For Factor 2 of the PALS PreK (print and rhyme Awareness), the following independent variables were included: Weekends factor 3 (roles) and mothers work hours. For this model, R^2 = .47, Adj. R^2 = .041, *SE* of estimate = 4.7. For the PPVT standard score, vacations factor 4 (occurrence and routine) was again included in the model. R^2 = .21, Adj. R^2 = .19, *SE* of estimate = 11.2

Table 10

Regression Models for PALS PreK Letter Recognition and Print and Rhyme Awareness Factors

Variable	R^2	Adj. R^2	*SE* of Estimate	Predictors	Beta	*t*	*p*
Letter recognition	0.12	0.09	27.00	Constant		6.90	0.00
				Vacations occurrence and routine	-0.35	-2.05	0.05
Print & rhyme awareness	0.47	0.41	4.70	Constant		8.00	0.00
				Weekend roles	-0.40	-2.30	0.03
				Mother work hours	-0.45	-2.70	0.02

Table 11

Regression Models for PPVT Standard Score

Variable	R^2	Adj. R^2	*SE* of Estimate	Predictors	Beta	*t*	*p*
PPVT standard score	0.21	0.19	11.20	Constant		56.60	0.00
				Vacations occurrence and routine	-0.47	-2.90	0.01

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to address the relation of family rituals to children's early literacy development. Previous research on children's development suggests that regular and warm family activities create an environment that fosters the development of early literacy skills (i.e., Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Dodici et al., 2003).

Although there was not a positive relationship found between children's involvement in family rituals and early literacy development, the results did show some interesting relationships. Specifically, analysis showed that the assignment of roles or duties for family members on weekends was negatively correlated with children's rhyme and print awareness scores. In fact, role assignment showed a negative relationship with literacy outcomes summed across all settings as measured by the family roles dimension factor. When families score high on role assignment it may indicate a more structured family life. These findings suggest that families who express a high amount of role assignment may be limiting the opportunities for unstructured time together to participate in spontaneous learning activities. Early reading skills may develop better when the family environment is a little more spontaneous. Olsen's Circumplex Model (Olsen, 2000) has often been used to describe the functioning of family systems and may be useful here. The circumplex model describes family dynamics through three dimensions; family cohesion, flexibility, and communication. Flexibility will be discussed here. Family flexibility focuses on the amount of change in a family's leadership, roles and rules. Healthy families need stability, but also need to be able to change when

appropriate for healthy functioning. Flexibility is placed within four levels of functioning, ranging from very rigid to very chaotic. According to the model, a healthy family system would be seen as able to be both structured and flexible, allowing stable roles, few rule changes, and open negotiations. In these families, roles are stable but are also shared and change when necessary. In very rigid families, the roles are strictly defined and the rules do not change. These types of families make it difficult for proper functioning and development within the family (Olsen). These types of families may also make it more difficult for the development of early cognitive skills.

From the viewpoint of this dimension within the circumplex model, those families with limited flexibility may impair the development of close interpersonal relationships and spontaneous exploration that provides children with the opportunity to learn. The fact that role assignment on weekends had a negative impact on literacy outcomes is notable here because one would expect that family duties and expectations would be more relaxed on weekends. Families who still require a certain degree of exactness and uniformity on the weekends may be an indication of higher levels of inflexibility, which could hinder children's opportunities for learning.

In addition, ritual routine scores were also negatively correlated with children's scores on the PPVT. Ritual routine scores measure the roles and routine dimensions for family-linked settings (dinnertime, weekends, annual celebrations, and reading aloud). This further suggests that that a lack of spontaneity and variety in family settings may inhibit children's opportunities to come in contact with new words to help build vocabulary. Furthermore, these findings parallel other research that suggests that parents who have a balanced perspective toward literacy have a more positive impact on

children's literacy development. Parents who have this balanced perspective stress the role of the child's own experience and interests rather than engaging children in very structured, parent-directed activities (Sonneschein et al., 1997). Families who are too rigid in their expectations for individual involvement in family activities may lose out on opportunities for variety, spontaneity with regard to early literacy activities. In addition, the occurrence and routine of vacations was negatively correlated with children's scores on both the Pals PreK and the PPVT-III. The occurrence of vacations was a negatively weighted item in the factor suggesting that poorer early literacy skill development occurs in families who take fewer vacations. When families take fewer vacations, children may be missing out on opportunities to be exposed to new environments and new experiences that may help to foster the development of language and reading skills. Taken together, this factor suggests that early reading skills are less likely to develop well in families where there is little flexibility and fewer family outings, excursions, and vacations.

