FROM INSIDE THE ARAB FAMILY: WHAT FAMILY LITERACY PRACTICES

OCCUR WHEN RAISING BILINGUAL AND BILITERATE CHILDREN?

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Living in the United States creates unique challenges in biliteracy and bilingualism for the Arab family. While extant literature provides insight into the literacy interactions and experiences of families from many other cultures now living in the U.S., there is next to nothing regarding the Arab family literacy experience. Thus, knowledge about the literacy activities Arab families engage in as they gain access to and knowledge of a new culture and language is important. The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the literacy practices of the Arab families raising bilingual and biliterate children in the U.S. This study , using methodology based on ethnographic approaches, investigated the literacy events, behaviors and interactions which occurred within one Arab family over a 16-week period. A second group of participants were 5 other Arab families living in the U.S. Data sources included video and audio recordings, fieldnotes, observations, journals, informal interviews, and artifacts of children's literacy. The researcher and the participants engaged as co-participants in the research. Findings showed that driving factors behind home literacy practices were religious beliefs and the imminence of return to the home country. Arab mothers were found to yield a heavy influence on the pursuit of literacy, as well as the consistency of literacy learning events in the home. Findings should contribute to helping parents of children with different cultural backgrounds and languages provide the most effective types of support in the home instruction to develop fluency in both the new and the primary language. Information gathered would also help teachers bring together these children with their peers and the subject matter to create a positive synergy wherein all learners can be successful.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the soul of my father,

to my mother for her blessings,

and to my wife and my children

for their love, endurance, and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Around 1,063,732 persons legally immigrated to the in the year 2002 (BCIS, 2003). An increase in immigrants coming to the U.S. means more and more people find themselves in situations where learning English becomes a necessity. This has created both a growing concern for and focus on literacy instruction for children and adults in English for speakers of other languages (ESL) or English as foreign language (EFL) contexts (Ediger, 2001).

People come to the for several reasons. Some come with the intention of making it their ultimate home; others view their stay as a transitional stage in their lives during which time they will achieve certain goals such as obtaining an academic degree, and/or doing some kind of business prior to returning home. Despite the diversity in their objectives, most newcomers share the same desire to find a better life for themselves and for their families (Ogbu, 1983).

Upon arrival in the, these people, whom we might call language learners/users of English (Cook, 2001), vary in their English language proficiency. While some are fluent, others do not have even the basic interpersonal communication skills. They struggle to meet their daily needs because they are unable to completely express themselves. In many families, like those participating in this study, the father is the most literate in the new language. Family members, especially the mother and children, have been exposed to English as a school subject in their home country (if at all) and have little or no opportunity for language acquisition. These families face an enormous challenge requiring them to become as literate as possible as quickly as possible, enough so they can survive the new life- not only to manage their daily routine, be

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successful in their program of study, find employment if needed, and/or to support their children in their school work.

While learning the new language and culture brings its own set of challenges, an equal or greater challenge for immigrant families is to do so without abandoning their cultural identity and their heritage as expressed in their cultural traditions and their first language. Parents who wish to retain the first language and cultural traditions do so in the midst of a vastly different majority culture. In cases where children are very young or were born after the family's arrival, parents may find themselves exposing their children to their mother tongue and to English together for the first time.

For Arab families there is a special urgency for children to retain or to achieve proficiency not only in listening and speaking, but also in reading and writing the primary language. While it is considered a privilege to speak more than one language, it is considered shameful for an Arab to lose full command of his pride - the language of the Holy Qur'an, which is at the core of every aspect of life for the devout Muslim (Rabbath, 1986, in Jazzar, 1991). Indeed, all Muslims, regardless of native tongue, memorize and recite the Qur'an in Arabic (Esposito, 2002). Thus, parents would like to see their children succeeding in English, but at the same time they need to see them achieving the same or even better, in Arabic.

This becomes urgent and critical especially for the families who plan to return to their native countries. To those families it would be very distressing to go back home with children incapable of speaking, much less reading and writing properly, in Arabic. Arab families have doubts mixed with fears concerning their children's future in the long run after they go back to their home country. The matter goes beyond communication issues to those of social position and acceptance in the community. Huge concerns occupy parents when they think about

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reconnecting their children with their society in the home country. How will children fare in school and the community if they aren't doing well in Arabic? How will they be able to read the Holy Qur'an?

Perceptions of minority families in the United States.

In a multi-diverse society like the one in the U.S. the cultures of minority families are often not visible and/or are ignored by other groups in society (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). In such a society the mainstream language and culture are typically dominant, and sometimes domineering in ways that make members of minority cultures feel compelled to conform or face rejection. According to typical models of cultural assimilation (Bennett, 2003), the minority child is faced with three choices. First, and through assimilation, the child gives up his original culture in order to be accepted by the macroculture. In the second choice-pluralism, where the macroculture respects and appreciates ethnic diversity, the child retains many of his traditions, such as language, religion, artistic expression, and social customs. Finally, through what is called suppression, the child is segregated from the rest of society, and the macroculture regards him as inferior (p.131).

Culture and schooling.

Culture is integral to every human being from birth. Whether or not that culture is accepted by the majority, it is always there. Without question, a child wittingly or unwittingly brings his home legacy and culture to school. It would be unfair and irrational to expect a child from the minority not to do so as well. There is good evidence that some children fail, not because they lack intellectual abilities or motivation, but rather, because their homes and the school learning lives lack congruence (Paratore, 2003). The works of Auerbach (1989), Cairney and Munsie (1995), Cairney and White (1999), Delgado-Gaitan (1991), Heath (1983), Taylor and Dorsey-

Gains (1988), White (2002), among others, support this view, indicating that literacy practices in minority families are often not in accordance with literacy practices valued by the school. Still, this should not devalue the existence and the importance of literacy in these homes simply by virtue of the fact that different literacy practices may take place.

Just as the mainstream culture wields its power over many aspects of the daily lives of minority families, it also controls what should and should not be learned in schools. The people in power decide what should be in the school curriculum (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Freire & Maceedo, 1987). This can create a disconnect between school culture and literacy and home culture and literacy, reducing the chances for effective literacy learning for a growing population within the American schools. In the immigrants are the fastest-growing sector of the child population, with one in five children coming from an immigrant household (Suarez-Orozco & Gardner, 2003, October 22). In a multiethnic society, the mismatch between school and home may be particularly pronounced for smaller, less represented ethnic groups such as Arabs.

Arabs in America.

Forced by economic necessity, personal advancement, and even safety from the horrors of the Ottoman Empire, the first major wave of Arab immigrants came to North America during the 1870s. Later, another major wave of Arab immigrants came beginning during World War II and lasting until the present time (Suleiman, 1999). The current population of Arabs living in the U.S. is difficult to determine exactly because of the varied classifications used by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The most frequently cited figure is two and one-half to three million (Suleiman, 1999).

The state of Arabs living in the has only recently become of interest to a broad audience. In his book *Arabs in America: Building a New Future* Suleiman (1999) states in the preface,

"Until the past 20 to 30 years scholars ignored or were ignorant of Arabs in North America." (p. xi). Suleiman continues, saying in his preface that "Much of the available literature on Arabs in America has not found its way into the main body of scholarship and has instead been restricted to a limited audience." (p. xi). In his opinion "Such a situation is clearly a disservice to the Arab-American community and to the host countries – the United States and Canada." (p. xi). Specifically in regard to the literacy practices of Arab families, the dearth of research is even greater. Indeed, the literacy practices of the Arab family living in the U.S., to the researcher's best knowledge, have never been addressed.

Culture and literacy.

The research of Bloome and Green (1991), Heath (1983), and Taylor (1997), details the richness of home literacy within minority families. In these family settings there are both multiple literacies and multiple literacy practices. In addition, families may use literacy in a wide variety of situations, for a wide variety of purposes, and for a wide variety of audiences (Taylor and Dorsey-Gains, 1988). Sadly, it is frequently the case that differences in literacy practices between home and school are viewed as deficits. This attitude contributes to the incongruity experienced by the minority child, and analogously to the Arab child. It follows that school literacy might become less and less meaningful to the child as long as he does not find it relevant to him. Every child has the right to find his home literacy represented in and respected by his school, teachers, and peers, even if it differs from those of the mainstream literacies. Adults must understand and take action regarding the need for building greater respect for and, if possible, parallels between home and school literacies.

The role of the parent.

In highlighting the role parents play in their children's education, Morrow (2003), in her foreword to *Family Literacy from Theory to Practice,* says, "Parents are the first teachers the children have and are the most important people in the education of their children." (p. vi). Former First Lady Barbara Bush (1995) recognized the role that a family plays in the child's life when she stated: "the joy and all the economic and spiritual benefits of reading should be part of everyone's life, and the family is the place where it all begins." On the other hand, each family has its own private familial world where family members practice their literacy in its many forms which eventually lead to preserve the family cultural identity (Debruin-Parecke & Krol-Sinclair, 2003).

The research of Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, (1998), Epstein (1995), Hart and Risley (1995), Sulzby, Teal, and Kamberelis (1989) echoes the longstanding belief that parents are the child's first teacher. Enz (2003) says, "It is very critical whether parents are aware of their role in their children's literacy development and whether they trust their abilities for such a role" (p. 54). Parents need to be aware that they must become great supporters for their children developing their literacy (Epstein, 1995). Parents must see their daily life interactions within the home as the cornerstone for their children's development.

Family literacy.

Family literacy as a focus of research is relatively recent (Purcell-Gates, 1997). The term "family literacy" was coined in the mid-1980s after the publication of Denny Taylor's landmark study of literacy practices within urban minority families. Taylor's work called attention to the breadth of literacy practices within families in every walk of life as legitimate and valid forms of literacy. This was strikingly different than the former deficit-driven conception regarding

literacy amongst underrepresented and minority groups within the population. Since then, family literacy proponents have worked to mount a "literacy campaign" (Street, 1995) which has been referred to as "a state of the art approach to educational reform" (Auerbach, 1995). Within this framework, the family and home are no longer assumed to be literacy impoverished environments that are a liability; rather, they are recognized for the funds of knowledge they contribute to children's literacy growth and development (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Research supports a strong link between the home environment and children's acquisition of school-based literacy (Clark, 1984; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Morrow, 1993; Teal, 1984; Morrow, 1995). Correlations between literacy-rich environments and reading achievement have been documented in terms of the significance of factors such as parents' educational level, the use of print in the home, the number of the books in the home, and the frequency of parent-child storybook reading events to children's reading achievement in school (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Schools and community agencies should view family literacy as one of the most important elements in literacy development. These agencies, community organizations, policy makers, business leaders, and every stakeholder should look at family literacy as a part of the school curriculum with a coordinator in charge of initiating and supervising programs (Morrow, 1995).

It follows then that family literacy studies should address the diversity of the different literacy practices in the society from a wide perspective in order to contribute to the child's academic success. Research on family literacy should be sensitive to the many literacies and the many ways people value literacy and become literate. It should account for the different cultural backgrounds of the people involved in it (Debruin-Parecke & Krol-Sinclair, 2003) and the different literacy practices taking place in the home in both the first and second language. In

other words, instead of arguing the value of home literacy over school literacy (or vice versa), research on family literacy should be the place where different literacies are explored to the extent that they can be used to inform and respect each other. Teachers and educators would benefit greatly from more information about home literacy practices of every child, regardless of culture so that all needs can be met as effectively as possible.

Arab family literacy in the United States.

Arab families living in the U.S. for the purpose of continuing their education or doing business find themselves in the middle of the conflict between home and school literacy. They are faced with the new responsibility of raising children who are bilingual and biliterate in English and Arabic. Bilingualism and biliteracy transcend mere issues of communication and education since loss of the native language impacts all aspects of life upon returning home: social position, acceptance in the community, religious practices, schooling, and even the potential loss of cultural identity.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

Moving to the U.S. creates unique challenges for the Arab family wanting to raise bilingual and biliterate children. While the literature provides insight into the familial literacy interactions and experiences of families from many other countries who have made their homes in the U.S., the research literature is meager in regard to the Arab family literacy experience. More must be learned about the literacy practices Arab children and their families engage in as they define their identity in the new culture and language. This ethnographic study addresses this gap in the literature through its investigation and analysis of family literacy events over a 16-week period.

Questions of the Study

As with all qualitative research, the initial orienting constructs of the study produced more global questions. In order to cast a wide net, these types of questions helped to define and refine both the conceptual framework and the appropriate sources of data for the study. Question evolution is an iterative process, and as more information became available, the questions were refined even further resulting in the following two questions which served as the guiding questions for this investigation:

1. What are the literacy practices of an Arab family raising bilingual and biliterate children in the?

2. What are the influences on and factors that appear to drive the English and Arabic biliteracy and bilingual practices in the Arab family?

Data sources included video and audio recordings, fieldnotes, observations, memos, journals, informal interviews, and written artifacts of children's writing and drawings at both home and school. The researcher and the participants engaged as co-researchers in the data collection process. In addition to collecting data about my own family as the primary case study, I also interviewed five other Muslim families. These interviews were designed to determine whether or not the concern for biliteracy was present, what types of actions the parents were taking in regard to their children's learning of academic Arabic, and what types of materials and activities these families were using to support literacy in their homes.

Purpose of the Study

There are multiple literacies rather than a single literacy (Barton, 1991; Bloome and Green, 1991; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1997), and individuals may be literate in multiple ways (Bloome and Green, 1991; Goodman, 1997; Taylor, 1997). When children enter the classroom, they come loaded with a wide range of backgrounds in terms of prior knowledge, values,

languages, cultural traditions, and self-perceptions, all of which form the foundation for the literacy events which may occur in the classroom.

The classroom itself has its own culture which typically reflects the dominant or majority culture of the population. Thus, a cultural and linguistic disconnect is frequently an issue for minority children. Two factors can ameliorate this problem. First, the effort the teacher makes to understand the varying cultures in his or her classroom and to ensure those cultures are fairly and properly represented in daily instructional activities and materials can help to build a bridge between the children and the established curricular goals. Second, is the role of the home and family literacy in helping the child not only to function effectively within the culture of the school, but also to do so without losing hold of his dominant culture, language, and identity?

For preschool children, home literacy experiences make a crucial contribution to their emerging literacy. It is equally true for children in bilingual homes that a better literacy environment at home will improve the child's performance and enhance his language skills, thus increasing and refining his bilingualism and biliteracy. The family is an arena in which virtually the entire range of human experience can take place and the assumption that the family exerts significant impact on the outcome of the child's education has been sufficiently strong in recent years to assure us that as the child's first teachers, parents play a major role in their child's literacy development.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the nature and types of literacy practices common in the home of the Arab family living in the raising bilingual and biliterate children and to determine wherever possible the factors and influences on these events.

Significance of the Study

Based on personal experience supported by readings about other families from different ethnicities, I know it is not an easy task for Arab families to accommodate quickly to life in the U.S. Coming to the U.S. creates many challenges for the Arab family. The new life requires acquisition of a second language that differs markedly from the first language, along with learning new literacies and new skills. These learnings must occur in order for the family not only to survive, but hopefully, to thrive. Upon our arrival in the U.S., my family and I were overwhelmed with the differences in almost everything: the people, the language, the society, the new community, and even the architecture of the homes, the stores, the traffic, even the street signs.

No one except me (the head of the family) spoke English fluently when my family and I first arrived to the. My wife has had few formal chances to learn English since her association with native speakers of English has been limited. Wearing the *esharb/hijab* (the scarf Muslim females wear on their heads) and the *jelbab* (a long dress covering the entire body) set her apart and made her very noticeable. Especially after the events of September 11th she often felt alienated and was not always treated respectfully when in public.

We arrived in the U.S. with three children. In spite of the difficulties in the beginning, our eldest child learned the new language in a short time, largely due to school attendance. But for him, acquiring the written form of English has proved more troublesome and has lagged behind his oral language for a while. However, after almost three years of being in the U.S. he speaks English fluently, reads English texts by himself, writes his journals, and spells accurately.

The negative has been that while acquiring a better grasp of English, my son began to lose the command he had of his native language, especially the academic aspects (reading and

writing) of Arabic. His Arabic reading and writing skills have deteriorated, despite his mother's continuous efforts to instruct him. This led to growing concerns on our part as parents, and curiosity about how other Muslim families wishing to raise bilingual children dealt with the cultural clash. Research on the Arab family experience with literacy was almost nonexistent. Thus, the impetus for this study was born.

This study took the lead of being the first to investigate the literacy lives of the Arab family living in the U.S. There is a need to conduct such studies to learn more about Arab family literacy experience and fill this gap in the extant literature. Findings should contribute to helping parents of Arab children and children from other less represented minorities who are living in America. By observing and defining the ways families work to support language learning in the home can inform other families with similar situations and goals. This study also reveals a great deal about the key elements needed for home literacy to be truly supportive of the emerging bilingual child. For teachers, this study defines the influences on and the driving factors behind the literacy practices in the Arab home. This information will prove valuable to the teacher who is truly dedicated to understanding and meeting the needs of every child. Teachers and parents can work together to help bring together these children with their peers and the subject matter to create a positive synergy wherein all learners can be successful.

Definition of Terms

Arab – An individual native to any of the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East or Africa (see chapter 2 for a complete listing of Arabic-speaking countries).

BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) – This refers to conversational fluency in a language. With BICS, one is able to live his or her daily routine and interact socially with others. BICS is achieved within 2 years at the most for immigrant children. This is in contrast to CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) which refers to grade-appropriate academic proficiency in the second language which can take 5 years or more to achieve.

Bicultural – The existence of two distinct cultures.

Biliterate – Ability to read and write in more than one language.

Bilingual – Ability to speak in at least two languages.

Family literacy – Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children and extended   family members use literacy at home and in their community.

Literacy – Literacy involves complex relationships between spoken and written languages, conventions of print, fluency, knowledge of letters, sounds, words, and comprehension (Clay, 1991). All literacy acts are purposeful and embedded within social and cultural contexts (Ferdman, 1990)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It is believed that the practice of literacy within families has existed for centuries (Purcell-Gates, 2000). Although the term "family literacy" was coined soon after Taylor's pioneering work in 1983, family literacy in one form or another was present in every family and was constantly practiced across generations (Debruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair, 2003). But, family literacy as a focus of research is relatively new (Purcell-Gates, 1997). In the 1960s research on child development began to highlight the importance of the early environment for later development and academic success as behavioral theories of learning receded and social learning theories ascended (Purcell-Gates, 2000).

Research on correlations between literacy-rich environments and reading achievement have documented the significance of factors such as parents' educational level, the use of print in the home, the number of the books in the home, and the frequency of parent-child storybook reading events in children's reading achievement in school (Anglum, Bell, & Roubinek, 1990; Basic Skills Agency, 1993; Chaney, 1994; Downing, Ollila, & Oliver, 1975, 1977; Feitelson & Goldstein, 1986; Goldfield & Snow, 1984; Hiebert, 1980, 1981; Share, Jorm, Maclean, Mathews, & Waterman, 1983; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991; Walberg & Tsai, 1985; Walker & Kuerbitz, 1979; Wells, 1979; Wells, Barnes, & Wells, 1984, in Purcell-Gates, 1997).

