

So we would all help pitch in: The family literacy practices of low-income African American mothers of preschoolers.

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“So we would all help pitch in:” The family literacy practices of low-income African American mothers of preschoolers

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Highlights

- Families made ample use of print and engaged in multiple reading activities.
- Families demonstrated resilience in promoting child literacy development.
- Extended kin play a critical role in children's literacy development.
- Extended kin benefit mothers through knowledge, time, education, and/or money.

â€¢ Extended kin, maternal partners, and siblings contribute to child literacy skills.

Abstract

The development of emergent literacy skills are important for the development of later literacy competencies and affect school readiness. Quantitative researchers document race- and social class-based disparities in emergent literacy competence between low-income African American and middle-income White children. Some researchers suggest that deficits in parenting practices account for limited literacy skills among low-income African American children. A small body of qualitative research on low-income African American families finds that despite economic challenges, some African American families were actively engaged in promoting child literacy development. Using qualitative interviews that emphasize family strengths, we add to this small body of research to highlight positive family practices obscured in many quantitative analyses that concentrate on family shortcomings. Specifically, we examine in-home literacy practices and child literacy development with a sample of low-income African American mothers (families) of preschoolers. Key findings include identification of various literacy activities promoting child literacy development and inclusion of multiple family members assisting in literacy activities. These findings add to substantive discussions of emergent literacy and resilience. Insights from the qualitative interviews also provide culturally-sensitive recommendations to childhood educators and speech-language pathologists (SLP) who work with low-income African American families and children.

Learning outcomes: Reader should recognize that (1) there is not a "right" phenotype and therefore not a right form of environmental input and (2) that context matters (at both the level of the cell and the individual organism).



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Keywords

African American; Emergent literacy; Family literacy; Low-income; Parents; Qualitative research

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