Regression analyses in this study also indicated that the more hours that mothers worked outside the home, the lower children's literacy outcomes were. With an increasing number of women entering the workforce while their children are young, these findings warrant some attention. Brooks-Gunn et al. (2002) found that maternal employment in infancy (by the ninth month) was related to lower scores on the Bracken School Readiness assessment at 36 months. The negative effects were more pronounced if mothers worked more than 30 hours per week, even after controlling for quality of daycare, home environment and maternal sensitivity. The more time women spend in the workforce may reduce the amount of time they have to spend in learning and instructional activities with their children.

The findings from this study warrant further research of family rituals and their potential relationship with children's literacy development. Certain aspects of family rituals, such as somewhat inflexible role assignments and fewer family vacations have a negative impact on literacy scores is similar to other studies indicating that family involvement and some spontaneity in family life can influence children's literacy outcomes.

Limitations

Although this study gives us an indication of the relationship between rituals and emerging literacy, it is very limited. Because it is a sample of convenience, the results are not representative and generalizations can only be made with caution. Furthermore, because there was no manipulation of the independent variable, family rituals, causality cannot be inferred. Our findings suggest that there may be something about highly structured family weekends and few vacations that correlate negatively with children's literacy outcomes, but we are not able to determine causality or if there is another influence that may be unaccounted for in our study.

The present study also included a very small sample size. It would have been beneficial to have a larger sample size to better substantiate the effects of family rituals and perhaps find some relationships between rituals and literacy outcomes that could not be observed with such a small sample size.

This study is also open to selection bias as well. Parents who chose to participate in this study may differ from those who refused and may have very different family

practices. In addition, the providers who chose to participate may have a different clientele of parents.

Though this study is subject to many various confounding threats, it is important to note that research that advances knowledge is a cumulative process that begins with rich descriptive data and then moves on to understanding connections and identifying causal mechanisms (National Research Council, 2000). This study seeks to provide us with a basic foundation for first establishing a relationship between children's emerging literacy skills and family rituals.

Future Research

These findings suggest that future research is needed to examine the issue of how children's early literacy development can be influenced by the family's interpersonal relationships, daily practice, and extended leisure time activities. Foremost, perhaps would be to incorporate a larger sample size. This study's small sample makes some analyses and interpretation of results difficult.

Secondly, it may be beneficial for future research to examine family rituals via the use of interviews rather than a questionnaire. Shuck and Bucy (1997) have suggested that families may be able to more comfortably describe their rituals through interview method and that elaboration of their descriptions can provide a better view of their unique family experiences. Using interviews to measure family rituals may give researchers a better idea of what it is exactly about particular rituals that has the potential to affect children's literacy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Family Ritual Questionnaire

DINNER TIME

Think about a typical dinner time in your family.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families regularly eat dinner together	BUT	Other families rarely eat dinner together	C	D
A	B	2. In some families everyone has a specific role and job to do at dinnertime.	BUT	In other families, people do different jobs at different times depending on the needs.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, dinner time is flexible. People can eat whenever they want.	BUT	In other families, everything about dinner is scheduled; dinner is at the same time every day.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families everyone is expected to be home for dinner.	BUT	In other families you never know who will be home for dinner.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families people feel strongly about eating together.	BUT	In other families, it is not that important if people eat dinner together.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, dinner time is just for getting food.	BUT	In other families, dinner time is more than just a meal; it has special meaning.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, dinner time is pretty much the same over the years.	BUT	In other families, dinner time has changed over the years.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families, there is little planning around dinner time.	BUT	In other families, dinner time is planned in advance.	C	D