What does Family Literacy Mean?

What does the concept 'family literacy' mean? In the *Dictionary of Education* Good (1973) defines both family and literacy:

Family: (3) (census) a group of two or more persons, related by blood, marriage, or adoption and residing together (p. 235).

Literacy: (1) strictly, the bare ability to read and write. (2) More broadly, ability to read and write at the level of the average fourth-grade pupil (p.342).

There is a debate going around the most accurate definition for family literacy, and no consensus has been reached. There is no single narrow definition of family literacy that can do justice to the richness and complexity of the families and the multiple literacies that are part of their everyday lives (Taylor, 1997). Cited in Debruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair (2003) both Gadsden (2000) and Purcell-Gates (2000) agree that "most educators consider 'family literacy' to be a vague concept that has not linked recent methodologically sound and applicable research with sound practices, effective strategies, and resulting outcomes" (p.2).

According to some educators, and the dominant family literacy programs, family literacy is about teaching parents (mostly low socioeconomic parents) and their children to incorporate mainstream school-like literacy practices as a way of improving their children's academic performance (Purcell-Gates, 1997). Opposing this "deficit-driven" stance, Taylor (1997) and Auerbach (1995), among others, assert that research has documented that there are many ways of incorporating literacy into families other than injecting school practices into homes (Purcell-Gates, 1997).

Since there is no clear consensus on what family literacy means, and the complexity of this concept may prevent having a single clear definition, we might resort to some basic tenets that can probably be agreed on (Morrow, 1995). The Family Literacy Commission, as documented in Morrow (1995), has published a brochure that offers the following definition:

> Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Sometimes, family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children "get things done." These events might include using drawing or writing to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; making lists; reading and following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversations, reading, and writing. Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives. Family literacy activities may also reflect the

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ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved (Morrow, Paratore, & Tracey, 1994, pp. 7-8).

As research points out, there is a general agreement that the term family literacy first emerged from descriptive ethnographies like Taylor's pioneering work (1983) supported by other research in the field (Barton, 1994; Taylor & Dorsey-Gains, 1988; Purcell-Gates, 1995,1996; Teale, 1986).

<div align="center">Assumptions about and Trends in Family Literacy</div>

Family literacy has come to be seen as "a state of the art approach to educational reform" (Auerbach, 1995, p. 643), and, according to Street (1995), it can be said to have gained the status of "literacy campaign". Shortly after Taylor's pioneering book Family Literacy in 1983, many of the established family literacy programs focused on transmitting school-like literacy practices into the home. Parents with limited English proficiency have to become their children's tutors through performing "structural academic activities that reinforce schoolwork" (Simich-Dudgeon, 1987). Those programs in existence take many forms ranging from competency-based to behavior modification methods but share a goal: to strengthen the ties between the home and the school by transmitting the culture of the school literacy through the vehicle of the family in a unidirectional process, i.e., school to parents to children.

The existent models of family literacy contain assumptions that do not correspond to the realities of many English language learners (ELL) families' life. The first misassumption is the belief that minority students come from literacy-impoverished homes where education is not valued or supported. Actually, it seems that this stance is not supported by ethnographic work. In defeating this assumption, the work of Taylor and Dorsey-Gains (1988) found that families use literacy for a wide variety of purposes (social, technical, and aesthetic) and for a wide variety of audiences, and in a wide variety of situations. Snow (1987) says, "It seems then that explanations

implicating the absence of literacy in low-income homes as the source of children's reading failure are simply wrong" (p.127). Other researchers (Chall & Snow, 1982; Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Diaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1986) all have refuted the notion that poor minority and immigrant families do not value or support literacy development. On the contrary, many families see literacy and schooling as the key to mobility, to changing their status, and preventing their children from suffering as most of their parents did (Ogbu, in Spindler, 1987, p. 273).

The second misassumption is the belief that success is limited by the parents' ability to support school-like activities in the home; i.e., the ability of non-literate parents to initiate literacy activities that meet the school literacy criteria. Actually, context provided by parents and the natural occurring of literacy practices and experiences in the home may be more important than any transfer of skills (Tizard, Schofield, & Hewison, 1982). Research from Taylor (1983) and Taylor and Dorsey-Gains (1988) provides evidence that a wide range of home experiences and interaction patterns characterize homes of successful readers. The absence of school-like literacy practices from the home of the minority does not indicate a lack of literacy in that household. This absence does not, and should not give the right to the majority in any community to inject the minority families with the most-dominant cultural practices. Each family has its own heritage, values, beliefs, traditions, and cultural practices of which it feels proud and is not willing to trade for something else.

The third misassumption states that "home factors determine who succeeds." This assumption can put the minority family in the position of being a scapegoat for the wrong doings of others. Because the family literacy practices are different than academic or standard literacy practices, some conclude that this represents an absence of literacy altogether. Many majority group members point to this as the reason for the failure of minority children in school. This

shifts the responsibility to the minority families in an attempt to disguise the truth behind the many social, economic and political problems which are endemic to the systems in which children are educated. Contrary to this assumption and most interesting is that Heath's (1983) study found not a lack of literacy but a difference in the ways that literacy was used and perceived in these homes.

Taylor and Dorsey-Gains (1988) argue that it is the lack of social, political, and economic support for parents in dealing with contextual concerns that put children at risk. Also, Diaz et al, (1980) confirms the importance of situating literacy in its social context. This necessitates the use of the home language for communication within the family and as a foundation for the children's academic success. Furthermore, Auerbach and Wallerstein (1987) found that the quality of the work improves when the content is most closely linked with students' real concerns. Within such an understanding, literacy can become as a tool for discussing, shaping, and improving the social context.

At the beginning of the 1990s, rhetoric of "deficit" was replaced with "strengths." A new generation of family literacy perspectives has emerged opposing the deficit programs and calling for a focus on family strengths, cultural sensitivity, celebrating of diversity, and empowering parents. But the success of the new family literacy programs contains new dangers. The reality of the post-deficit generation is monolithic representing more of a "neodeficit" ideology wherein the discourse of strengths may serve the function of legitimizing that ideology (Auerbach, 1989). Auerbach makes the argument that these programs function under a new version of the "deficit hypothesis", which assumes that the parents lack the essential skills to promote school success in their children. Auerbach continues to argue that there is a gap between research and

implementation saying, "the existing models for family literacy programs seem not to be informed by ethnographic research" (p. 57).

Such a narrow definition for family literacy, acknowledging family literacy as performing school-like literacy and looking at social-contextual demands as obstacles, is unfair and must be overcome so that learning can take place. Such a narrow definition does not acknowledge the family's social reality and does not acknowledge families as a source of power and as funds for knowledge and strengths. Rather, it looks at families as lacking even the essential skills in literacy and parenting.

Until that perception of inferiority changes from one that depicts minority homes as swamps for disability lacking in knowledge and skills and undereducated to one that perceives families as funds of knowledge and sources for strength; only then we will witness a true development at all levels; economic, social, educational, and political. However, the tendencies of the new generation models fall within three categories: intervention prevention, multiple literacies, and the social change approach (Auerbach, 1989).

Intervention prevention approach.

According to the intervention prevention approach, literacy problems are rooted in undereducated parents' inability to promote positive literacy attitudes and interactions in the home. Objectives of this model are framed in terms of "breaking the intergenerational cycle of under-education and poverty, one family at a time, by changing the messages communicated in the home (National Counsel for Family Literacy, 1994). Family and intergenerational literacy programs are intended to improve the literacy of educationally disadvantaged parents and children based on the assumption that improving the literacy skills of parents results in better educational experience for their children (Kerka, 1991).

The stand of this model is very clear; there is no literacy appreciated except the one represented by the mainstream literacy which dominates the curriculum in schools and all other aspects of life. Minority homes lack the right literacy practices and skills, and if there is something of literacy, it is inadequate to ensure the child's success. Therefore, the mission is to transmit the mainstream's cultural literacy to those homes either to replace the inappropriate one or to change it completely. Either way, the stand is disguising the truth regardless of the hidden agendas.

Auerbach in "Toward a Social-Contextual Approach to Family Literacy" (1989) critically analyzes family literacy programs that focus on teaching parents to do school-like literacy activities in the home. She pursues to claim that the theoretical stance of these programs does not stand on sound current research. Auerbach argues that this approach shifts the burden from genetic or linguistic factors to social or educational factors locating the source of literacy, economic and educational problems with deficiencies in family literacy practices and attitudes.

From the perspective of this model, the remedy is framed in terms of changing family behaviors and attitudes. Such programs often are framed in terms of family strengths but may fall into the trap of ignoring research about cultural variability in discourse styles and literacy practices promoting cultural-specific norms and values, and decontexualizing family life, resulting in putting responsibility for social problems on family shoulders. The danger of this model is that it serves the ideological function of scapegoating marginalized people for problems that originate in the broader socioeconomic structure.

Multiple-literacies approach.

The multiple-literacies approach defines the problem as a mismatch between culturally variable home literacy practices and school literacies. So, it sees the solution as investigating and

validating students multiple literacies and cultural resources in order to inform school (Moll, 1992; Street, 1995). Multiple-literacies approach promotes empowerment through affirmation of cultural identity and community building. Street (1995) argues that people with literacy difficulties in some part of their lives already have some knowledge of literacy and live in cultural settings where various kinds of literacy are valued. The task, then, is to listen to the students and find out about their lives and cultural contexts and to make room for their literacy practices in teaching.

Social change approach.

Finally, the social change approach encompasses all principles of the multiple-literacies approach and goes beyond that by placing emphasis on issues of power as well as culture. Auerbach (1993) presents a social-contextual approach in which community concerns and cultural practices inform curriculum development as an alternative. Within such a curriculum, teachers should look at schoolwork in the context of the client's life giving the priority of the demands over the school assignment. The teachers' role is to connect what happens outside the classroom to what happens inside. The central assumption of this perspective is that problems of marginalized people originate in a complex interaction of political, economic, and social factors, rather than in family inadequacies or differences between home and school cultures.

The social change goals focus more on changing the institutions and addressing the conditions that cause marginalization than on changing the families to fit the mold of the majority culture. This work is informed by the work of Paulo Freire (1981) and others who argue that literacy must be linked to a critical understanding of the social context and to changing oppressive conditions. From a Freirean perspective, the most important features are problem

posing and dialogue in which students contribute concrete knowledge and the teacher contributes knowledge about reading and writing.

Gadsden's (1995) words speak to this end arguing that when participants are part of the decision making process of a program that is intended to help them, the program becomes more effective and the effect more durable. Actually, literacy becomes meaningful to students to the extent that it relates to their daily life realities and helps them to act on them (Freire, 1970). On the other hand, school-based family literacy programs assume that targeted individuals have little to offer and the school must determine the forms of literacy that are acceptable for the family. Referring to the model as "deficit-driven," Taylor (1998) challenges educators to redefine the relationship of literacy to poverty and socioeconomic status and to acknowledge the wealth of knowledge members of these families offer.

Family Literacy and Social Justice

Current rhetoric revolves around the deficiency of schools and how the public education system does a disservice to students and creates huge obstacles for them. On the other hand, schools are not capable to lead the educational march alone, and there should be a back up line that takes on the responsibility and bridges the gaps. Kozol (1985) says that early child development depends upon a reassuring backup from committed parents who have competence equivalent to their commitment. Most teachers believe they are not alone responsible for teaching. They strongly believe that parents are even more responsible and have a role to play that may exceed the one of the school. Darling (1992, cited in Auerbach, 1995) said that "the seeds of school failure are planted in the home, and we cannot hope to uproot the problem by working only within the schools, we must approach it through the family" (p. 5).

Research supports a strong link between the home environment and children's acquisition of school-based literacy (Clark, 1984; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Morrow, 1993; Teal, 1984; Morrow, 1995). Auerbach (1995) points out that family literacy has become a new buzzword in the last 10 years, and it is receiving enormous attention from policy makers, researchers, and practitioners. Family literacy is being touted as a new solution to the problems of schooling. Arguing against parents helping their children acquire literacy was perceived as unlikely to happen (Auerbach, 1995).

Heath (1983) says that certain ways of using literacy in the home may better prepare students for success in school. Schools and community agencies should view family literacy as one of the most important elements in literacy development. These agencies, community organizations, policy makers, business leaders, and every stakeholder should look at family literacy as a part of the school curriculum with a coordinator in charge of initiating and supervising programs (Morrow, 1995). So saying, there should be a middle ground where schools and parents get together and live up to their ideal roles and do their best to help children access literacy in its many forms.

It is in the nature of being human to look for something to hold accountable for our failures and mistakes. The "blame the families" hypothesis, coined by Auerbach (1995), is the scapegoat for the deficiency in the economic, educational, and political performance saturated by racial segregation and chauvinism. Thus, blame the families may serve the important ideological function of deflecting attention away from the very conditions that give rise to literacy problems like poverty, unemployment, and inadequate healthcare and housing (Auerbach, 1995).

Taylor (1997) says that the recent focus on family literacy that is seemingly designed to bring more literacy to parents and children is actually an effort to shift the blame for poverty and

underemployment onto the people least responsible for and least able to struggle against the systematic inequalities of modern societies. Local knowledge is not always appreciated and local literacies are not always recognized. Under the present political conditions, working for literacy involves becoming part of the struggle for social justice (Taylor, 1997).

Edwards (1990a) supports the creation of a model that increases the matches and decreases the mismatches between home and schooling. Perhaps the key to the success of this model lies in giving the lead to home to inform the school in terms of educational practices. Schools would be better served if they were to take advantage of parents' participation to inform and to enhance their performance. I, and perhaps many other people in and/or out of education, would like to see schools inviting parents to offer their experience to solve many behavioral, educational, and achievement problems for our children.

We would like to see schools recognizing the cultural and language resources of families (Taylor, 1997). On the other hand, we would like to see family literacy as the power that enables parents and/or caregivers to discuss the social and educational issues. We would like to see schools as well as teachers importing from this rich source what could contribute to rich and active teaching-learning practices. This will work to link what is going on inside the classroom to the real life of the students. We would like to have parents seeing family literacy as the tool to address the problems that face these families (Auerbach, 1995).

<div align="center">Literacy at Home</div>

It is highly unlikely to find anyone who argues against the principle that "parents are the first teachers" for their children (Morrow, 1995). Parents and/or other caregivers are potentially the most important people in the education of their children. Children learn the skills their parents pass to them. In most homes skills and literacy interactions are initiated mainly by

mothers who "assume the leadership roles in the family" (Leichter in Taylor, 1997) due to their husbands being busy and/or out of home most of the day.

Since the families participating in this study seek to raise bilingual and biliterate children, then literacy practices in the native language are required as well as practices in the second language. Literacy in the mother tongue can enhance literacy in a second language; conversely, ignoring the home language and/or literacy in the home language has the potential to delay literacy in a second language (Uttech, 1997).Furthermore, literacy is embedded in the everyday activities that are a part of family life. Literacy itself is not usually the primary focus of such activities; rather, the goal is the accomplishment of the task in which the use of literacy plays a part (Uttech in Taylor, 1997).

In all societies family events include literacy practices in which family members take part in that environmental interaction. Literacy practices are not limited just to reading books but extend to include other practices like watching TV, reading a newspaper, reading and/or writing a letter, drawing a picture, reading street signs, playing, checking mail, filling coupons, filling application forms, and other practices that a child consciously or unconsciously engages in. Based on this argument, literacy becomes something bigger and wider than reading a book and becomes a multilayered and multifaceted construct that contains every learning action and event that occurs in the life of an individual while proceeding in his continuous learning about the surroundings. Literacy is embedded in the mundane of our daily life. Within this perspective, literacy functions as a multipurpose tool to fulfill the diversified needs of the daily life of a human being.

By the same token, it is a shortsighted vision to consider reading aloud as the only way to achieve literacy. This is not meant to undermine the importance of reading aloud but to suggest

other practices that may contribute to discipline, educate, and enhance the child's learning abilities. Goodman (1997) believes that there are many activities equally important but different than reading aloud in which children are immersed in literacy events that positively influence their development. Most important is to bring to the teachers' attention the various literacy practices that occur in the children's homes that reflect the cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs of families from different backgrounds, different roots, and different origins.

The teacher should expand his understanding of literacy to include not just the school like literacy practices including worksheets, handouts, and homework assignments, but to include every action that the child invests his effort in along his learning process and to consider the diverse backgrounds of those children and their families' cultural heritage. School curriculum should address the many literacies and literacy practices that occur at home through preparing educational programs for parents and teachers as well. These interactions pave the road for the later official institutional education in the life of the child. "What schools would have been like if a broader definition of literacy was accepted and we saw our tasks as supporting and extending everyone's way of knowing?" (Harste in Taylor, 1997, p. 64).

<center>Arabs in America</center>

But before addressing the issue of literacy, family literacy, and what counts as literacy interaction for Arabs, there is a need to give a historical background about Arabs in the before historically investigating the Arabs' perspective toward literacy, and what literacy studies have been done in the Arab world.

Forced by economic necessity and personal advancement, the first Arab immigrants came to North America during the 1870s forming the first major wave that lasted until the World War II. Later, there was another major wave of Arab immigrants that started from World War II to the

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present time (Suleiman, 1999). About the origins of those immigrants and their divisions

Suleiman says;

> The term "Arab-Americans" refers to immigrants to North America from the Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and their descendents. The Arabic-speaking countries today include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, pre-1948 Palestine and the Palestinians, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Somalia and Djibouti are also members of the League of Arab States and have some Arabic-speaking populations. Most Arab immigrants of the first wave came from the Greater Syria region, especially present-day Lebanon, and were overwhelmingly Christians; later immigrants came from all parts of the Arab world, but especially from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen and had large numbers of Muslims among them. Although most Muslim (Arab immigrants have been Sunni reflecting the population in the region), there is a substantial *Shi'a* minority. Druze started immigrating in small numbers late in the nineteenth century (p. 1).

After World War I and after the introduction of very restrictive quota systems in the and Canada, the Arab community felt an intensified sense of isolation and separation. This helped an assimilation process in the American society, which was a trend lead by the American-born children of the Arab immigrants. Consequently, the Arab community became part of the American society assuming a greater role in public and political services. Suleiman (1999) states that "Whereas first-generation Arabs in America managed as best as they could in an alien environment, their children were thoroughly immersed in American society and culture-and their first or only language was English" (p. 5). In spite of this, the Arabs in America and Canada were still receiving insults and charges of inferiority based on their race and color. Even the and Canadian authorities denied Arabs their rights to "naturalization and citizenship because they allegedly were Asian and did not belong to the white race" (Suleiman, 1999).