WEEKENDS

Think of a typical weekend with your family.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families rarely spend weekends together.	BUT	Other families regularly spend weekends together.	C	D
A	B	2. In some families everyone has a specific job to do on the weekends.	BUT	In other families, there are no assigned jobs on the weekends.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, there are set routines and regular events on weekends.	BUT	In other families, there are no set routines or events on the weekends.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families, everyone is expected to come to weekend events.	BUT	In other families, people pretty much come and go as they please.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families, weekends are pretty casual; there are no special feelings about them.	BUT	In other families, there are strong feelings about spending the weekend time together as a family.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, spending time together at weekend events is special.	BUT	In other families, there are no special family weekend events.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, weekend activities have shifted over the years.	BUT	In other families, weekend activities have remained pretty much the same over the years.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families, there is much discussion and planning around weekends.	BUT	In other families, there is very little discussion or planning around weekends.	C	D

VACATIONS

Think of a typical vacation or vacations you have spent with your family.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families regularly spend vacations together.	BUT	Other families rarely spend vacations together.	C	D
A	B	2. In some families everyone has a job or task to do.	BUT	In other families, people do what needs to be done and take turns.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, vacations are times for something new and there are no routines.	BUT	In other families, there are set routines on vacations.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families, it is OK if some members decide not to go on vacation.	BUT	In other families, it is expected that everyone will fo on the vacation.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families, people feel strongly that family vacations are important family events.	BUT	In other families, there is a more casual attitude towards vacations; no one cares that much.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, vacations are just a time to relax or catch up on work.	BUT	In other families, the family vacation is more than a trip; it is a family togetherness time.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, there is a history and tradition associated with "The Family Vacation."	BUT	In other families, vacation activities are more spontaneous and change from year to year.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families there is little planning around the vacation; we just go.	BUT	In other families, there is a lot of planning and discussion around the family vacation.	C	D

ANNUAL CELEBRATIONS

Think of celebrations that your family has every year. Some examples would be birthdays, anniversaries, and perhaps last day of school.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families have regular and several annual celebrations.	BUT	For other families, there are few annual celebrations or they are rarely observed.	C	D
A	B	2. In some families, people don't have assigned jobs for each celebration.	BUT	In other families, everyone has a certain job to do during annual celebrations.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, these celebrations have no set routines; it is hard to know what will happen.	BUT	In other families, these celebrations are pretty standard' everyone knows what to expect.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families, everyone is expected to be there for the celebration.	BUT	In other families, annual celebrations may not be a time for all members.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families there are strong feelings at birthdays and other celebrations.	BUT	In other families, annual celebrations are more casual; people aren't emotionally involved.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, birthdays and anniversaries are important milestones to be celebrated in special ways.	BUT	In other families, not a lot of fuss is made over birthdays and anniversaries; members may celebrate, but nothing is particulalry special.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, the ways birthdays and anniversaries are celebrated change from year to year.	BUT	In other families, there are traditional ways of celebrating birthdays and anniversaries that rarely change.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families there is a lot of planning and discussion around these celebrations.	BUT	In other families, there is little planning and discussion around these celebrations.	C	D

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS

Think of some special celebrations that happen in your family, special celebrations that may occur in many families regardless of religion or culture. Some examples would be weddings, graduations, and family reunions.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. In some families, there are rarely special celebrations.	BUT	In other families, there are several special celebrations.	C	D
A	B	2. In some families, people don't have certain jobs or roles to do at special celebrations.	BUT	In other families, people have certain jobs to do at special celebrations.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, there is a set routine at these events; everyone knows what will happen.	BUT	In other families, there is not a set routine, every celebration is different.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families, it is hard to know who will be there; whoever can shows up.	BUT	In other families, everyone is expected to attend special celebrations.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families, special celebrations are times of high emotions and feelings.	BUT	In other families, special celebrations are low-key; there aren't a lot of strong emotions.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, special celebrations have deep meaning for the family.	BUT	In other families, special celebrations are the same as other occasions.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, special celebrations have shifted over the years.	BUT	In other families, special celebrations are traditional and may be carried across generations.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families there is a lot of planning and discussion around these events.	BUT	In other families, there is little planning and discussion around these events.	C	D

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Think of how your family celebrates religious holidays such as Christmas, Chanukah, Easter and Passover.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families rarely celebrate religious holidays.	BUT	Other families regularly celebrate religious holidays.	C	D
A	B	2. In some families, there are no set jobs; people do what they can during religious holidays.	BUT	In other families, everyone has a certain job to do during religious holidays.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, there is a set routine during religious holidays; everyone knows what to expect.	BUT	In other families, there are few routines during religious holidays; activities vary from year to year.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families, everyone is expected to be there during religious holidays.	BUT	In other families, it is hard to know who will be around; whoever can will show up.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families, religious holidays are more casual; there aren't a lot of strong feelings.	BUT	In other families, religious holidays are times of strong feelings and emotions.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, religious holidays have special meaning for the family.	BUT	In other families, religious holidays are more just like a day off.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, religious holidays are traditional, with activities passes down generations.	BUT	In other families, religious holidays shift across the years.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families there is little planning and discussion around religious holidays.	BUT	In other families, there is a lot of planning and discussion around religious holidays.	C	D

CULTURAL AND ETHNIC TRADITIONS

Think of some cultural and ethnic traditions that your family observes. Some examples may be baptisms, naming ceremonies, barmitzvahs, baking of a particular ethnic food, wakes, funerals.

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families observe cultural traditions.	BUT	Other families rarely observe cultural traditions.	C	D
A	B	2. In some families, there are set jobs for people to do during these events.	BUT	In other families, there are no set jobs during these events.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, there is flexibility I the ways these events are observed.	BUT	In other families, there are routines and everyone know what to expect during these events.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families, everyone is expected to attend these events.	BUT	In other families, only a few members may attend to represent the family.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families, these events are very emotional and family members experience strong emotions.	BUT	In other families, these are more casual events with family members less emotionally involved.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, these events don't have much meaning for the family.	BUT	In other families, these events take on special meaning and significance.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, these events have stayed pretty much the same across generations.	BUT	In other families, these eventsare flexible and change over the years.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families there is little planning on the part of the family; details are left up to people outside the family.	BUT	In other families, there is a lot of planning and discussion among family members.	C	D

READING ALOUD

FOR OUR FAMILY					FOR OUR FAMILY	
really true	sort of true				really true	sort of true
A	B	1. Some families regularly read aloud together	BUT	Other families rarely read aloud together	C	D
A	B	2. In some families the same parent or older child always reads aloud to the youngest child.	BUT	In other families, different people read aloud to the child at different times depending on who is available.	C	D
A	B	3. In some families, the timing of reading aloud is flexible. People read aloud whenver they get the (a) chance.	BUT	In other families, reading aloud is very definitely scheduled; it happens at the same time every day.	C	D
A	B	4. In some families everyone is expected to be there for reading aloud.	BUT	In other families reading aloud may not be for all members.	C	D
A	B	5. In some families people feel strongly about reading aloud together.	BUT	In other families, it is not that important whether people read aloud or not.	C	D
A	B	6. In some families, reading aloud together is just so others can hear.	BUT	In other families, reading aloud is more than just information; it has special meaning.	C	D
A	B	7. In some families, reading aloud has always been and will always be a regular event.	BUT	In other families, the time at which people read aloud has changed over the years as children grow up and schedules change.	C	D
A	B	8. In some families, there is little planning around reading aloud.	BUT	In other families, reading aloud is planned in advance.	C	D

Appendix B. Provider Postcard

Provider Postcard

Dear Providers,

Many of you have participated in different research studies with me and I thank you sincerely for your efforts to further our knowledge on children's development. This postcard is a heads-up that in a few days you will be receiving a phone call from one of my graduate students, Melanie Williamson.

Melanie's phone call will request your participation in her thesis study of child development and family environment. I think you would enjoy working with Melanie, and I sincerely hope you will consider her request. Her project will not require any additional time on your part except to help her identify children who meet her study requirements. As always, I am available for questions and comments (797 1527) as are Carrie and Leah (797 1552) and my student Melanie (797-3012) or at (melanuss@cc.usu.edu).

Thank you for considering this request, and thank you for your continued dedication to children.