As a result, Americanization was encouraged and was seen as escape from such a status. Suleiman says that this new attitude "was seen as a process of shedding old loyalties, the traditional culture, and the Arabic language. The children, therefore, grew up barely aware of

their Arabic heritage" (p. 8). This lasted until the second wave of Arab immigrants arrived who helped to revive the first Arab immigrants as an ethnic community and revive their interests in their relinquished heritage and pride. The second wave of Arab immigrants was different, in terms of their higher level of education, their diverse background, and the driving reasons for leaving their homeland. Regional conflicts and wars were added to the second wave immigrants' list as main reasons for their immigration. Also, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the one-sided stance that the American media played provoked the search-for identity among Arab immigrants in the . A wake-up call for Arabs in America required them to fight the negative stereotyping and the hostility in their new society. Suleiman (1999) explains this negative stereotyping and hostility by saying;

> The most popular explanation for the negative stereotypes Americans hold about Arabs is that they are ignorant of the truth because they have not read or have read inaccurate and false reports about Arabs and have not come into contact with Arabs. According to this view, the stereotypes are mainly the result of propaganda by and on behalf of Zionist and pro-Israeli supports. Another view sees hostility and violence against Arab Americans as anti Arab racism and is believed to be present in all sectors of American society (p. 13).

According to Suleiman, scholars neglected Arabs in the wittingly or unwittingly until almost the beginnings of the 1970s and 1980s. Suleiman (1999) said in the preface to his book "Until the past 20 to 30 years scholars ignored or were ignorant of Arabs in North America" (p. iv). Suleiman demonstrates that "Much of the available literature on Arabs in America has not found its way into the main body of scholarship and has instead been restricted to a limited audience" (p. iv). In his opinion "Such a situation is clearly a disservice to the Arab-American community and to the host countries-the and Canada" (p. iv).

Nevertheless, Arabs in America have great achievements on more than one level. "Since the 1960s, there has always been at least one representative of Arab background in the U.S. Congress. They also have done well and fared better economically than the general population

average in many areas" (Suleiman, 1999). According to Suleiman (1999) the 1980 and 1990 U.S. census data show that Arab Americans reach a higher educational level than the American population as a whole.

Concerning the percentage of the Arab community living in the , it is hard to tell exactly because of the different classifications the U.S. Naturalization Department uses with Arab Americans. But according to U.S. immigration figures, which generally are considered to be low, the most frequently cited figure is two and one-half to three million (Suleiman, 1999).

<center>Family Literacy in the Arab World</center>

Although the literature contains numerous studies in family literacy for families from many societies and ethnicities, it does not tell much about literacy in the Arab family. There is a great shortage in Arab family literacy research that investigates family literacy practices, events, and results in the Arab family. Jazzar (1991) in his dissertation asserts the fact that "not much is known about what really goes on in Arab homes related to the use of language and especially how home-life influences literacy" (p.1).

In regard to research on Arab family-life and literacy interaction, I did not find any document or study done on Arab families specifically living in the U.S. On the other hand, Jazzar (1991) describes the research done on Arab home-life and its impact on literacy done in the Arab world as scanty and shallow. His research has been about "how Arab home-life in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) possibly provides and/or limits opportunities for six U.A.E university students to gain literacy in their native language, Arabic, and their foreign language, English, especially literacy as it is related to reading ability" (p.2).

So saying, there is a need to know more about the complex literacy interactions that take place within an Arab family context in order to fill the gaps and to let diverse cultures learn from

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each other. Hence, this study is pioneering in its addressing the literacy practices for the Arab family living in the U.S. who has access to new language, culture, and interaction with people from diverse backgrounds. This kind of research (to the best of the researcher's knowledge) has never been done.

Regarding Arabs and literacy, there are many questions to which we would like to have answers. Such questions that might be asked would be; what is literacy for Arabs? How do Arabs look at literacy? How do Arabs value literacy? What literacy practices take place in the Arab family? And, what do we know about literacy in the Arab world? All this forms the heart and soul of this research.

Due to the shortage on research in family literacy done on Arabs either in the Arab states or abroad, few articles and reports found their way to my hands. Most of the documents that I could access stress on the fact that there were continuous efforts in the Arab states, with their rich background of Islamic and Arab civilizations, to enhance the cultural development through different forms and levels of education. The focus for most of the countries in the region is the promotion of literacy and basic education (Abu-Rhabia, 1995 #35; El Atrash, 1992 #36).

Jazzar (1991) in his dissertation briefs us about literacy in the United Arab Emirates where his research took place saying;

> Arab home literacy seems to occur when students read a great deal, when they are encouraged to read a great deal, and when they are given support-whether it is financial or moral support-to succeed. Home literacy happens when there are kind words by husbands, fathers, brothers, or sisters, having adequate books in home libraries, and through spending many hours on reading…literacy also implies all kinds of reading and writing activities the students practice at home and the serious efforts they make to overcome some of the L1 and L2 learning problems (p.46).

Right after the Arab states gained their independence, they established The Arab League in 1945 as an institution to take care of most, if not all, the affairs within the Arab world and to

advance Arab interests throughout the world. Literacy was one of the most important issues that concerned The Arab League and which later on led to the creation of the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) in 1970. Literacy is a hot issue in the Arab world because of the high rate of illiteracy in the Arab countries. Literacy programs in Arab world exist to foster reading, writing, and math.

Historically speaking, literacy was propagated in Arab societies through the mosques and driven by religious reasons. Most Arabs are Moslems by virtue of birth. Islam, as stated in the Glorious Book of Allah (the Holy Qur'an that God revealed to his Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him [PBUH]) requires all Moslems to be literate. Actually, the first verse that *Allah* (God) (*Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala* [SWT]) revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) more than 14 centuries ago started with the word "read". The approximate translation for the first verses reads:

> In the Name of Allah The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists)…Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen, He has taught man that which he knew not (*Surah* XCVI)

The Holy Qur'an is full of verses that call Muslims to invest more time and efforts in becoming literate. Also, the *sunnah* (the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet Mohammad) (PBUH) is full of examples that witness on the outstanding efforts in calling for and supporting literacy. For example, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has asked the captives of "Bader" (site of the first battle between the Muslims and the disbelievers) to teach ten illiterate Muslims reading and writing before they (the captives) could be set free. At this pivotal moment of establishing the new Muslim state, acquiring literacy became paramount to all true believers. After that, mosques became the place were Muslims went to get their education and especially the *Qur'anic* education. History tells us so many examples about pioneers in every field of science who

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graduated from the mosques. Later on, this had developed to establishing the *maktab* as an institution for education. Street (1984) in his ethnographic study that he carried out in Iran talked about literacy and the role of the *maktab*.

Moving to the 20th century, and in specific since The First Alexandria Conference for Literacy (Oct 1964), and due to efforts made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Second Alexandria Conference (Dec 1971), important changes have taken place in the field of literacy in the Arab states; e.g., looking forward to achieve a balance between formal and non-formal education and to link them with the modernization of society. Also, literacy programs in most Arab states were designed in a social context to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic skills to those adults who did not acquire them in their young age (Mustaffa-Kedah, 1977).

The definition for literacy which has been adopted by ALECSO and ARLO (Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization and Arab Literacy and Adult Education Organization, respectively) and presented to the Third Alexandria Conference for Literacy based on the findings of a field survey took the form of the functional literacy which was defined as the individual's ability to:

- Read a written or printed paragraph with comprehension and fluency

- Take down correctly a dictation passage

- Express comprehensibility

- Read and write numbers and perform arithmetical operations

- Improve work

- Know rights and obligations and participate in the development of the society

I want to emphasize that until this moment, and based on the accessible literature, I have

not found any document that talks about family literacy in the Arab family living abroad. Jazzar

(1991) in his literature review says, "Most of the studies which have been in/about Arab

countries touched either the social changes and culture, or teaching and learning English as a

foreign language" (p.54). It seems that there is a need for more work and thorough research to be

done in this area in order to get a more comprehensive understanding and a clearer picture about

what family literacy means for an Arab family, and what family literacy interactions take place

within the family context.

Effective Emergent Literacy Practices

Looking at the emergent literacy through a sociocultural framework (Purcell-Gates, 1986,

1995) researchers have documented that what young children learn about written language

before schooling is constrained by the ways in which important others in their families and social

communities use print (Clay, 1976; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995, 1996; Schieffelin &

Cochran-Smith, 1984; Taylor, 1985; Taylor & Dorsey- Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986) . As young

children participate in literacy events within their homes and communities, they learn that print is

a language signifier about the ways in which print represents meaning, the code, and the

conventions of encoding and decoding the print (Clay, 1975; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1986;

Goodman & Allwerger, 1981; Harste et al., 1984; Hiebert, 1980, 1981; Mason, 1980).

Storybook reading is the home literacy practice most widely perceived to be related to

young children's later success in learning to read and to write in school (Burgess & Lonigan,

1996; Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994 in Purcell-Gates 1997). The kind of and the level of child

involvement in family literacy events affects directly the level of child literacy and performance

development. Senechal et al. (in Purcell-Gates 1997) found significant effects for the level of

involvement by the child during the reading. Children who only listened scored lower on comprehension and on production of new words than those children who participated actively by pointing and/or labeling (Purcell-Gates, 1997).

Whitehurst et al. (1988) found that children of parents who asked more open-ended questions, function/attribute questions, responded appropriately to children's attempts to answer these questions, and decreased their frequency of straight reading and questions that could be answered by pointing- those children had significantly higher mean length of utterances (MLU), higher frequency of phrases, and lower frequency of single words. Both studies reveal significantly the importance of teaching parents efficient ways and techniques to read to and interact with their children at home. The kind of literacy children acquire at home suggests that these practices facilitate later reading achievement among children which can be explained by different home-literacy experience which in turn led to a national focus on and to the establishment of family literacy programs (Purcell-Gates, 1997).

Ethnography: The Study of Culture

Culture is the central focus in ethnographic research. Ethnography is concerned in the unique characteristics that individuals of a culture establish for themselves. In Goetz and LeCompte's (1984) words "Ethnographies recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people." An ethnographer looks for social organizations, economic practices, family structure, religious practices and beliefs, political relationships, and ceremonial behavior to help him understand a society under study. Individuals in a particular society may establish the unique characteristics through "cultural acquisition", where individuals themselves seek to acquire or not acquire the values, beliefs,

concepts of the common culture; and/or "cultural transmission", where the dominant culture decides on what others might learn (Gall, M. D., Gall, J.P., & Borg, 2003).

Since the ethnographer seeks to understand unique features of individuals within a culture in a particular society, how to gain entry to that society without breaking the rules or the privacy of the individuals in the society becomes a key issue. At the heart of an ethnographic work are observations and interviews; however, some cultural, social, and/or religious reasons may restrict or block entry to a certain group or society. The researcher should be careful and sensitive enough in order to win the trust of the participants of the society. Actually, the researcher should strive to reach the point where the participants accept the researcher's presence among them. This might require the researcher to live in the society, learn their language, and attend their special ceremonies, similar to what, for example, Mead (1930) did in her study in Guinea (Mead, 1930).

Concerned in discovering constructs and patterns to explain the participant behavior, the ethnographer, while collecting his/her data, might not limit him/her self to certain data collection procedure. Instead, the ethnographer uses a full range of data collection techniques and data resources, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in order to capture more comprehensive picture he/she is looking for.

Ethnographic research is holistic in nature seeking to construct descriptions for the phenomena to generate patterns that help in interpreting the phenomena (Goetz, & LeCompte, 1984). These techniques might include observation, collecting artifacts, keeping detailed records and interpretations, note-taking, interviews, and any other procedure that helps the researcher to acquire better understanding and perspective (Gall, M. D.; Gall, J.P.; & Borg, 2003).

At the moment the researcher starts collecting his/her data, data analysis in qualitative research usually begins and frequently shapes the subsequent data-collection efforts. While collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher might modify his/her hypotheses, theories, and interpretations as findings emerge. Then, the ethnographer needs to report his/her findings to the reader as if narrating a story-making the reader travel across the events as if living them for real (Gall, M. D., Gall, J.P., & Borg, 2003). The researcher's job is to be informed by the entire spectrum of knowledge that has been gained throughout the research process (Herrmann, 1989).

By adhering to these ethnographic procedures in carrying out this study, I aimed to bring the literacy interactions in the Arab family to the forefront. Ethnography involves "first-hand, intensive study of features …so readers of it should be able to understand the culture even though they may not have directly experienced it" (Gall, M. D.; Gall, J.P.; & Borg, 2003). The ethnographic work is successful to the extent that data has been gathered from multiple perspectives, carefully analyzed to include the participants' diverse points of view, and scrupulously honest in reflecting the participant observer's understanding gained throughout the extensive research process (Herrmann, 1989).

The methodology of this study was informed by the work of Bogdan (1972), Bogdan & Taylor (1975), Goetz & LeCompte (1984), Spindler & Spindler (1987), and Spradley (1979, 1980). Data has been collected through observations, interviews, field notes, journal logs, audio and video recordings and artifacts. Based on the previously cited works, the study started by (1) identifying the participants/informants, (2) collecting the data, and (3) writing the ethnography. This is not a traditional ethnography but a qualitative case study using ethnographic procedures based on ethnographic theory.

In the next chapter I intend to go through the methods and the detailed procedures according to which this study was conducted.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to describe the nature and types of literacy practices, events, and factors that influence and support those interactions within the Arab family raising bilingual and biliterate Arab children while living in the U.S. While the literature contains an abundance of studies and research carried out on other families from many other countries who have made the U.S. their home, it contains almost nothing about Arab family literacy interactions and experience. The questions guiding this study were: (1) What literacy interactions, events, experiences and artifacts are present within the Arab family living in the U.S.? And (2) What are the influences upon and factors that appear to drive the literacy practices in the Arab family?

Why Ethnography?

"No other research tradition matches the ability of ethnography to investigate the complex phenomenon known as culture" (Gall, M. D., Gall, J.P., & Borg, 2003, p. 87). Looking for an alternative approach to positivism in the 1960s and 1970s, many educational researchers turned to ethnography. Originally developed by anthropologists, ethnography, according to Shimahara (1988), focuses on discovering cultural patterns in human behavior that reflect beliefs, traditions, values, and typical features of the culture.

According to Green and Dixon (2003) ethnography seeks to understand the behavior of the group of people in terms of cultural patterns that describe everyday life practices from an emic (insider) perspective and in which the task of the ethnographer becomes one of discovering the ways in which people go about their daily practices constructing patterns of life, values, and beliefs. Spradley (1980) says that "ethnography is the work of describing a culture…and rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people" (p.3).

Franz Boaz (cited in Gall et al., 2003), in highlighting the ethnographic focus on the emic perspective of the members of the culture in order to get to how they describe their culture, says "If it is our serious purpose to understand the thoughts of a people, the whole analysis of experience must be based on their concepts, not ours" (p.487). The participant-observer, who is a member of the group, is considered the most important instrument in the ethnographic research: "the researcher being 'insider' gets advantage of speaking the language of the group, understanding the local values, and knowing the taboos- the ethnographer knows how to operate within the system and how to get things done" (Herrmann, 1989, p.5). Finally, the research in ethnography should focus on studying the nature of the settings in which culture is manifested (Gall et al., 2003; Goetz & LeCompte 1984; Spradley, 1980).

Goetz & LeCompte (1984) talk about the process of ethnographic research and mandate "investigatory strategies conducive to cultural reconstruction" in the ethnographic design as follows:

1. The strategies used elicit phenomenological data that represent the worldview of the participants being investigated. Participants' constructs are used to construct the research.

2. Ethnographic research strategies are empirical and naturalistic. Participant and nonparticipant observation are used to acquire firsthand, sensory accounts of phenomena as they occur in real world settings.

3. Ethnographic research is holistic, seeking to construct descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward the phenomena.

4. Ethnography is multimodal or eclectic; ethnographic researchers use a variety of research techniques to amass their data. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p.3)

This is a qualitative study using ethnographic procedures based on ethnographic theory. Investigatory strategies used when conducting ethnographic research do not fit in a linear sequence pattern. Instead, carrying out a qualitative study applying ethnographic procedures

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follows a cyclical pattern. Spradley (1980) presents a cyclical model which starts by selecting a research project, asking ethnographic questions, making an ethnographic record, analyzing the ethnographic record, analyzing ethnographic data, writing ethnography, and then the process repeats itself again and again.

Description of Site

This study began in my home and within my family. Due to the intensive nature of the data collection process in this type of study, extended observation in an Arab home was the cornerstone for data collection. Numerous, extended visits to Arab families to collect data, because of social and religious reasons, were unlikely to be facilitated and may even have been prohibited by the head of the families. The best thing a researcher might have expected from these families was to allow him a few visits during which he would have been granted access to males only. Any access to females would have been limited.

Based on previous research (Al-Shaboul, unpublished manuscript) the mother is typically more heavily involved in literacy interactions in the home setting. To have only data collected without ongoing access to at least one Arab female would have severely constrained the scope of this study. Therefore, I selected my family to share this great endeavor and to be my main informants. In my home I had complete and continuous access to all participants as they engaged in literacy events.

I firmly believe that this had offered me the time and the place necessary to collect the data. Doing the research with my family diminished any access-denials or limited access problems that an outsider researcher may face. It also saved me breaking and social, cultural and/or religious restrictions and taboos along with many other social distracters. I also chose this site because I believed to be representative of the Arab community of interest in this study. This

has guaranteed high accessibility to most of the family events to record without being afraid of risking the family privacy. This has also guaranteed the accessibility to the natural family literacy events in their real context.

Participants

This study included two groups of participants. Group 1 (G 1) was my family which consists of my wife, my four children and me. I am a graduate student doing my doctorate in reading. My wife (currently postponing getting a degree in order to take care of our children) is looking forward to continuing her education and to earning a degree in Early Childhood Education after going back to Jordan. We have been in the U.S. for almost three years now.

Our eldest son Alhareth attended second grade upon our arrival to the . He was the one who, because he was immediately immersed in the school environment, suffered the most and was the spark for this study. Our second child, Asia, who is currently experiencing the world of first grade, had a wonderful preschool experience, which greatly facilitated her kindergarten year. The curricular emphasis for her was more traditional, i.e., focusing on socialization, practical skills, and basic concept learning. She was not confronted with the academic demands that Alhareth faced upon our arrival in the U.S. Our third child, Mohammad, was eligible to attend the same preschool that Asia attended a year before. After few months and much to our happiness and our delight, our family received a newborn baby girl whom we called Shahd.

Group 2 (G 2) included five other Arab families who participated in the study through interviews. I sought the participation of the families in the second group because I believe this wider perspective enriched the study and deepened my understanding of Arab family literacy practices through seeking common concerns, beliefs, and practices as far as literacy is concerned.

In order to form the second group, I looked for the participation of the Arab families living in the community. Data has been collected through conducting open-ended and informal interviews.

G 2 in the study consisted of five Arab families from different Arab countries. The group included one Jordanian family, two Palestinian families, one Lebanese family, and one Kuwaiti family. I came to know these families through my school and/or through the local mosque. I approached them regarding their willingness to help with and participate in the study, and all five families agreed. For anonymity purposes, I referred to these families by letters: family A, family B, family C, family D, and family E. At one point prior to data collection, Family E appeared unwilling to participate, therefore I replaced them with a family from Jordan, Family F.