Sincerely,

Ann Austin

Appendix C. Provider Phone Script

Phone Script

Hi, my name is Melanie Williamson. I am a graduate student working with Ann Austin at Utah State University. You should have received a postcard from Ann letting you know that I would be calling.

I am conducting a study of early child development and family practices, and I am wondering if you would be willing to allow me to use some of the children in your daycare that are ages 4 to 5?" (wait for response). If provider agrees, "I will send you a packet of information that outlines the details of the study and will include an approval letter for your signature. In this packet I will also include a packet for you to distribute and collect from the parents. The only other thing we will ask of you is to allow a tester to come to your child care facility and do an assessment on the participating children. All of this will be further outlined in the upcoming letter. Can I confirm your address so that I can send you the information and materials?

If providers does not agree "Thank you for your consideration, if you should ever have any questions about the study you can contact me or Dr. Austin."

Appendix D. Provider Approval Form

Provider Permission
Early Literacy and Family Practices

Dear Provider,

Thank you for your interest in our early literacy and family practices project. The purpose of this letter is to further inform you of the project and to get your signed approval to allow us to use your child care facility and clients. We will be doing an evaluation of children and their parents whose child care provider is registered with the Bridgerland Child Care Resource and Referral. Your child care center has been invited to participate because you have a child in your child care who is between ages 4 and 5, but not yet in Kindergarten. Approximately 40 children and their parents will be involved in this study.

With your approval, a developmental assessment of each child will be made using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS PreK). These assessments are not an IQ test. Rather, the purpose is to determine the child's current level of language and literacy concepts. Children usually enjoy these assessments because they are presented in a game-like format. For example, the child may be asked to point to the picture of a ball on a page of pictures or to sound out a word.

You will be asked to allow assessors to come to your daycare to do an assessment of the participating child. Assessments will be done in the morning hours during self-selected activities so as not to take the child away from other planned activities. We request a quiet room be provided to do the assessments to minimize distractions; testing may take approximately 40-50 minutes. The child will be given breaks throughout the assessment if necessary. You will be asked to allow the assessors to test the child in a quiet place while he/she is at child care to minimize distractions.

Accompanying this letter is a paper clipped packet for you to distribute to the parents whose child is eligible to participate in the assessments. When these forms are returned to you, please keep them and give it to the tester who comes to do the assessments on the child. We cannot begin assessments until we have your signed approval below and the signed consent forms from the parents, so please get the packets returned to us as soon as possible.

To express our appreciation for your participation in this study, we will provide new materials for your daycare (i.e. scissors, books, etc.). If you have any questions about the paperwork or project please call Melanie at (435) 797-3927. We look forward to working with you!

"By signing below, I agree to allow the researchers to use my child care facility and clients."

_____ _____ _____

Provider signature Date Name of Child Care

Appendix E. Parent Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent
Early Literacy and Family Practices

Dear Parent,

Introduction/Purpose: The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a project examining the role of family practices and early literacy development for pre-Kindergarten children. Your participation will allow us to learn more about how families can help their children to develop reading skills that are necessary for school success. We are doing an evaluation of children and their parents whose child care provider is registered with the Bridgerland Child Care Resource and Referral. You have been asked to participate because you have a child in child care who is between ages 4 and 5, but not yet in Kindergarten. Approximately 40 children and their parents will be involved in this study.

Procedures: If you agree to participate in this project, a developmental assessment of each child will be made using Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III) and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS PreK). These assessments are not an IQ test. Rather, the purpose is to determine the child's current level of language and literacy concepts. Children usually enjoy these assessments because they are presented in a game-like format. For example, the child may be asked to point to the picture of a ball on a page of pictures or to sound out a word. The assessments will take about 40-50 minutes to complete. Breaks will be provided as necessary for your child. It is important that your child not be distracted when involved in the assessments; therefore, a quiet room will be provided by the child care provider. Your child care provider will be asked to allow Dr. Austin and Melanie Williamson (the assessors) to assess your child while he/she is at child care. They will also be asked to return the packets to the researchers.

You will be asked to fill out the Family Ritual Questionnaire. The purpose of this measurement is not to label your family as "good" or "bad." Rather it is to examine the type of family interactions and routines that the child experiences at home. We would also like you to complete a demographic questionnaire.

New Findings: During the course of this study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research or new alternatives to participation that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue participating in this study will be re-obtained.

Risks/Benefits: There is minimal risk in participating in this study. There may be a direct benefit to the parent participants, child participants and child care provider participants in this project. The researcher may learn more about the effects of family

Informed Consent
Early Literacy and Family Practices

practices on early language and literacy skills of children. Parent participants will learn about their Pre-K child's strengths and weaknesses via letter. However, these results will not be shared with anyone else. If you have any questions or if you would like to meet with the researchers about this information, please contact Melanie Williamson at (435) 797-3927 or Ann Austin at (435) 797-1527.

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence: Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality: Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with state and federal regulations. Only Dr. Ann M. B. Austin and Melanie Williamson will have access to the data; it will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. We will use codes in place of names and any identifying information will be destroyed after three years. The code and data will be kept separate in locked files. Any information obtained from you for this study will not affect any services you are now receiving or may receive in the future.

IRB Approval Statement: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects at Utah State University approved this research project. If you have any concerns or questions about this study, you may call the IRB office at 435-797-0567.

Copy of Consent: You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one copy for your files.

We are so excited about this opportunity to share with you. We hope that you will take advantage of this invaluable experience and consent to work with us!

Investigator Statement: "I certify that the study has been explained to the individual identified as the subject in the next section, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered".

_____	_____	_____	_____
Dr. Ann M. Berghout Austin	Date	Melanie Williamson	Date
Principal Investigator		Research Assistant	
(435) 797-1527		(435) 797-3927	

Signature of Participant: "By signing below, I agree to participate."

_____	_____
Parent's signature	Date

Appendix F. Demographic Questionnaire

Date: _____

Parent Questionnaire

_____
Full Name (please print)

_____
Pre-K Child's Full Name (please print)

_____
Address City, State Zip Code

_____
Phone Number E-mail Address

Family Background

1. Person completing this questionnaire:

   ☐ Mother ☐ Stepmother ☐ Father
   ☐ Stepfather ☐ Other Relative ☐ Guardian

2. What is your marital status?

   ☐ single – never been married ☐ common law ☐ divorced / separated
   ☐ widowed ☐ married ☐ remarried

3. Please list all the members of your household, their age, and their current occupation.

	Age	***Current Occupation***	***Hours/week at job***
Mother			
Father/Step/Partner			

4. Please list all children in your family (foster, step, adopted, etc.). Place a star by the child in this study.

Child #	***Sex***	***Birthdate***	***Child #***	***Sex***	***Birthdate***
1			**6**		
2			**7**		
3			**8**		
4			**9**		
5			**10**		

D
Do you give your permission for researchers to use the above birthdates?
YES NO

5. Please mark all services your family is receiving.

☐ CHIP ☐ Any Medicaid Program ☐ FEP ☐ Food Stamps
☐ WIA Tier Two or Three ☐ FANF Non-FEP training ☐ Child Care
☐ Refugee ☐ WIC ☐ UDH

6. Please check the highest education level that the child's ***father*** has completed.

☐ 1-8th grade ☐ vocational or some college ☐ college/university graduate
☐ 9-11th grade ☐ high school graduate or GED ☐ graduate school

7. Please check the highest education level that the child's ***mother*** has completed.

☐ 1-8th grade ☐ vocational or some college ☐ college/university graduate
☐ 9-11th grade ☐ high school graduate or GED ☐ graduate school

8. Please check yearly family income:

☐ less than $4,999 ☐ $10,000-$14,999 ☐ $30,000-$44,999
☐ $5,000-$9,999 ☐ $15,000-$29,999 ☐ $45,000-$59,999
☐ $60,000+

9. Which best describes the ethnic background of your child?

☐ White/Anglo ☐ African American/Black ☐ Asian, Pacific Islander
☐ Latino/Hispanic ☐ American Indian, Alaskan Native ☐ Other
_____

10. Which is the primary language spoken in the home?

☐ English ☐ German ☐ Other _____
☐ Spanish ☐ French