<center>Procedures</center>

This study examined the literacy practices of six Arab families living in the U.S. over a 16-week period. A timeline of the phases of the study appears below. Participant observation was the main technique that I adopted in order to gather the data for the study. The researcher in this study was the main instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I devoted about five hours daily to field work which resulted in almost 350 hours of field notes along with other data sources. It should be mentioned that while these five hours were devoted to taking actual field notes, because I live with the primary subjects in this study, I have included in my findings and interpretations salient observations which may have taken place outside of that timeframe. I constantly made descriptive observations whenever I was engaged in fieldwork. Spradley (1980) says, while talking about descriptive observation, it is "the first and the most important type of observations" (p. 73).

Figure 1. Phases of the study.

Time	Research Focus	Data Sources & Collection Techniques	Analysis Focus	Analysis Techniques
Pre-Field Entry 09/01/03	Seeking the participation of families from the community Preparing necessary equipment for fieldnotes and recording Training participants on recording methods	Securing IRB approval Development of informed consent forms Development of interview protocols Setting up data base to catalogue data Securing data collection equipment	Determining methodological procedures for recording and cataloguing data sources	Applying Spradley's domain and theme analysis techniques
General Phase 09/01/03 to 12/10/03	Field Entry (G1) Interviewing key family members (G2)	Collection of data for G1 and G2 (Fieldnotes, Interviews, Artifacts, Recordings)	Fieldnotes Interview Data Artifacts Recordings	Cataloguing data using domain analysis worksheets NUD*IST® software[*] (coding, data management)
Final Phase 01/15/04	Exiting Field	Audit of data sources	Triangulation of developing data interpretations	Recursive process of redefining/refining categories and data interpretations

I made the effort to assume the role of participant –observer following as closely as possible the model set forth by Spradley (1980): "the participant observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation" with "what is going on here" (54) as the driving question.

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[*] QSR International Pty Ltd., http://www.qsrinternational.com

This helped me get as close as possible to the original data in its original form and context. This required me to take a role in the activities that took place in the context and decide on the most salient data to record (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).

Data collection.

Data sources included video and audio recordings, informal interviews, field notes based on observations, and a collection of written artifacts of children's writings and drawings.

Audio and video recordings. My wife and I have been engaged as co-researchers in the data collection process. I trained my wife to do audio recording and videotaping. The video camera was fixed on a tripod and placed in the corner of the family room. I chose this room because it is the typical congregating place of the family. I carried the remote control with me and was able to turn the camera on to record each literacy event that occurred. If literacy events were repeated with little or no variation, I typically recorded the event only once (For example, if one of the children sat in a chair reading a book alone, I did not videotape the event more than once.) However, if the interaction related to the literacy event was significantly different from the previous instance, I would record the new event. For example, if the children were watching cartoons and the related literacy interaction was drawing pictures of the characters and making a story to go with it, I would videotape this. Then, on another occasion, the children might be engaged in watching cartoons and start acting out the cartoon, I would videotape this very different event. This approach allowed me to record samples of the many different types of literacy behaviors without repetition. Audiotapes were transcribed and videotapes were narrated throughout data collection. In this way I transposed the data from its original, condensed form to its elaborated, expanded form (see Spradley, 1980). This process assisted me in the discovery of the domains which helped in completing the domain analysis phase. These data collection

procedures are considered among the most common methods for data collection cited in most of the reviewed literature (Bloome, 1980; Bloome & Green, 1991; Bogdan, 1972; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Baghban, 1984; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Green & Dixon, 2003; Green & Wallat, 1983; Herrmann, 1989; Spindler & Spindler, 1987; Spradley, 1979, 1980) among others.

Informal interviews. Interviews with the families in G 2 took place in the homes of the families, with one exception to be explained later. Interview times were planned in advance at the convenience of the individual families. In order to maintain the informal atmosphere I desired, my family joined me on these visits. The presence of my wife increased access to female members of the household and definitely increased the amount of information gained from the mothers. Having the children with us allowed me to observe genuine literacy interactions amongst the children. Typically, the interviews lasted about two hours and were completed within a period of 7 weeks. All families were asked in advance if they would agree to allow me to audiotape the interviews; all agreed.

The interview structure was modeled after what Spradley (1979, 1980) calls descriptive question-observation. I entered the interviews with about 10 preconceived grand tour and 10 mini tour questions. See Appendix A for a list of the interview grand tour questions. The grand tour questions were created based on research questions and assumptions. Mini tour questions were follow-up questions that helped explicate and clarify. Some mini tour questions were preconceived, but many were spontaneous and emerged from the conversation as it unfolded. An example of a grand tour question was something like, "Do you have any concerns about your children's use of Arabic?" A mini tour question would be "What are your specific concerns?" The questions initiated through the grand tour led to as many mini tour questions as needed to

obtain clarity and detailed description of literacy events mentioned in response to the grand tour questions.

The grand tour questions were designed to ensure a general overview of everything that might have been occurring in the context. Spradley (1980) suggests nine dimensions that help in formulating the initial questions for observations and the interviews in every social situation:

1. Space: the physical place or places

2. Actor: the people involved

3. Activity: a set of related acts people to do

4. Object: the physical things that are present

5. Act: single actions that people do

6. Event: a set of related activities that people carry out

7. Time: the sequencing that takes place over time

8. Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish

9. Feeling: the emotions felt and expressed

Artifacts. Artifacts (stories, drawings, letters ...etc.) included any work created by one of the children as the result of a literacy event. They were collected to show the great variety of ways in which the children expressed their ideas and interacted with their world using their own forms of literacy. Artifacts were collected and placed in individual folders designated for each child. Samples are referenced throughout the document in various appendices.

Field notes based on observations. Fieldnotes included notes taken during or immediately after observing the children engaged in literacy events. My wife contributed to the field notes by writing in her personal log to capture any moment of literacy that occurred while I was not around. Spradley (1980) urges the participant observer to put all his/her senses to work during

the collection of data. This was especially important for me because the daily interactions of my family are so familiar, I had to heighten my senses to be sure I did not miss any significant literacy moments. My stance, therefore, was one of increased awareness.

Length of time for data collection.

Data collection for this study took place over a period of 16 weeks. Regarding the length of the data collection period, there is no standard length of time that is considered standard across all studies. For an ethnographer, the heart and soul of his work is to gain understanding for the phenomena he is investigating no matter what time it takes him to finish the job. Wolcott (in Spindler & Spindler, 1987) when arguing that ethnography is not the length of time in the field says, "Length of time spent doing fieldwork does not, in-and of-itself, result in 'better' ethnography or in any way assure that the final product will be ethnographic" (p.39). Still, ethnographic research is extremely time intensive, usually requiring an involvement of at least a semester (Herrmann, 1989).

Tracking researcher bias.

"The myth that research is objective in some way can no longer be taken seriously" (Janesick, 2000, p.385). Fetterman (1989) sees bias in ethnographic inquiry as a potentially negative or positive force. If bias is uncontrolled it often serves to undermine the quality of the research. However, if biases are made public and tracked by the researcher, they can serve to limit and focus the research effort in a positive way.

It is especially important in qualitative and ethnographic approaches to data collection and analysis that the researcher owns up to his or her bias from the beginning and track that bias throughout the study as a way of increasing the reader's confidence in the findings and enhancing the credibility of the results. My own biases which could affect my interpretations of

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the findings include the fact that I am a Muslim. In my opinion, full command of academic Arabic is necessary to fully practice Islam. I am also the husband and father of the main participants in the study so there may be certain emotional biases which color my perceptions. However, while collecting data, I was aware of the pitfalls of potentially manufactured literacy events. I was sensitive to possible subjectivity which could arise from the parent-as-researcher relationship with his children which would affect the credibility of the study. Marcia Baghban (1984), who did a case study of the literacy development of her own daughter, states that "While interacting with the child, the observer must make the distinction between her observations and any subjectivity stemming from the relationship with the child or from emotion present in the collecting situation" (p.8). Baghban quotes from the introduction of Glenda Bissex's five-year case study conducted on her son by stating that such methodology is "…an attempt to understand another person through enlightened subjectivity" (1980, p. vi).

While it might be argued that a parent researching his own family would bring too much bias to the study, it is important to consider the richness of data that is collected by one so familiar with the context in which events are occurring naturally and with full access to the site. In normal situations, no one is closer to the child than his parents, and as Huey (1908) said while highlighting the role parents play in the child's education "It all begins with parents reading to children" (p. 332). Who better to capture a full range of child literacy practices than the parent who is most often with the child? Supporting this stance, Baghban (1984) says, "A detailed case study of a child learning language would be virtually impossible for a non- parent researcher." Baghban cites Fowler saying, "No other person will ever know the child, the context of the child's life, and the particular research situation so completely as the parent" (Fowler, 1962, in Baghban, 1984, p. 8). Baghban affirms "no one but a parent would have the opportunity" (p.8).

The parent as researcher is not a new practice or tradition as evidenced in the following

quote from Baghban (1984):

> Researchers in oral language acquisition, who were parents, typically capitalized on such opportunities by studying their own children (Darwin, 1877; Leopold, 1939-1949). The First International Symposium on First Language Acquisition in Florence in 1972 emphasized the important role parent studies have played and continue to play in studying the phenomenon of language (p.8).

Janesick (2000) suggests keeping a critical reflective journal throughout the research

process as a way of tracking one's own biases. Thus, my field notes were my detailed record of

my observations, and my personal log/journal allowed me to track my subjective feelings and

any inherent bias about these observations.

Data Analysis

Making the ethnographic record.

From the first moment I began my study, I started making my ethnographic record. Audio

and videotaping, pictures, artifacts, fieldnotes, and anything related to the literacy practices

became a part of the ethnographic record. The ethnographic record consisted of two accounts:

condensed and expanded. The condensed account included all the notes taken during the actual

field observations represented in phrases, single words, and unconnected sentences. In the

expanded account, I started to fill in details and recall unrecorded events to come up with a full

account about the observed period.

Spradley's (1980) advises that the three principles be strictly followed while compiling

and making the ethnographic record: (a) the language identification principle, (b) the verbatim

principle, and (c) the concrete principle. Spradley argues that "these principles have a single

purpose, to create a more accurate ethnographic record and one that will facilitate ethnographic

analysis" (p. 65).

I recorded my observations and fieldnotes during or soon after observing in order not to lose any valuable data that may contribute to a better understanding for the phenomena under investigation. Spradley (1980) says, "The major part of any ethnographic record consists of writing field note, and the moment you begin writing down what you see and hear, you automatically encode things in language" (p.64). Besides, keeping a journal log/journal account I recorded my personal reactions, feelings, and all the breakthroughs while in the field conducting my study (Spradley, 1980). This, as Spradley says, "enables a person to take into account personal biases and feeling to understand their influences on the research" (p. 72).

Data management.

Before I could develop a plan for data management, I had to have enough data to see what the most logical approach would be. At first, I recorded notes and observations in handwritten form. I initially utilized note cards and post-its and finally settled on notebook paper as the recording medium. Notes were recorded in a more condensed form (original notes, short sentences, key words and phrases). At the end of each data collection period (at least by the end of that particular day) I would remove myself from any distractions and reflect upon and expand my condensed notes into their more elaborated form. After completing all the elaborations of the field notes, I used domain analysis worksheets (See Appendix B) to begin to reduce the data. This helped define the domains in an organized way by providing space for the domain labels and specific examples.

About six weeks into the study I was able to acquire a laptop computer which streamlined my data collection by allowing me to collect many of my fieldnotes directly using word-processing software on a computer. Having the fieldnotes in electronic form allowed for a great deal of flexibility when organizing the data. Tesch (1989) points out that "computer-aided

analysis can reduce analysis time, cut out much drudgery, make procedures more systematic and explicit, ensure completeness and refinement, and permit flexibility and revision in analysis procedures" (p.44). Following a thorough discussion with the committee members and a lengthy demonstration of the QSR-N6 (NUD*IST®) software (QSR International Pty Ltd.. http://www.qsrinternational.com) for data management and analysis, I decided this would be an excellent tool for organizing and managing my data.

After all videotapes and audiotapes were transcribed, artifacts collected, and field notes typed in their expanded forms using word-processor, all the transcripts were transferred to text files in order to import them into the NUD*IST® software.

The data analysis process.

The moment the study starts, the ethnographer starts analyzing his data and this process continues throughout the study (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, Spindler & Spindler, 1987; Spradley, 1980). In this study data analysis included semantic analysis following the guidelines of Spradley (1980). This helped in generating questions and answers for data analysis, microanalysis, and triangulation. In microanalysis the focus was on detailed descriptions of recurrent patterns of social and communicative behaviors that are provided within the context of face-to-face interactions to generate grounded theoretical constructs. Doing the macroanalysis, the focus was on the relationship between societal structures and the institutions and the events embedded. I feel it is important to say that while the process I followed in my data analysis is described in a linear fashion, the process is very recursive and often progresses in a very non-linear fashion. For example, as the domains were defined and cross-checked through additional readings of the data, this process yielded the beginnings of possible patterns and themes.

Microanalysis. The primary task for the ethnographer is to determine units of analysis to be used in processing the data. Through reading and rereading the data in its many forms and phases and noting consistencies and the semantic relationships throughout, I was able to identify what I call the domains. Domains are essentially categories into which similar literacy behaviors and events began to group themselves. These acted as codes for this portion of the data analysis. For example, one domain was prayer; another was Qur'an recitations; yet another domain was *Du'a,* (more spontaneous prayers of special intention). Ultimately, during macroanalysis, these domains converged into the theme of Religious Literacy. The evolution from domains to themes is described next.

Macroanalysis. I began the process of macroanalysis after I reached the point where no new domains seemed to be necessary to reflect any remaining literacy practices present in the data. (See Appendix C for a list of the original 110 domains). Then, I again reviewed all of the raw data from all data sources to ensure saturation of domains. This resulted in refinement, modification and the deletion and addition of some new domains and the definition of 28 preliminary themes (broader categories) into which the domains converged. At this point the 28 themes were entered as nodes into the NUD*IST software. I then began to categorize the raw data under these nodes. The process of entering the data allowed me to again consider the existing semantic relationships within the data as it was grouped under the preliminary themes. The flexibility of the software allowed me to vary the units of analysis from the sentence to the paragraph level, code each of these data units using the nodes and then readily manipulate the data to group and categorize it into the ultimate themes. This yielded the final 12 themes which grouped into two categories: Themes related to literacy practices and Themes related to driving factors and influences on those purposes. (See Table 1 for the list of themes.) These themes

broke into two broad groups reflecting the areas within the research questions: literacy practices and the factors driving those practices.

Table 1

List of Themes

Literacy Practices	Influences and Factors
Arab child literacy	Impact of religion
Functional literacy	Planning for the future
Arab women and literacy	Family support
School literacy and the Arab family	Language use at home
Literacy and play	Impact of media
Religious literacy	Availability of literacy materials

After the domains were refined, it was necessary to perform an inter-rater reliability to determine the consistency of the criteria being used to categorize the raw data. Once the codes were established, an outside rater coded ten percent of the data, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The standard minimum cut off for reliability is 0.80 in order to proceed. Credibility of the interview findings was determined externally by asking participants to confirm that the identified patterns had credibility from their perspectives. Following the analysis of all data and the writing of the narrative draft, a member check was completed for both Group 1 and Group 2.

Triangulation.

In triangulating the data sources, I confirmed the accuracy of the domains and themes by checking and cross checking data from all the data sources. I reviewed field notes, artifacts, and transcriptions of audio and videotapes, journals and transcripts at crucial points during the

analysis comparing the sources and looking for corroborating or conflicting findings. This type

of triangulation enhanced the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the

course of the investigation. It also helped in correcting the biases that occur when the

ethnographer is the only observer of the phenomenon under investigation (Goetz, & LeCompte,

1984). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the purpose of triangulation as a way to support

findings by looking for independent measures of agreement or contradiction.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study was designed to investigate and describe the literacy practices that take place in the home of one Arab Muslim family living in the , and to consider what factors that appear to drive the various literacy practices, especially as they may relate to raising bilingual and biliterate children.

My Family's Story

History of the family.

Starting in the early 1990s, I began seeking the opportunity to come to the to obtain my doctorate. Coming to the U.S was a dream that my family and I worked hard to achieve. During that time I was working as a teacher in the Ministry of Education in one of the secondary schools, then later on in a middle school. After teaching for a year, I was able to take advantage of this teaching position in order to attend graduate school. In Jordan, if a teacher wishes to further his or her education by obtaining a master's degree, regulations state that a teacher can teach for half a day and then be released to attend graduate classes. In this way, it took me about two years to earn my diploma.

Three months after obtaining my master's and having been awarded a contract to teach English in one of the best schools in one of the Gulf States, a light of hope started to appear to me. While in Saudi Arabia, after a hard and tedious search (which lasted for almost seven years), I was awarded a scholarship from the Hashemite University in Jordan to come to the to seek a doctoral degree in education. After fulfilling all the conditions, I came to the U.S with my family in August, 2001. With the first step on American soil a new life began with its challenges, fears,

and hope. At that time there were five members of my family: my wife, two sons, a daughter and me.

Emerging challenges to biliteracy.

Transitioning to a new environment is always difficult. When we arrived there were immediate and practical challenges such as needing to find someone to drive Alhareth to school because bussing was not available, and we had not yet purchased a vehicle. Of course there were culturally-related challenges, the most predominant of which was the language barrier.

Learning English was most immediately stressful and quite difficult for Alhareth, who at the age of seven, was enrolled in second grade right away at the local elementary school. He finished first grade the year before we arrived. He was exposed to some English language instruction, but his vocabulary was minimal. During the first days of our being in Denton, Alhareth burst into tears while talking about his terrible experience at school. While crying he was telling me how hard it was on him and how much he suffered in the school because of his lack of skills in English. This was a great source of sorrow for both my wife and me. Thankfully, the suffering did not last long; Alhareth managed to pick up enough skills with English to survive in a relatively short time (less than 3 months). When English was no longer a source of distress and suffering, it became a source of power as well as a way to have fun and earn new friends.

Surely the worst part of the story was when my wife and I realized that our eldest son's level in Arabic (our mother language) was deteriorating rapidly in spite of our (especially my wife's) great and consistent effort to keep instructing him according to the Arabic curriculum books we brought with us from Jordan. Our concerns and worries started to grow more and more, especially when Alhareth's attitude toward learning Arabic changed drastically. He

became unwilling to learn Arabic because of lacking the skills to read and to write in Arabic properly. Instead of the delight and the willingness he had shown earlier, he started to show negligence, stubbornness, and refusal to learn his first tongue.

The second child in the family is our seven-year-old daughter, Asia, who is currently in first grade. Her transition into school was much easier than her older brother's. She had had no formal schooling in Jordan. She spoke no English when we arrived. She had the opportunity to attend the second semester of pre-K during the 2001-2002 school year at a school for young children. Her preschool experience definitely enhanced and facilitated her kindergarten year. Her attitude toward school was very positive.

Our third child is our five-year-old son, Mohammad. He was two years old when we arrived in America. Since we were not able to afford for a private preschool, and since he was not eligible for public school because of his age, he had to stay at home until he became three years old. At the beginning of the second year, he was eligible to go to the same preschool that Asia attended. He, like Asia, had a wonderful experience with school. The last member in our family was born here in the U.S. 8 months after our arrival. We named our new born daughter, Shahd.

The setting.

We live in a three-bedroom apartment in a gated complex on the northeast side of town about five miles east of the university. (See Appendix D for a floor plan of my apartment.) When we moved to the apartment in 2003, it was brand new and we were only the second family to move into our building. The residents are diverse in their backgrounds and origins. Although the place looked quiet when we first moved in, it turned out to be not so quiet. Many families with

teenaged children who are quite disruptive have moved in making our environment less safe and more stressful.

Therefore, certain rules have to be enforced, and children have to be reminded of what to do, when and where when they are playing outside. Every single time our children are outside playing, either my wife or I feel we must watch them from the patio. We tell them they cannot go far from our sight, and they need always to be within our view. The reason is that there are teenagers who are not a good influence because they use inappropriate language and are undisciplined.

The living room is simply furnished with one green sofa, two easy chairs and a small table. The entertainment center contains the TV set with a VCR, videotapes, the phone book, magazines, stories, the phone memo pad, some toys, paper, pens, crayons, and pencils to which the children have free access. The living room opens to a patio, which overlooks the street that separates the building from the next one on the other side. The dining room faces the kitchen with a black dining table surrounded with six black chairs. On the wall is posted the prayer schedule and some of the children's schoolwork. In the kitchen we have posted school and community announcements and calendars. The carpeted hallway takes you from the living room past the hall closet where the children store their backpacks. At the end of the hall are the three bedrooms; two to the right (one for the children and the other is an office) and one to the left (for the parents) with its master bathroom. In the office is the computer, some reference books, storage for the children's schoolwork, CDs and computer games. Between the two bedrooms at the end of the hallway is a large linen closet which contains the family library.

Findings

This study was designed around these two main questions: 1) What are the literacy practices of an Arab family raising bilingual and biliterate children in the United States? and 2) What are the factors and influences that appear to drive the biliteracy and the bilingual practices in Arabic and English? The following section will address findings related to question one.

Cultural themes.

References to cultural themes can be found first in the work of Opler (1945), then in Benedict (1934) and Spradley (1980) among others. Cultural themes emerge from observations of groups over a period of time that reveal certain consistent patterns of behavior and interactions. These patterns reflect disparate behaviors and actions (that are recurrent over time) which merge into a united whole or theme. These themes serve to define dominant principles inherent within the group and distinguish one group from another. Themes are meaningful assertions about a particular group that have a high degree of generality.

In this section, I will discuss certain cultural themes in one Arab family living in the. I have found those themes dominating the literacy practices in the daily life and routines of my family. See below for a list of these themes.

List of the cultural themes:

1. Arab child literacy

2. Functional literacy

3. Arab women and literacy

4. School literacy and the Arab family

5. Literacy and play

6. Religious literacy

Arab child literacy. Child literacy practices captured our children engaged in different kinds of reading and writing in different places and at different times. Table 2 presents a full list of child literacy practices. Two major areas within this theme are: children as literacy partners and children as literacy teachers. The bulk of the data contains so many events and literacy practices that confirm this fact and show the children in both roles. (See Appendix E for samples of children's literacy artifacts).

Table 2

Child Literacy Practices

Literacy Practices
Making choices on kinds of readings.
Buying games and toys.
Checking out books and videotapes from library.
Child-child partnership: bedtime story and rotating roles as readers and listeners.
Other readings and writings: flyers; reading the mail, newspapers, and magazines; reading during media activities like watching TV or playing computer games; viewing posters, writing the letters of the alphabet, spelling in both languages, writing note cards, writing letters, and drawings.
Children-as-teachers involved typing on computer, installing games, helping in school assignments, and helping in target language learning.
Siblings interaction and copying each other.
Reading instructions and dates on home equipment, machines, and pieces of furniture.
Reading instructions on games and toys.

Note. Child literacy practices include any literacy practices initiated by the child which may or may not involve others

I found my children were not just literacy consumers waiting for someone to fill them with information. Indeed, they initiated more literacy events than the parents, with the exception of Arabic instruction.

As partners in literacy, my children made many decisions about the kinds of literacy practices to engage in at home. They had as much freedom as possible to choose what kind of storybooks to read; when, where and how to read them; what kind of games and toys to buy; and which videos to check out from the library. They participated in the family discussions when my wife and I were talking about different topics, ranging from discussions about our future home in Jordan to making decisions about whether or not to change school after a local move. The children also partnered with each other. These events were sometimes peaceful as the children took part in bedtime story events and rotated roles as readers and listeners. The children played a major role in book-talk events and telling stories.

Literacy events even resulted from confrontation. For example, after an argument with her brother Mohammad, Asia wrote a note, which said, "I don't want to play with Mohammad any more. He wants to get my things." After writing the note she told him at dinner, "I don't want to sit next to you."

Bedtime stories were not exclusively an adult right, but another opportunity for adult-child partnering. When we were tired, our children took the responsibility of reading to each other. Sometimes, we divided the reading material into sections where everyone should read his/her part. Our children displayed confidence and were more engaged when they participated in the reading events as partners rather than just as listeners. Sometimes, we would tell them ahead of time that one or all of them would be responsible for the bedtime storybook reading. Upon hearing this, they were pleased because they enjoyed the excitement of reading. Asia in many

occasions would say, "I love reading." They were always motivated to read especially when it is bed time, and there was never any reluctance on their part to take a turn reading aloud.

The children also embraced the role of literacy teachers, especially Alhareth. As the eldest child, he was primarily in this role. He takes a major leadership role and his younger siblings look at him as a model to follow. He would sit in front of the computer teaching his siblings typing, teaching them how to install games, and helping Asia, especially in math. Alhareth also played a major role in developing his mother's English skills. He corrected her language errors, and he worked like a dictionary when she needed a meaning for a certain word or phrase. He insisted on teaching his mom some computer skills.

Mohammad always wants to look older and bigger like his brother, and that is why he sometimes does things the way Alhareth does. He asked me several times, "When will I grow up?" and "Why am I still a little boy?" Sometimes when Mohammad imitates his older brother, Alhareth gets bothered and irritated and would ask Mohammad to stop copying him. But as with all children, modeling and imitation do not always yield positive outcomes. Because of blind copying, Mohammad has been captured using some undesirable words (i.e., *stupid*). When I asked him about its meaning upon the first time I heard him using it, he replied, "I don't know, Alhareth said it." Thus, I mentioned it to Alhareth and insisted on him to be careful with the words he uses and/or brings home with him from outside environment. I keep reminding him of his responsibility as a big brother toward his siblings and how he should be careful with any kind of behavior he engages in in front of his brother and sisters. I keep reminding him that his younger siblings will be learning from him, and they will be looking at him as a model for them, and we do want them to learn only the good things. Despite a few undesirable instances related

to some cultural conflicts, overall the children learned a great deal from each other, and they managed to establish their own literacy environment.

Functional literacy. Literacy proved to be an inseparable ingredient in my family's daily activities. Functional literacy refers to the different kinds of literacy practices involved in running the household, engaging in the daily routine, solving practical problems and carrying out daily social interactions. (See Appendix F for an artifact representing functional literacy.)

Each member in the family used multiple literacy practices and/or experiences to go about the complex interactions and activities of his/her daily life. Mundane but necessary instances of literacy were involved in reading the instructions on any new home equipment or machine, reading instructions on new games and toys, reading the directions to install a computer game on a CD, writing down addresses and phone numbers, using the next-to-the-phone notebooks for special dialing, writing recipes after watching certain shows on TV, preparing shopping lists, using catalogues, using maps for driving directions, sorting the mail, arranging bill payments, marking the calendar with coming events and special dates, displaying flyers on the refrigerator, etc. Table 3 shows a list of the different functions of literacy within the Arab family household.

The Arab mother and family literacy. It was quickly apparent to me that my wife leads most of the literacy instruction in our family. It seems important to share briefly her own literacy history before talking specifically about her literacy role within the family.

My wife's literacy history.

When we arrived in the U.S., my wife's experience with English was limited to typical second language learning experiences found in classroom setting. My wife was

able to attend only a few ESL classes at a local church before the arrival of Shahd, but

she continued to pursue her English language learning on her own.

Table 3

Types of Functional Literacy

Functional Literacy Uses
Reading instructions on home equipments, machine, furniture, games and toys
Installing computer games
Writing addresses and phone numbers on any within-reach papers and cards
Using phone notebook
Writing recipes after watching some shows on the TV
Preparing shopping lists
Using catalogues
Marking the calendar with important events and special dates
Hanging flyers and notes on the refrigerator
Filling in applications
Paying bills
Exchanging notes with the school teachers
Reading prices tags
Reading street signs and stores signs
Cutting, filling out and redeeming coupons
Checking the mail
Using maps
Looking up phone numbers in the *yellow pages*

Note. Functional literacy means the involvement of print in the Arab family to meet the challenges and the practical needs of their daily life.

She was eager to acquire English and pursued every opportunity to do so. She bought

books and dictionaries to help build her vocabulary. She cancelled our satellite TV access to

channels and news in Arabic for fear this would be an obstacle to the speed with which she could

make progress in her English acquisition. She purposefully watched programs like *Sesame Street*

and *Between the Lions* to augment help her English language development. She told me that the

language used in these shows is simple and therefore easy to understand, repeat, and learn. These

programs offered her exposure to English at her own convenience. She wrote down words for

later practice. (See Appendix G for an example.) She would save these lists and later ask me

about the meanings of certain words.

Today, I would describe my wife's progress in learning English as excellent. She appears

alone often in public, and manages these appearances with no problem. She even asks me to stay

with the children at home if possible while she goes in public to take care of some affairs of the

family. However, her belief is still that she is not good enough in English. The fact remains that

her goal is fluency in English and she sees that she has not yet achieved that. She still asks

Alhareth or me about how she did after each time she uses English in public. My wife is well on

her way to biliteracy, but the second language proficiency I observe seems sometimes invisible

to her.

Biliteracy in action.

The contexts in which my wife uses her biliteracy are varied, occurring both within and

beyond our home. She takes care of household responsibilities like shopping; maintains social

bonds with the Arab community through phone calls and visiting; socializes with other friends

and neighbors; and calls family members in the homeland. She uses her literacy in schooling the

children in both Arabic and English, reading storybooks for the children, telling stories, teaching

children discipline, and doing housework (See Appendix H for an example of her reflection on one of these lessons).

My wife uses her literacy skills in caring for her family. One example of this was using her literacy to cure the family from headaches, stomachaches, and backaches through using certain herbs she had brought with her from Jordan. When she ran out of some of these herbs, she knew how to find some of the international stores in the area and could go and buy those.

Another example of literacy is my wife's storytelling. Storytelling is a strong tradition in my culture and is used for both entertainment and education purposes. At home the children will circle around their mom when it is story time. As with most fairy or folktales, these stories are designed to teach children how to behave and live their lives well. She tells the same stories she heard from her parents when she was a child. She also tells stories she had read herself. The children listen attentively. Whenever one has a question or wants to make a comment, he or she raises hands, waiting for their mom to give them a chance to hear the child's contribution to the story event. She is keen to keep the sequence of the story events and at the same time to give the children a chance for comments and participation, too.

My wife's literacy role within the family.

My wife cares for a family of six. She has three children going to schools and a 2-year old who stays at home. She does the majority of the daily housework by herself with some help from me whenever I have a chance. She is most often the initiator, the supporter, and the facilitator of literacy interactions especially when it comes to instructing the children in Arabic. She ensures consistency in the children's instruction in Arabic and rarely was a lesson skipped.

I believe the driving force behind my wife's commitment to our children's literacy is, first of all, that she wants her children to be highly educated. In her words, "We need all the

children to do well in their schools so they can have better careers and better lives. We need to give them all that we can." She sees education as the key to many opportunities and does not want the children to be cut off from anything they might want to pursue now or in the future. She has put her own education and goals aside to further her children's learning and literacy.

Her second motive is embedded in the primary cultural theme of this study. She believes (as do I) that religious faith is the foundation for life, especially for sound moral and ethical behavior. Without Arabic literacy, the children would be unable to fully understand, practice and truly live their faith. Her convictions are so strong that, despite periods of poor health, two pregnancies, and her own daily responsibilities to the household, she continues to focus on and actively pursue opportunities to advance the children's literacy. This is not only true for their Arabic literacy, but their English literacy as well.

Even when my wife's English was very poor, she was at the children's schools volunteering, participating in school activities, and talking to the teachers. She has volunteered many times in the schools that our children attend, helping the teachers in preparing materials and activities for the students, or anything else the teacher needs to be done. My wife has received different appreciation certificates and awards from the schools for her participation and giving of her time for the school.

School literacy and the Arab family. In any culture, family literacy practices do not occur in a vacuum separate from school literacy. For families with school-aged children, the child wittingly (or unwittingly) becomes a vehicle and an active tool for bringing school literacy into the home. Children return home at the end of the school day with not only backpacks loaded with homework, handouts, and school assignments, they also come back

with new literacy experiences either acquired through classroom instruction and/or social interaction with other children.

School literacy takes up a large portion of the afternoon and evening. One example is parent-school communication. When the children arrive home, my wife or I greet them at the door and ask them about their day at school, "How was your day today?" and "Anything wrong today?" trying to get a brief from the children. If anything wrong has happened, we talk about it, and if there is a need I will call the school immediately before it closes for the day. It has happened more than once that Alhareth would report an incident that took place at school. Of course as a parent I would feel either unsatisfied about the way the matter was settled, or I would seek more clarification from the teacher. The follow up procedure would be that after we as parents get a detailed report about the incident from our son, I would call the teacher to discuss it with her immediately while the incident was still fresh. If there was a need for a meeting, then I would ask the teacher to schedule a meeting as soon as possible to further discuss the matter and think of ways to prevent it from happening again in the future.

Another form of communication is through the take-home folders from the school. These folders contain progress reports and announcements regarding school and community events. My wife and I share the responsibility of checking and signing the children's folders and reviewing them with the children. If there were a note from the teacher we would discuss it with the designated child. Checking the children's folders became a part of the family's daily routine and an event to which we reserved time specifically in our schedule.

A second aspect of the home-school literacy connection is, of course children's homework and school assignments (See Appendix I for an example). Sometimes we have dinner, take a rest, watch some cartoons, and then handle their homework. Whenever homework time is,

Alhareth goes to his room, locks himself in, and does his assignments by himself. He locks the door to prevent Shahd (his baby sister) from interrupting him and/or tearing up his papers. Once she entered his room while he was working on his assignments with papers spread all over his room. Shahd was too fast for him and reached one of his papers and ripped it. Frustrated that he was not able to reach her in time to prevent her from tearing his paper, he could not help crying. He was so mad and angry, and I had to calm him down in order for him to go back to work on his papers again. When once I asked Alhareth why he spreads his work out all over the place, he said it helps him to see the papers at the same time without the need to flip the pages or search.

Asia usually does her homework in the family room and sometimes in her bedroom. For example, she lies on the couch holding her math sheet right in front of her or she lies down on the floor. She works hard on her own to get the assignment done. While I ask her to tell me if she needs help, she always prefers to figure it out by herself first. Sometimes her mom and/or Alhareth help her.

The bulk of data shows that we maintained consistent contact with the teachers and the school year round. (See Appendix J for an example). I personally try my best to serve as a member of school committees as much as possible. My wife and I try to attend most of the schools' meetings and special occasions. We also invite our children's teachers to have dinner with the family. We also try to maintain good parents-teachers relationship through sending the teachers cards on special occasions, too.

Literacy and play. Play was a prime context for the children's literacy activities. Play events included playing games, singing, drawing, making toys, playing video games, and the like (See Table 4 for a list of literacy practices related to play.) Play and having fun together meant the children interacted for extended periods of time. Literacy was sometimes the vehicle through

which play events were enacted (drawing, singing, writing role cards for a particular game). As the children interacted during playtime, their literacy abilities were used to talk about play (i.e., to communicate to each other about their needs and intentions). Other times literacy was the product of the play (songs, letters, shared stories, reenactments of stories) (See Appendix K for an example).

Table 4

Literacy and Play

Literacy and Play
Independent reading for pleasure
Shared parent-to-child and child-to-child reading
Drawing to express oneself
Creating role cards (characters) to guide play
Writing letters for mom and dad
Making toys
Reading instructions on games and toys
Singing; learning songs from TV and from mom; teaching songs to each other
Playing video games
Attending public library
Playing/learning games (Uno®, checkers)

Note. Literacy and play includes any literacy event which occurred as a part of or an outcome of play.

We give our children different kinds of educational toys, games, and storybooks. We believe in the importance of such educational games and mediums in motivating the literacy skills of a child and challenging his/her abilities and carrying them to the next level. As parents

we spend some time playing with the children especially after school assignments have been done, or during the weekends when children want to do something exciting while at home. My wife spends a good time teaching and playing with Shahd "Where is--- (name of a body part), and/or playing with toys that emphasize maternity and females' activities. On the other hand, hide-and-seek, "piggy-back" riding, and football are the most popular games I play with my children, and my children enjoy them so much. I play chess and checkers with Alhareth, who asked for his set and actually taught me the rules.

Our children, especially Alhareth, spend a good deal of time playing computer games. When playing these computer games our children either take part all at the same time or Alhareth takes the lead first, because he is the computer-literate boy in the family. Then he gives turns to Asia and Mohammad after giving them some directions and help. If there is any installation necessary, he will do it. I ask him to show his brother and sister how to do the installation so that they can feel confident in using the computer independently.

Oral language was predominant during all aspects of play. During their play my children use English almost exclusively. The observations, videotapes, audiotapes and fieldnotes all made clear that during practically every child-child interaction (within the family and with other Arab children) my children almost always used English instead of Arabic. When it comes to playing together at home, playing in the playground, talking about a book, doing school assignments (especially when Alhareth helps Asia in her homework), English played a greater role than the first language. While Arabic sometimes finds a place in the interactions of Alhareth and Asia, it is rare to hear Mohammad speak it at all. Multiple observations confirmed that during literacy interactions in Arabic, whenever Mohammed is directly addressed or decides to enter into the event, he always does so in English.

When my wife and I are involved in play situations with the children, then Arabic and English are both used. Our data shows plenty of code-switching taking place in parent-child interaction with Arabic use outweighing English use by the parents.

(Context: Alhareth read aloud Raggedy Ann to his siblings and mom.)

Alhareth: What did you understand from the story?

Mohammad: When the balloon never…he to pull it and…it..and he was surprised.

Alhareth: It was his birthday.

Mohammad: She…

Alhareth: He is… (correcting the pronoun)

Mohammad: HE is…

Alhareth: I understand that… your birthday could be so fun and surprising and your friends can come and play with you and that's all.

Mohammad: And I understand that when somebody opens the box and when somebody opened the box and the bird pull her down and she was so excited to have her birthday.

Ayat: (Arabic) *What else did you understand? What did you like the most in the story?*

Alhareth: Well, the most part I loved about the story when they got …the bird sparrow pulled him down and knocked and they got …the birthday party…that was the best part.

Alhareth: Mohammad, What was your best part?

Mohammad: …and I liked when he flew up in the sky…

Alhareth: When he opened the box and got it in the sky and she was floating over the meadow.

Ayat: (Arabic): *Did you enjoy reading it?*

Alhareth: Well, I had fun reading the story a lot because that story was easy fun and friendly.

Ayat: (Arabic) *What is the story you like most to read?*

Alhareth: Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy.

Ayat: (Arabic) *What time to like to have a bedtime story?*

Alhareth: I like to read a story when the TV is off and when nobody is talking. You will concentrate on the story. Like between 7:00 and 8:00pm.

Play and the interactions surrounding it provided multiple opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and speaking in both languages.

Religious literacy. Because of the centrality and the importance of religion in the life of every devout Muslim, literacy events and practices revolving around our religious beliefs acted as something of a framework within which the events of each day occurred. (See Table 5 for a list of religious literacy practices.)

An example of religious practices and its presence in a typical day of the routine of my family is represented through the sounding of the *Azan* (the call for Muslim's prayers which I have downloaded to my desktop computer from the internet). Azan starts in the very early morning calling for first prayer of the day *Salat Al-Fajr (*The Prayer of the Dawn). Then the other prayers follow at intervals according to a certain timetable throughout the day: *Al-Fajr, Al-Duhr, Al-Asr, Al-Maghrib, and Al-Isha'* (dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening) respectively. These prayers may be performed individually or in a group although it is highly encouraged in our religion to perform them in groups in a mosque whenever possible. In the community that I live in right now here in the United States the five prayers are performed each day at the mosque; however, attending to those prayers at the mosque depends on each individual's schedule. Nevertheless, one can pray at home or at the mosque in order to accommodate such differences and commitments.

Table 5

Religious Literacy Practices

Areas of Religious Literacy Practices	
Daily Practices	Special Practices
Azan and the five prayers; *Al-Fajr, Al-Duhr, Al-Asr, Al- Maghrib, and Al-Isha*	Readings from religious books
Praying individually and in a group	Using *Du'a* for different purposes
Reading and/or reciting the Holy Qur'an.	Attending the mosque
Teaching children simple verses from the Holy Qur'an	Fasting during Ramadan
Teaching the prayers and principles of Islam	Children practicing fasting too
	Making *iftar* (dinner) for Muslims in Ramadan
	Taraweeh prayers (special prayers in Ramadan)
	Telling religious stories
	Using hell and paradise for disciplining children
	Friday special prayer

Note: Religious literacy includes any literacy practice that is related to Islam.

Outside of the daily practices described above, there are special religious occasions where religious literacy plays a big role. For example, Ramadan is a special month for Muslims to practice their faith even more deeply. A large part of this is the daily fasting, which is simply no food or drink from dawn to sunset. The fast is then broken at sunset. This is an opportunity for families to have their children engaged in as many of the events and ways of worshipping of which they are capable. For example, older children may try to fast if they want to, but it is not required.

Social activities special to Ramadan allow us to interact with other Muslim families through the breaking of the fast with a dinner called *iftar*. A different family will prepare dinner for each of the 30 nights. The dinner begins with the breaking of the fast with juice and dates.

Then dinner is served right after performing the *Salat* (the prayers). This lasts about an hour. Then the *taraweeh* (the special *Ramadan* night prayer) takes place and lasts for about ninety minutes. All these rituals starting from breaking the fast till going back home at the end of the prayers last about four hours.

The six cultural themes described here depict the great variety of literacy practices which occurred within my home. Throughout the course of any given day, all family members engaged in literacy practices of one kind or another as either goals within themselves or as a means to achieving some particular end.

<div align="center">The Families and their Stories</div>

There were five Muslim families who participated in the informal interviews. See Table 6 for demographic information regarding family size, country of origin, length of stay in the U.S., owning or renting a home, major occupation for all families in the study:

Table 6

Demographic Information for all Families

Family	Group1	Group2				
		A	B	C	D	F
Origin	Jordan	Lebanon	Kuwait	Jordan	Palestine	Jordan
Size	6	3	6	3	4	5
Years in the U.S.	3	12	3	12	15	5
Owns home				-	-	-
Rents home	-	-	-			
Occupation	GS[a]	GS	GS	faculty	business	business

Note: GS[a] = Graduate student

Family A.

This Lebanese family consists of two parents and their three-year old daughter. The husband, upon finishing high school, accompanied his family (two parents, two sisters and another younger brother) on their long journey from Kuwait to the U.S. looking for a safe place to live after the Second Gulf War had started in 1990. They came to the U.S. with little money, leaving their belongings in Kuwait, and with no plan in mind beyond escaping the disastrous war results and finding a safe place to live. All of the children started attending U.S. schools. Over ten years after their arrival, one of the daughters has married, earned her Ph.D. and started a family. The other daughter completed college and also started a family. The younger brother is a dentist. The older brother (the participant in this study) married a young lady from his home country. They have a three-year old daughter. The father has been working on his Ph.D. and his wife has just started going to a community college. This family lives in the same apartments as we do.

I called the man and talked to him about my research and my desire to do an interview with his family at their home. We agreed on a time for the visit, planning it in the evening for his convenience. When it was time for the interview, I called the family before going over to their home to let them know we were on our way. I took my family with me as usual. I knocked on the door, and the wife opened the door for us. We exchanged greetings and she let us in. While walking in, the man appeared up and greeted us warmly. Then we all took our seats.

Framed verses from the Qur'an hang on the walls of the living room. There are pictures on the walls and a big box of toys. The daughter's room (which doubles as the father's office) has shelves with books on the lower shelves for the daughter and academic texts on the upper

shelves. The daughter has a TV and videos in Arabic. There are prayer rugs in this room as it serves as the location for family prayers.

The interview started very informally and we discussed many topics before I geared the discussion to the topic of my research. During the interview the couple expressed their awareness of the importance of their daughter picking up Arabic very young. "We have bought Salwa some video cartoons and CDs in Arabic to help her pick up the mother language." I noticed that the parents spoke Arabic exclusively. I did not observe the couple using English at all except during our discussion when the father and I switched between English and Arabic.

In our discussion I asked, "Do you read to your daughter?" the father said, "No, we do not read to her. We know it's important, we should be reading to her, but she seems too young." They mentioned lack of time because of school. I also asked about the availability of instructional materials for their daughter, the father said "We do not have any except the ones you gave us more than a year ago." The father stated, "We know we should be doing better than this…" (referring to as exposing their daughter to more literacy opportunities such as reading aloud, telling stories and spending time interacting with print). They buy her many games, toys, and cartoon films; but Arabic books and stories are not among the literacy resources.

While their daughter was playing with my children, I noticed she used some English in her verbal interactions. When I noted this, her parents said it might be because of the TV. Their daughter does not attend any daycare or preschool, and her parents speak predominantly Arabic at home. At the end of the visit, I thanked them for their hospitality and for being so open with me. I also thanked them for sharing their life stories and literacy experiences.

Family B.

This family is from Kuwait. This family consists of the man, his wife, and four children (three boys, one aged 5 and the two twins aged 7, and a baby girl aged 2 who was born in the U.S.). The man attends graduate school seeking a doctorate in computer art education. His wife worked as a teacher in her country before coming to the U.S to join her husband, but she plans on going back to her teaching job after they return to their country. Now she attends several ESL classes to improve her English language skills. She stated she is not happy with life here and finds it hectic and too stressful. She keeps saying (to my wife) she wants to go back to her country if she can.

The family lives in the northern part of town about ten minutes from where I live. The family lives in gated-apartments in a nice quiet area. They have been in this apartment for almost three years. When I visited them with my family, I noticed the walls in the children's rooms were full of all kinds of literacy artifacts. There were original pieces of art created by the father which hung on the walls of the family and children's rooms. There were posters on the walls, pictures of the family and their relatives together, children's drawings from school and home, and English written-words and the alphabet in both English and Arabic. The children's room also had games and toys.

When the parents talked about their children in schools, they expressed satisfaction with their academic achievements (although not so much their behavior). They shared their worries about Arabic. The father said, "I worry because we are returning home next year and I want them to be able to keep up with their peers." For instance, their children can recite the letters of the alphabet, but appear to have no ability to recognize the individual letters in a word written in Arabic. They showed me a sample of their children's work and writings from their Arabic

instruction. Although the work was within a developmentally appropriate range, the mother was not satisfied. She said "Even they trace the words and the letters, but they do not know the letters. They copy the letters without being able to recognize them." When I inquired about how they were teaching the children, the wife went to her room and brought some books for teaching Arabic. These books were first grade curriculum which the parents had brought from Kuwait.

At this point, their son Adel came from his room where he was playing with the other children and joined us. I watched Adel while he was writing his name in Arabic on a piece of paper. From where I was sitting on the sofa (he was sitting next to his mom on the floor) I asked him about the first letter in his name, but he did not know the answer. At that time I understood what the wife was saying about their children copying but not recognizing the letters. They were drawing the letters when their mom asked them to rewrite them in their notebooks.

I noticed that the father used mostly English with the children, regardless if it was for modifying behavior or merely for talking and associating. He does use Arabic, but English was more dominant. The wife was using Arabic almost 100% with her children.

When I asked them who teaches the children Arabic, the husband said that he takes care of the "English stuff," while his wife takes the responsibility of teaching them Arabic. They had books in Arabic, books in English, flash cards, pictures, children's artifacts, and so many other things used to help build and develop their children literacy skills.

Family C.

The man and his wife are Jordanians who came to the U.S. more than ten years ago seeking their higher education. They worked hard for years trying to support themselves while attending graduate school. Both of them have successfully managed to earn their doctoral degrees in science. The man is a faculty member at a local university. His wife is not working

right now; she prefers to stay at home taking care of their four-year old daughter and waiting for the coming baby.

On the Thursday night before the interview, I received a phone call from the family telling me they would be coming to my house instead of me visiting them in their home as originally planned. While canceling on someone in America is a fairly common occurrence, from the Arab cultural perspective this event is significant because it is considered socially unacceptable. Once one has accepted an invitation, to renege on the invitation is extremely rude. The value of doing it in the participant family's home where literacy happens naturally in the context of the family allows for better opportunities to shape the grand tour and mini tour questions. Nevertheless, I decided to proceed as best as I could and on Friday evening the couple came to my house with their four-year old daughter. In order not to look disrespectful to the couple, I tried my best to run the interview as normally as possible. I did my best not to look unhappy with the last minute changes in the plans, and both my wife and I were extremely generous and tried to show great hospitality.

My wife and I welcomed the visitors. We (the males) shook hands while the ladies kissed each other's cheeks while shaking hands too. We exchanged phrases and statements of compliments while standing at the door. Then, the visitors were seated in the family room, and some warm words of greeting found their ways through the context.

For their part, the couple, especially the wife, appeared extremely cooperative and interested in the study and both showed their excitement for my study and its value to the Arab community. They expressed great concern for their child being bilingual and suggested it would be most helpful if an Arabic school were available for the children. "It would be so beautiful if the mosque would become involved in teaching Arabic for the children." They talked about their

daughter and how she picked up English from the media (TV) and the daycare she attends. "We do speak only Arabic with her at home because we want her to learn the mother tongue." Her mother reported reading aloud to her regularly. They talked about visiting their families in their home country this summer since it has been a while since their last visit. They also want to give their daughter the chance to see her relatives and to give her more exposure to Arabic in its context. When the little girl played with my children she spoke only in English. The adult conversation took place in both English and Arabic

I was not able to corroborate in any way what they told tell me about their literacy because I was not able to see any of their materials or artifacts present in the home. Clearly, doing the interview in the participant's home (where literacy naturally takes its place) would have been most informative about the literacy practices in the family.

Family D.

Family D is headed by an Arab-American who came to the U.S. from Palestine more than 15 years ago. The man came to the U.S to attend college. When he finished his degree, he chose to stay and live here. Now he runs his own business and owns a house, which he bought a few years ago in the south part of town. He is married to a lady from his home country. They have a four-year old daughter and one year-old boy. Their daughter goes to school for half a day. The wife stays at home taking care of the children and other responsibilities. The husband owns convenience stores.

When my family and I went to visit them for the interview our host greeted our children in Arabic, "*Alsalamu Alaikum*," (Peace be upon you), and the children responded "*W'alaikum Assalam*," and shook hands too, even Shahd. He welcomed us and took us to their living room

where his wife was waiting to welcome us. My wife and his wife kissed cheeks; they have a strong friendship.

Their home is a one-story house that consists of two bedrooms, one family room, one nicely furnished formal room, and a small back yard. When walking in the hallway between the formal room and the family room, the kitchen is to the left. From the living room, there is a small hallway that leads to the bedrooms and the restrooms.

My wife started off the discussion when she asked our host's wife "How is Lana (their daughter) doing in school?" That was the question and the moment I was waiting for. My wife gave me the opportunity to gear the discussion to my interest without being the one to initiate it. The lady answered the question saying, "She likes school too much, and she is doing great. She can write her name in English." (Their daughter attends school from 12:00 noon to 2:50pm.) Then I followed up asking, "How about Arabic?" At that moment the husband responded saying, "She speaks some Arabic but mostly in English, although we speak Arabic most of the time if not all the time here at home. Actually that is the main reason why we are planning to go back home this year, we need her to speak proper Arabic fluently." He continued, "My wife and the children they will spend about 4-5 months there, where I will catch them two months later to spend the last two months with them there. You know, I have business to take care of, and I cannot stay away from the business for 4 months." "Yes, I understand," I responded back.

I directed my next question to the wife asking, "Lana doesn't know the Arabic alphabets yet, right?" She then responded saying, "No she doesn't." When I asked, "What about books in Arabic; do you have any?" 'No', she said, "where would we get them from? We do not have books except the ones you gave us time ago while we were participating in your project." (She was referring to a previous project I did on family literacy and Arab mothers).

When I asked, "What about reading and writing?" they said they would be bringing some books to teach her at least the basics. They then asked us specifically what we do with our children and my wife shared the specifics of her lessons with them. We talked also about how youngsters learn from their older siblings. My wife mentioned how Asia started to learn Arabic and Mohammad started to ask to learn Arabic too just because they saw their mother teaching their older brother. My wife, while talking to the other mother, demonstrated that any work they do with their daughter will also help their youngster to learn Arabic.

During the visit I did not see any kind of print materials hanging from the walls or dropped on the floor or anywhere else. Later on when at home, I asked my wife about any flashcards, pictures, or flyers in Arabic in our friend's house, but she said she saw nothing. When I asked her about something like a library in the house, she said there is a library that contains mostly college text books and few storybooks, but all in English. There was nothing in Arabic. My wife also mentioned that they check out some religious books from the library of the mosque.

The last thing to say about the visit is that when all the children were watching cartoons and playing with a puzzle picture trying to put all together, I listened closely to the children's verbal interaction. Their daughter was using English not Arabic. I do not recall hearing her using Arabic at all when conversing with the other children. Her father made it clear that they use Arabic with her at home. He referred to school and TV as the major influences on their daughter's more dominant use of English.

Family E.

Although this family was supposed to take part in the interviews, I had to look for a family to replace them because they did not express an interest in the research and were not

willing to participate. Although the family did not say outright that they would not participate, I got that feeling based on the family's response to me when I asked them for a good time to do the interview. My wife got the same feeling when she once met the other lady while shopping at a grocery store and reminded her about the interview. The wife said "I do not know how this will help. We did not participate in your husband's project two years ago, so how this will help him now?" I also know that the man is so busy and it would be hard to schedule a visit with him. Based on all of this, I decided to look for another family who was willing to participate and would have time for the interview.

Family F.

I asked this family to participate in the study to replace family E. I talked to the parents (with whom we have a great friendship) about the research goals, and I told them about my intention to get some feedback from them concerning how they work with their children when it comes to Arabic and English literacy practices in their home. They showed their enthusiasm to take part in the study. A week later I called the head of the family. Near the end of our chat I asked what time would be good for the couple to do an interview in their home. The male parent asked if I was willing to come right away. I responded positively to his request.

This Jordanian family consists of two parents and their three boys aged 5, 7, and 9. The father first came to the U.S. to study engineering in the late 1970s. He got his masters degree in engineering. He then returned home, got married, and left to work in one of the Gulf countries after he got a contract to work there. A few years later, after he finished his contract, he could not find the job or the kind of business he was thinking of back in his home country. Since he is an American citizen, he decided to come back to the U.S. to work and establish his own business. When he found things were encouraging, he asked his wife and the three children to follow him.

The beginning for the wife and the children was not easy. In fact, they had much the same experience as my own family as far as the social, bilingual, and other challenges we encountered. It took them a while, especially the wife, to adapt themselves to the new life, the new society, and to learn the new language. After four years, and after associating with neighbors and some schooling, the wife picked up English. Because of the great support the wife found from her husband, she decided to enroll in one of the community colleges in the area to pursue her education. This is her second year in the college, and she is thinking of going ahead until she becomes a dentist.

The family recently bought their house in the suburbs in a very quiet area in the southern part of town. It has two stories with four bedrooms on the second floor and two on the first floor. There are living rooms, one family room, and the kitchen. There is a huge backyard too. The family just furnished their house with nice new furniture.

When we arrived at their home and rang the bell, the door was opened, and we were warmly received and invited to enter by the couple. They prepared a traditional breakfast food (olive oil, olive, hummus, fool, fried egg, fried meat, honey, tea, and beta bread extra thick). After we finished our breakfast, the husband took me on a tour in his backyard. The weather was sunny and great. We walked around while still talking about job opportunities and employment in our home country. Then we sat down at the table in the backyard. Minutes later, my wife brought us the Turkish coffee and our wives joined us in the setting, too. We then started them talking about my research topic and how important it was for me to get their input regarding literacy and Arabs in the U.S.

Through the interview both of our hosts expressed their concerns about their children's skills in Arabic. The father stated, "It is very important that the children learn Arabic now or they

will not make it later on." They said that the main reason behind their recent visit to Jordan last summer was because of that. They felt that their children were losing their mother language and they could do nothing except take them in a visit to their home country in the summer when school was not in session. They went and spent about three months, and when they came back, their children were doing great as far as spoken Arabic is concerned.

When I asked them about how practical it was to depend on visits to the home country in order for the children to learn Arabic, they said it was not because it costs too much and it does not teach children how to write Arabic. Such visits helped in exposing the children to authentic use of the mother tongue and give the family the chance to see their relatives and friends. Throughout the interview and the discussion about the topic, they agreed that the best thing they could do about their children's skills in Arabic was to teach them at home. "We need to find the time, the materials, and the determination to do so."

The couple mentioned teaching their children Arabic using some Arabic books they brought with them during their visit to Jordan. The wife said that she spends her weekends instructing her children and schooling them in Arabic. When I asked her about the weekdays too, she said that she cannot do it because she is busy in her school, taking care of her home, and helping her children in their school assignments, too. She felt it would become an extra burden on herself and the children to have Arabic sessions after spending most of their day in school and then doing homework, too. So, she waits until the weekend to start working on Arabic. She followed up saying that she did it herself for the most part because her husband is frequently out of the home working. She strongly insisted on following up with her children especially because they plan to stay here until their children finish at least their high schools. "If the children are not well-educated in the mother language, then they will have a hard time speaking it, let alone

writing it." Another point brought up during our discussion was that the absence of an Arabic

school within a reasonable distance of the town was a problem. While the mosque is a possible

venue for such instruction, it has been discussed only recently as a possibility and no real action

has been taken so far.

In the next chapter, I discuss the driving factors behind the literacy practices described

here as well as the influences upon them. Along with discussing results directly related to my

own family, I will elaborate on some of the findings from the families I interviewed.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The stories of the families who participated in this study came to reveal interesting facts

and deep concerns on the part of the Arab families living in the U.S. Those families spoke out

their concerns regarding raising their children in a society that does not embrace the same

religion, traditions, culture, values, and language. Behind each family there is a story that tells

the family's struggle for survival and the family's long journey for a better life. None of these

families came to the without a strong reason; in fact, most of them were forced to leave their

countries because of the poor economy, looking for better education, and/or to escape the

political situation deteriorating in the region.

Many children in families that settle in a country where their native tongue is not

commonly spoken are in a situation where they are attempting to become bilingual and biliterate

in the host society's language as well as their native language. While their oral language may

develop fairly readily, they sometimes encounter a lack of opportunity to put more academic

forms of reading and writing in their native language into practice. An example of this is

reported by Jiang (1997) in the following story. Ty, a boy from China, came to the with his

mother and father when he was four years old. His parents did everything possible to educate Ty

in his mother language-especially the written form. They surrounded him with opportunities

where he could put his Chinese language to authentic uses through listening to stories, reading

storybooks, reading on his own, writing letters, keeping a diary, etc. They integrated these

practices into his life and allowed him to have consistent practice and exposure in his mother

language. Even the positive attitudes he had about his Chinese language transferred to his

learning the second language-English. His contacts with English were very successful, and he

developed amazing literacy skills in English that allowed him to enroll in a gifted-and-talented program.

After the first grade, his parents were no longer worried about his literacy skills in English, but became increasingly concerned about Chinese. When Ty started attending school and started developing and working hard on his English skills, his skills in Chinese began a rapid decline. He was soon hardly able to write any character in Chinese. He no longer wrote diaries in his mother language, as he used to do, but in English. His second language had become his preferred language, even at home where it was intentionally discouraged by his parents. His parents tried their best to provide every effort and opportunity for their son to retain as much Chinese literacy as possible, but their efforts were in vain. His parents reached a point where they felt what they could do for their child became very limited.

I tell this story because it parallels almost exactly our experience with our son Alhareth. The only difference is that Alhareth, due to the continuous instruction and encouragement on our part, has managed to retain and even gain some reading and writing skills in Arabic (although he is still not on level with his grade-peers). Extant literature shows that when one's second language becomes the consistent medium for communication, and chances to practice their first language are slim, children begin the process of deterioration in their first language skills. Caldas & Caron-Caldas (2000) found that even children's home language preferences shifted to the language of their external peer environments. This tendency increased with the age of the children as they responded to the increasing influence of their peers.

Parents' awareness of the problem does not by itself solve the problem. The parents I interviewed showed concern for their children's lack of skills in Arabic, but only a few chose to act upon their concerns in any significant way. Action on the part of the parents to create

intentional encounters in the first language will greatly increase the chances for developing literacy skills in the first language. The impact of schools, classmates, playmates, media, and the new environment is great and unpreventable, and the only thing to do is to match it with the same impact from home in first language exposure and instructions.

Along with lack of opportunity, children expected to be bilingual and biliterate may also experience issues related to identity (Soto, 2002). In James Gee's (1991) work on socio-cultural approaches to literacy he discusses the principle of "Discourse" with the capital D as socially-embedded phenomena. A Discourse is "thinking, acting, interacting, talking, and valuing connected with a particular social identity or role." For children living within two cultures, the process of acquiring each Discourse can be conflicting.

They may find themselves torn between home and school as they struggle to master two languages and two literacies (Ferdman, 1990). Martin & Stuart-Smith (1998) found that when Indian children were questioned about their attitudes toward English and Punjabi, their responses were strongly related to the ethnic origin of the two different interviewers. With almost no variation, children tended to report greater affinity for Punjabi with the Indian interviewer and greater affinity for English with the British interviewer. These results indicate children's loyalties were divided based on the conflict between their cultural and linguistic differences. Krashen (1981) found that language development can be inhibited by anxiety, alienation, and low self-esteem. Children do not find themselves confident in using the first language when it comes to reading and writing may struggle even more. It is important to remember that not only linguistic factors are related to language acquisition.

Feedback from the Families' Interviews

Interviewing the families was so helpful to me in getting entry-level idea about literacy attitudes and practices beyond those of my own family. All of the families expressed strong feelings about their children's biliteracy skills, spoke about the challenges facing the family in this regard, and all agreed without exception that they wished their children to be biliterate in Arabic and English. However, I found that what some of the families do actually falls short of what they say. While the stories the families shared with me revealed genuine concerns regarding their children's immediate and future biliteracy and bilingualism, the actions some of the families have taken thus far do not appear to match their levels of concern.

More specifically, Families A (the father is a doctoral student in chemistry) and D (the father owns a convenience store) appeared most passive about actually solving the problems they themselves had expressed. Arabic was the dominant language in all spoken interactions I observed in their homes, and this was confirmed through direct questioning. Nevertheless, their homes were short of obviously displayed print resources in both Arabic and English, with the greater shortage being in Arabic materials. They reported devoting little or no time to reading to their children or spending any time involved in any organized instruction in Arabic. In their homes I saw no print artifacts created by the children.

Family C (the father and mother are both university professors) fell somewhere in the middle. They expressed concerns for their children's bilingualism and biliteracy for their 4-year old daughter. She is a very intelligent girl, which is something the parents appear to value greatly (not surprising considering their academic orientation). Their desire for her to be well-educated is clear. They have enrolled her in the university lab school to socialize their daughter and increase her learning opportunities. They read aloud to her at home in English. The child uses

more English than Arabic, possibly because of her daily school interactions which are completely in English and the mother reported extensive TV viewing during the child's early years, which may also be a factor in her choice of language. Her mother reported they had a few storybooks in Arabic but they did not have any Arabic textbooks or workbooks. Interestingly, this is a mother who had received free Arabic literacy materials left over from a previous study I had done. When I asked about those books, she said she had given them away to another family and asked if I had any more.

Rogoff (1990), building heavily on the work of Vygotsky, stresses the importance of "enculturation" to the language acquisition process. Especially (but not only) in terms of academic language acquisition, presence within the context of the language is not enough. Guided participation through scaffolding and supported interaction from those who have already mastered the discourse is necessary for individuals to truly acquire the new language. This is an important understanding for parents who wish for their children to become literate in their native tongue. Without thoughtful support and instruction, it is less likely that children will achieve any level of proficiency.

Probably the best example of this was with Family B (the father is a doctoral student in art education) and Family F (the father owns a business). Both have devoted energy and specified a certain time to teach their children academic Arabic. These families described their successful efforts to obtain books in the native tongue. I observed examples of print resources in both Arabic and English in their homes. There were also children's drawings, flashcards, note/books, posters, Arabic curriculum and workbooks evident. Interestingly, (especially in Family B) the parents used more English with the children than in Families A and D. Mother B reported to my wife that she had started reading aloud to her children after participating in a

family literacy program which touted the importance of reading and literacy even with very young children

While it is often assumed that educated parents know how to teach their children, this is not necessarily true. While none of the mothers in this study work outside the home, however all are educated. Mothers A and B have bachelor's degrees; mother C has her doctorate; mother D has an associate's degree and mother F is completing some prerequisites at a community college with the intention of becoming a dentist. I noted in particular in both families A and D that the wives appeared less involved in the parent- child literacy interactions than the other three mothers. Mothers A and D reported not reading to her daughter when she was very young. Bialystock and Herman (1999) have documented the same degree of importance of reading aloud experiences with very young (preschool) bilingual children to their acquisition of literacy as monolinguals. The impression I got was that literacy interactions with a child at such an early age had never occurred to these mothers as being important. Indeed, both seemed to relate reading to more formal schooling and did not have a sense of the importance of literacy for very young children. Now that Mother D's child is in school, she does read to her daughter, primarily in English.

In general, the following reasons for the degree and quality of literacy practices in these homes emerged:

Time demands.

The first factor impacting teaching Arabic in the home was that school, work and daily life demands limited the amount of time fathers reported having to engage with their children in literacy events. All the fathers have jobs and/or attend school full time. This left most of the responsibility for parent-initiated literacy activities to the mothers.

Future plans.

Second, intention to return and the immediacy of departure appeared to be related to the degree of action being taken by the parents to increase their literacy levels in Arabic through some kind of direct instruction. While Family F has no immediate plans to return home, they are still strongly committed in word and action to instructing their children in Arabic.

Age of the children.

All families with school-aged children were more actively engaged in instruction in Arabic. Thus, age of the children seemed to have an impact on the consistency and frequency with which parents engaged their children in learning experiences with academic Arabic.

Media.

Fourth, counting on the media (TV and computer) to help in learning the second language appeared dominant among all the families. The Arab women themselves counted on the media to learn the second language, mostly due to the lack of exposure to real life situations in the second language, and because it is more convenient time and effort wise. It was also one of the ways families reported using to help their young children who did not attend daycare or schools to learn the second language.

Mothers as teachers.

Last, it was clearly apparent that the greater role in the family literacy interactions in general and any direct instruction in Arabic fell to the mothers in all the families. In part, this is due to the fact that the fathers in all the families act as the primary breadwinners and this, along with school responsibilities for some, keeps the father out of the home for extended periods of time.

Factors and Influences

The purpose of the study, then, was to explicate specifically what literacy practices took place in my home as my wife and I strive to raise our children to be biliterate. We want them to be literate in English without losing their academic literacy in Arabic, which is so crucial to our lives as Muslims. The data collected throughout the study provided not only a description of the many literacy practices, but also served to clarify the factors which drove these practices and to illuminate the various influences upon these literacy events. Factors differ from influences in that the factors are the reasons behind certain literacy practices. The driving factors are (1) religion and (2) future plans and concerns of the family. The influences are contextual elements that support and further enable the literacy practices. The influences are (1) family support, (2) language use in the family, (3) media, and (4) availability of literacy materials.

Driving factors.

Religion. The data gathered during the fieldwork confirms the strong presence of Islam as a way of life in my family. It is a driving factor behind literacy practices and also a cultural theme. Because my wife and I are Muslims by virtue of birth and we were raised as Muslims, our family and social environments revolve around the principles for living put forth in the Holy Qur'an. We want the same thing for our children. As Muslims raising our children within the mainstream society in America we need to work even harder on this due to the fact that Islam is not the religion of the mainstream society here in America. We, as Muslim parents, believe in and act according to the *hadeeth* (saying) of our Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) when he said, "Teach your children the prayers by the age of seven."

Religious literacy practices do not exist in the life of the family separate from the other practices which any individual performs in order to go about his daily life. This kind of religious

routine in the family requires the individual in the Arab Muslim family to be fluent in his first language. These practices are woven into the fabric of the individual's life shaping and modeling him or her within the form that is accepted by Islam. Along with being interwoven in our daily lives, my wife and I take many opportunities to speak specifically to the children about the importance of embracing Islam as a way of life. Topics such as morality, appropriate behavior, piety, benevolence, etc., as ways to be a good Muslim and a good community member are the focus during these informal family discussions. These topics are recurring in our religious teachings and instructions, in the individual and group prayers, in readings in religious books, in reciting the Holy Qur'an, and in the routine religious practices throughout the day.

An inseparable relationship between our practice of Islam and the teaching of Arabic was clearly evident from the data collected. The practice of Islam is both an avenue by which the first language is preserved and a reason for preserving the first language. Daily religious practices like reading and reciting the Holy Qur'an require and facilitate Arabic fluency in what is something like a symbiotic relationship. Islam is so woven into every day of our lives, there are multiple opportunities which support and strengthen this bond.

One example includes private petitions for individual concerns (called in Arabic a *Du'a).* If a family member is traveling or facing a major event, such occasions would naturally lend themselves to such prayers of support. Another example would be if a child comes home having had a bad experience at school, discussing how to handle the experience would naturally employ the use of Islamic principles as exemplars of appropriate behavior or to assist the child with future decision-making in the same situation. Many times, bedtime stories revolved around particular Islamic principles and/or readings from the Holy Qur'an and the *hadeeth.* Readings

from religious books can be used to help reinforce and explain the principles even more clearly through stories from the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and biographies about his companions.

A Muslim family should read on a daily basis in the Holy Qur'an to remember and stay close to Allah (SWT) in order to win his blessings and forgiveness, and to increase the Muslim's good deeds. Although this looks fully religious in motive, it carries so many original chances for our family to practice and learn our first language. After all, being able to practice Islam is the driving force behind teaching our children Arabic. Muslims are encouraged to read daily from the Holy Qur'an for the sake of applying the Prophet's (PBUH) s*unnah* (the Prophet's sayings and deeds). While there might be days which pass where a Muslim does not do so, rarely a whole week passes without at least reading *soratul-kKahf'*-chapter 15 on Fridays. According to the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), this reading forgives one's sins for a ten-day period.

In Islam, parents are held responsible and accountable for teaching Islamic principles in front of Allah (SWT) and for the way they raise their children; if they raise good children who will benefit and support their society, protect their community, help their neighbors, care for others, love others, know the limits of their freedom, and satisfy their God, parents then would have won Allah's (SWT) satisfaction, mercy, and blessings. Islam starts with the individual and goes in an ever-widening circle to reach out for the whole society. After all, it is all about how one interacts and deals with people; not just to benefit one's own community but your kindness and courtesy should reach out for everybody regardless of their color, ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

Planning for the future. This factor appeared affected the quantity and quality of the literacy practices within all of the families. For those families who planned to return to their

homelands, being literate in English enhances their chances and makes them more marketable. Families planning to return more immediately to their home countries were more likely to act upon their concerns about their children's Arabic literacy.

Families' future plans appeared to interact with children's age/s. Families with school-aged children were even more active in pursuing Arabic instruction for their children. If they do not, the families and the children may suffer upon their return to their homeland. Lack of proficiency in academic Arabic might create a delay in their children's education and hold them back from catching their peers. For example, my wife and I are concerned about all the children's skills in Arabic, but our concern about Alhareth is greater because of his age and grade in school. Alhareth has already lost three academic school years (in Arabic), and if we do not intervene, by the time we return to our home country he will be far behind his peers in terms of his CALP in Arabic. As parents we feel the need to make our highest priority filling in the gap between Alhareth and his grade-level peers at home in Jordan so that he can be proficient in both his ability to communicate in Arabic as well as to use his first language in an academic setting.

The second reason has to do with cultural identity and family connections. All the families who took part in this study emphasized the importance of being literate in Arabic. Even those who do not see a return to their home countries within the short run endure the hassles and the expenses to make overseas trips to their home countries to maintain connections between their children and their extended family members back home, the language, and the culture. They do this because of the future; they want to achieve a better life but not at the expense of their identity, language, and cultural heritage. They want to connect their children to their language and they want them to preserve their cultural identity.

Influences.

Influences can be distinguished from driving factors in the sense that they are the contextual and human elements which support and enable the literacy practices which are driven by the beliefs and the future needs of the families. The majority of the discussion will focus on my family, however, some of the influences such as availability of materials and media were also observed to be common to the other families in the study.

Family support. A supporting family atmosphere and parents' continuous support and encouragement to their children plays a major role in raising the level of enthusiasm in their children to study harder and to learn more. Parents play a major role in providing a literate environment for their children and ensuring healthy social interactions both within and outside the home. This all begins with the parents and their efforts toward being genuine participants in and contributors to their children's education. Parents do not raise a human being in just flesh and blood; they raise a mind, too. Parents' awareness of the critical role they play in their child's literacy development from birth onward is a determining factor in children's success.

Parents' participation in literacy interactions at home and at the child's school models the value of biliteracy for the child and makes it clear to the child that his parents are also true partners in his learning and education, and it is not just the teacher, and it is not just the school who take part in his literacy, but it is his parents, his home, his family members, and the environment too. The home is the arena where the child gets his first doses of education before going to any other institution.

The previous statements are true regardless of the language spoken in the home. However, for bilingual families, parental involvement has a heightened role in children's development of their literacy and biliteracy. In my home, the data showed numerous events in

which it was evident that my eldest son Alhareth experienced a great struggle in terms of his linguistic identity to the point where he was negligent and even defiant about his Arabic language learning. There were moments of tears, anger and expressed hatred toward the language. He would say, "I do not need it."

He did not want to learn his mother language because he no longer acknowledged it as necessary in order for him to pursue his daily life. As would be typical for most children in his age, he could not perceive the fact that he would need the language when the family returns to their homeland within months. He most definitely did not view that Arabic held the same potential for making friends and having power and control over his life as did learning English. Realizing the importance of his first language falls beyond Alhareth's cognitive scope at his age. He asked his mother and me repeatedly why we need to teach him Arabic and why we insist on that.

Raising the household awareness of the importance of becoming bilingual in both the first and the second language instead of becoming monolingual in the second language alone at the expense of the first language becomes extra important and highly crucial. Herein lies the importance of the role of the parents in sitting down with their children and discussing with them the importance of learning not just the second language (English in this case) but the importance of learning the first language (Arabic in our case) too. Parents need to talk about it with their children, and they need to explain and make it clear to them that the situation in the home country will be different; as parents we should commit ourselves to this duty and helping our children understand at the level of which they are capable, how things are at home socially, academically, and religiously. Raising the child's level of pride in his mother language and its vital practical implications is the duty of the parents. Raising a bilingual and a biliterate child in a

society where the first language is underrepresented and unrecognized is an honorable challenge that requires the entire family's effort and support.

At times, there were incidences at school, which made helping our children embrace their cultural identity more difficult. Alhareth and Mohammed both had experiences where their language and culture made them the target of disparaging and hurtful remarks from both children and even teachers. Consider the child's perspective. At home, they are asked to value and behave as their culture and religion dictates, yet at school (where they spend the majority of their day) these things may make them a target for teasing and criticism. This forces the children to navigate between two cultures and make difficult decisions about what they should do to fit in with their peers and still remain loyal to their cultural and familial ideals and values.

Asia has had a much easier transition into English, largely due to her age and the less rigorous academic demands of preschool and first grade. She has needed less direct encouragement and has been a self-initiator in terms of her Arabic learning. We did not consider it as important and/or urgent for her to learn Arabic at the age of four when we began working with Alhareth. However, when Asia saw her parents teaching her older brother the Arabic language and providing him with extra support, this provoked her to use literacy as a means to get her parents' support and attention too. Asia is in first grade now, and is showing great interest in learning Arabic that struck us as parents. In general, learning comes easily to her and she enjoys it.

At home, she is also literacy-oriented in an extraordinary way. Literacy is big part of her playtime. Her most favorite habit is to stay close to books, papers, print, pens, pencils, crayons, etc. She spends most of her time either writing letters decorated with hearts, flowers, and 'I love you mommy and daddy' messages to her parents. At the same time, she gives a share of her time

to reading storybooks she gets from the home library or the books she checks from her class library. Also, she spends a great deal of time practicing spelling in both English and Arabic.

Our third child, Mohammad is a different story altogether. Although the family uses Arabic predominantly at home, Mohammad uses English almost one hundred percent at home. He is capable of using Arabic any time he wants, and he fully understands it, and this is evident in the rare appearance of statements in Arabic every once in a while, but he does not. Instead, he uses English in spite of the insistence on the part of the parents for him to use Arabic at home. If one of us speaks to him in Arabic, he responds back in English, and if it happened that he uttered a few statements in Arabic, then the family is surprised. Once I heard his mom asking to him to respond back to her in Arabic while they were playing together.

Now the dominant use of English in Mohammad's daily events and practices may be attributed to several factors, but school and age play a major role in the kind of language he used more in his daily life. I believe age is the more central factor here because age relates directly to the amount of Arabic to which each child was exposed prior to attending English-speaking schools. When we came to the Mohammad was two years old, while his sister was four years and his brother almost eight. The early age at which Mohammad was exposed to English (especially during the crucial language development years) has had a strong impact on his choice of English as his preferred language. Asia and Alhareth had earlier exposure to Arabic and use both Arabic and English equally at home. They are facile at code switching between the two languages, while Mohammad is not. I believe his choice of language is not always a conscious one. Thus, age at which exposure to the second language occurs is the only different factor. If we had not kept using Arabic at home, Mohammad would have lost his mother language completely.

Again, the crucial role of the family's support in making a dedicated effort to using and teaching

the mother tongue is highlighted.

Language use in the family. Language use at home indicated the presence of four

bilingual patterns in the family verbal interactions. This variation may be attributed globally to

the family's need and/or desire to be bilingual, and specifically to the people involved in the

communication, their intention behind using a certain medium for communication, their ages,

their fluency level and skills, and the level of comfort in using a certain medium over the other.

Table 7

Bilingual Patterns in the Family

Patterns	Context	Example
I. Parents speak Arabic to each other and to children; children respond back only in Arabic.	Religious activities, and Arabic instruction	Father, "Alhareth, you are in the age to start practicing religion especially salat. " Alhareth: I'm still young."
II. Parents speak English to their children; children respond in English and Arabic.	School related issues like disciplining.	Father "You should not cry Mohammad. Tell me what you want." Mohammad, "Okay."
III. Parents speak English; children respond back in English.	In public places like grocery stores, etc.	Essentially, we feel it is appropriate to speak English in public places.
IV. Parents code-switch to each other and to their children; children code-switch back and among themselves, too.	Code-switching occurs naturally and spontaneously in our discussions.	Mother, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Mohammad, "A firefighter and a policeman."

Zentella (in Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 1992) when talking about the communication patterns in

the homes of '*el bloque*' said:

When we enter the homes on *el bloque*, we find four distinct communication patterns differing in terms of the language(s) that the parents speak to each other; the language(s) that the parents speak to the children, and vice versa, and the language(s) the children speak among themselves (p. 213).

These same patterns were evident in my data. Examples are shown in Table 7.It seems Patterns 1 and 2 play a crucial role in preserving and developing the first language. Over time, Pattern 4 has replaced Pattern 1 as the dominant pattern. Actually, parents count on this pattern in keeping their mother tongue alive within their children literacy practices. However, we do revert consciously to Pattern 1 especially with Mohammad because he almost never speaks Arabic.

English literacy practices inside the home emerge through Pattern 3. Parents count on this kind of verbal communication in developing the English literacy practices and skills among the household, especially with Shahd. Early data contain a lot of remarks that my wife made in which she was asking me to speak English with Shahd (the baby girl), now Shahd is code-switching very readily. This tells also how much the parents are aware of raising bilingual and biliterate children. When we return to Jordan we plan to enroll our children in private schools upon returning home to ensure they retain their bilingualism and biliteracy.

Pattern 4 is the one in which parents and children code-switch between Arabic and English and vice versa. It seems this pattern of literacy practices at home creates a balance between the two literacies. The children in the family are fluent in both languages enough to be able to perform the code-switching (Mohammad just chooses not to use his Arabic). They alternate between Arabic and English almost all the time while at home. Actually, this pattern dominates the child-to-child interaction at home with only-English disseminating when playing by themselves or with other children.

Media. In the age of high-speed technology and information, media can have a great deal of impact, both positive and negative, on children's literacy. Specifically speaking, the bulk of the data included literacy practices in the Arab family related mostly to the computer and the TV.

The computer and its role in developing the children's literacy is linked to using computers to develop other literacy skills like developing typing skills, rewriting a story using word-processing software on a computer, writing letters to parents, developing personal experience in computers, and doing homework. This kind of literacy came from the data that was collected from my own family and mostly from Alhareth. This boy is obsessed by computers, and he likes to spend his leisure time playing with them. Some times if he has nothing to do, he will go and change the background of the screen, he will download some pictures from his father's digital camera, or he will sit and start writing a story or a letter, and/or he will be playing some games on the computer. When he is done, he either prints out or saves his work on the computer. He also knows how to use the internet for finding information to complete school projects and will spend hours doing this. He also knows how to look for free software.

More than that, he is teaching his mom and his younger siblings some computer skills. I saw him several times performing a teacher-like role while trying to teach his mom some computer skills. I also asked him several times to help Mohammad and Asia in opening some games for them or advising them about typing skills. Once he wanted to teach me how to type without looking at the keyboard. In the fact of the matter, I let him do that and was listening to him attentively. He has gained good knowledge and practice at his school on computers. Once he said to me "Once I learn something new about computers, I come home and try to practice on it by myself."

All of my children are obsessed with the computer. Sitting in front of my desktop and trying hard to find the letters she needs to compose the letter to her mom and dad, Asia developed a good friendship with this machine. This gave her more confidence in herself and helped in developing her computer literacy. Mohammad, too, uses the computer. I had the chance to see him more than once looking at the keyboard trying to reach the letters with his little fingers. Sometimes he joins his brother and sister in sitting in front of the computer playing a game or watching a cartoon. Shahd too tries her best to get the chance and climb up to my chair in order to reach the keyboard and start punching the keys. In doing that she gives herself the chance to make successive approximations to what she sees others in the family doing. If all the family is sitting together in the living room and Shahd is not there, then we know that she is in the computer room messing with something. When she sees me coming to her, then she will try to hit the keyboard as fast as she can while laughing and jumping happily before I reach her.

Throughout the data collection process, media played a heavy role in literacy especially for my wife and my daughter Shahd. Since they do not attend any formal classes for learning English, the TV exposes them to a great deal of English. I believe this is a very positive thing, as long as the amount and content of programs watched is controlled and appropriate. Lin (2003) found that kindergarteners who watched the literacy related program *Between the Lions* scored much higher on tests of literacy skills. The field notes and daily observations bear this out. Television viewing is perceived as a tool of dual effects- positive and therefore recommended; and negative and therefore discarded and discouraged. TV viewing can result in valuable outcomes in the development of the Arab household literacy because it gives an exposure to the second language around the clock and at the family's convenience. This becomes more true when referring to Arab women specifically who do not have the opportunity to associate as much

as their spouses and children do with native speakers of the second language. This is the case for different reasons. Although my wife attended and still does attend some ESL classes, the majority of her time is spent at home taking care of the children. Therefore, she counts on some TV programs to help in developing her English skills especially the kind of programs that use simple language like *Sesame Street*. Interestingly, she made a conscious choice to cancel the TV channels which offered programs in Arabic as a way of forcing herself to learn more English and thus achieve her goal more quickly of becoming as competent as possible in the new language.

I do not believe that for my family, TV viewing has had a negative influence in any way. Although TV brings to the family a wide selection of shows and films which might not meet the Arab Muslim families' values and morals, it is up to the parents to exert control over what their children do and do not watch. The parents should supervise their children's TV sessions, and if there was any inappropriate and disrupting scene they should be ready to explain how this violates the principles and values of the family. Sometimes, we check out some videotapes of different materials from the public library, and/or we rent some others from the video stores to use with our children at home. Families who wish for their children to be biliterate should be aware that TV viewing in English should be balanced with at least an equal amount of interactions in Arabic.

There is much evidence in the field notes and observations that confirm the positive role media has played in my family's language development. The fieldnotes depict incidences in which the whole household was learning the second language from shows like *Sesame Street*, and other cartoon shows broadcast on KERA, channel 13. I had the chance to see my children repeating words, solving math problems, singing and dancing, working out puzzles, learning the names of different animals, learning the shapes and the colors, and you name it, from cartoons

like *Cyber Chase*, *Zoom Zoom*, *Kratt's Creatures*, *Clifford, Arthur*, and other interesting TV programs.

Each home of the Arab families who participated in this study, either in the observations and field notes or in the interviews, contained at least one TV and one computer. Talking first about the computer's role in children's literacy, it seems that the families counted on the computer to help in developing their children's skills in both languages (the first and the second language) through using certain educational CDs. Some of these families bought those CDs from their home countries during visits they made back home, while others got them from here in the U.S. Some of the CDs contained cartoons and/or games that use the targeted language (either Arabic or English) offering educational material to educate the child. They bring it in cartoon characters because they count on this to attract the child's attention, and hoping, at the same time, that this practice will yield good exposure to the desired language ending up with the success the family looks for.

Availability of literacy materials. Clearly, resources must be available for literacy to have the chance to grow and develop. So, what is there in the Arab Muslim home library? Specifically speaking about my home library, it includes academic books for me, Islamic and religious books in different topics, two copies of The Holy Qur'an and one translated copy in English which I obtained from the mosque, storybooks in both English and Arabic, magazines and newspapers (mostly in English), and school materials for the children. In addition, the library contains The *Oxford English/Arabic Picture Dictionary* and *Al-Mawrid* Dictionary in Arabic/English and English/Arabic. Finally, the selection contains some audiotapes and CDs (most in English) for the children. When looking at the home libraries and availability of print resources for all families in the study, it came as no surprise that the families who were less actively supporting

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their children's literacy or providing the least instruction in Arabic had fewer resources. Some of the families mentioned they had no knowledge or information regarding where to obtain books and materials designed for instructing their children in Arabic.

Table 8 shows the selection of the literacy materials in the family libraries for groups 1 and 2.

Table 8

Availability of Literacy Materials

Material	Group 1	Group 2				
		A	B	C	D	F
Academic	many	many	many	many	many	many
Religious	many	few	many	few	few	many
Arabic books & stories	many	few	many	none	few	many
English stories	many	many	many	many	many	many
Magazines	many	many	many	many	many	many
Newspapers	many	many	many	many	many	many
Dictionaries	few	few	few	few	few	few
Audiotapes	few	few	none	none	few	few
Videotapes	many	many	many	many	many	many
CDs	many	many	many	none	none	many

Note. None = 0, Few < 5, and Many > 5

Catalytic Validity

One of the interesting and promising outcomes from this study is the change this study brought to some of these families about how to go about their Arabic literacy. Specifically speaking, family (F) started a new and encouraging avenue in their literacy practices at home.

This family started teaching their children Arabic language using some academic books they got from their home country. Based on a discussion that took place between the researcher's wife and the wife in family (F), it seems that the wife in that family made a kind of schedule for her children and herself trying to spend at least one hour with each child over the weekends to teach them Arabic language starting from the alphabets and proceeding to reading, writing, and spelling based on the child's age and the skills he posses. The mother made a remark that her children are showing good progress and there are some indications of acceptance and willingness on the children's part to learn their mother language.

During the interview, family (F) said that one major reason behind their every-two year visits that they try to make to their home country is their concern about their children's literacy in Arabic. This family takes the financial hardship of this option because the family counts on these visits to fill the gaps and give the chance for those children to have more exposure to Arabic language and to associate with their relatives. They do not want for their children to grow up and stay away from their kinships because it is not just about language, but it is about social interaction, traditions, religion, and ancestors' roots.

<div align="center">Conclusions and Recommendations</div>

It is important to note that this study and its results are only the beginning of this line of research. More must be done to understand the literacy practices and needs of Arab families living in the U.S. so that different society's and culture's needs can be met, especially by educational institutions. I firmly believe that when families meet, cultures talk.

Conclusions.

This study did not spring from nothing; rather it has deep roots in the daily life needs and challenges of the many Arab families within the community as far as their children's biliteracy

was concerned. While concerns have grown for these families, any practical, reliable, and dependable solution are found. It is as if those families are living in a circle that has no exit.

As far as the bilingual and biliterate issues are concerned, these families have few options and resources available to meet their needs. These families know that if their children do not learn their mother language, then it becomes a matter of time before the children lose their connection with their language and in the worst case scenario, their cultural identities. As noted by Suleiman (1999) this weakening of language and culture will only pejorate until a new generation appears completely uprooted from the fathers' identity, culture, and religion. This could mean families and relatives in their homeland will not easily accept these culturally "amalgamated" individuals. If this should come to pass, it would result in a social, religious and cultural chasm between generations that will only grow with time.

Literacy is a human right to be respected and an individual property to be protected. Literacy, and its expression, within the human experience is not reserved for certain factions within society. It is the birthright of all people. Culture is equally important, if not more so. A quote from the Bullock Report expresses the fundamental principle that "no child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of his home" (DES, 1975; p. 286)

When thinking of literacy as a tool for change and empowerment, it must be powerful enough to bring justice to those silent voices and bring light to their shades. Those unheard voices should not remain in the darkness of the dominant culture's shadow. They should rise up and call for more representation in the different domains and walks of life. Their children cannot be segregated and uprooted from their heritage and deprived of their identity. The powers that be must relinquish the dominant rhetoric of "take it or leave it," or "one size fits all," or "blame the families.'' It is well past time to create a shared ground of mutual understanding between

underrepresented families and the education system. Street's call for the mounting of a "literacy campaign" to create Auerbach's vision of educational reform which would positively link home and school literacy is unlikely to happen without social reform as well. True equity, which necessitates embracing diversity and building understanding across people of all backgrounds and beliefs, is the only way to build bridges of cooperation and communication. This way individuals from different backgrounds can cross over to get together to work for the best of their children in particular and for all of society as well.

Literacy in the life of the literate people becomes an inseparable part and a major component of their daily routine and the practices of their life, without which the wheel of life will stop. In a literacy-rich environment literacy becomes as much a part of daily life as breathing. This does not mean that all communities should look the same in terms of their literacy. In a diverse community there must be diverse forms of literacy. True equity means people have the right to maintain their cultural, religious, and social selves and the literacy practices which are an integral part of these identities.

Literacy is used in all the domains of life, and an individual may encounter him/herself surrounded with literacy wherever he/she goes. But we might need to take into consideration that the ways literacy is used in the Arab family might look different from the ways it is used in the western society. Every family member in the Arab family should be literate is a dominant notion in all families. Literacy is supported and highly appreciated by the parents and by the community. We should not forget that in a form or another, literacy was one of the driving reasons that forced the families to leave their countries and come to the. Literacy plays a vital role in the daily life of the Arab family.

Recommendations.

The primary reason for this study was to describe the literacy practices and interactions of Arab families living in the , and to identify the factors and influences, which appear to drive them. This study was aimed at bringing to the attention of policymakers and decision-makers a portrait of the Arab family and the vital links between culture and literacy that exist for these people. The intent was also to reach out to different institutions, especially schools and their teachers with information that will enhance their performance. Third, this study provides a vital foundation for further studies in this area.

The bulk of data in this study confirms the longstanding fact that literacy is socially constructed and is present in the routine of the daily life of the families. This suggests the permanent vivid presence of literacy in its cultural, religious, traditional, and communicative practices and interaction in the various daily life contexts. Arab families when going about their daily routines bring multiple literacy practices and experiences to the context they are in, and they travel multiple roads of literacy.

Such ethnographic research can help educators, policy makers, and community leaders to realize what social, educational, traditional, and religious repertoire those families bring with them to the society they live in and to the schools their children attend. This should help stakeholders and legislators reach better decisions when those families become concerned. Shr (1993) demonstrates that "By discovering the meanings and uses of literacy for members of diverse cultural communities, anthropologists can help educational planners take into account what adults want literacy to do for them." Doing this will turn literacy experiences to moments of joy, productivity, and empowerment and will show literacy as a tool for change.

Recommendations for teachers. It is very important that teachers be aware of and appreciative of the different backgrounds of the students in their class. In a study looking at preserving the bilingualism of Japanese children in California, Minami (2001) discusses the inadequacy of the home-school connection. Martin & Stuart-Smith (1998) discuss the need for teachers of diverse children to deconstruct their existing constructs about minority children. They suggest the typical relationship between uninformed teachers and minority children is one of opposition brought about by misunderstandings and preconceived notions on the part of the educator. In order for the teacher-student relationship to be nurturing and supporting, mutual respect and shared understandings must be developed through more collaborative relationships. It is necessary that teachers realize students coming from minority backgrounds are literate before coming to the school. Teachers should educate themselves about the different factors that might contribute to the literacy development of students of minorities in specific and students in general. Teachers who familiarize themselves with the home and the literacy practiced there can help to put home literacy and school/mainstream literacy on a more equal plane. Teachers and schools who consider home literacy as a crucial component for child education, and seek parents' participation will be more likely to reach higher levels of satisfaction and academic achievement for students. The moment the home-school connection works, schooling the child becomes easier and more fruitful. This is also true for the child. The moment he sees his culture and literacy experiences appreciated and represented in the school curriculum, teaching and learning become more meaningful to him.

Teachers should work diligently to minimize and to eliminate obstacles and difficulties for the learner. They should work to maximize cultural appreciation and increase the level of involvement on the part of the parents. The contribution of parents of minority should be

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seriously sought, and parent's ideas should be taken as a basis to build on and to consider when dealing with those children.

Recommendations for parents. Literacy development and facilitating literacy skills are not the sole proprietorship of schools and teachers, especially where bilingual children are concerned. Parents share this responsibility and have a great role to play. Parents are the child's first teachers, and home is the first school that the child attends. Creating a literate environment that provides the child with tasks that develop and then challenge his abilities is the parents' responsibility. This includes providing books to read, choosing games and toys, engaging the child in appropriate social interactions and so on. More important than giving birth to a child is giving him the right environment that can offer him better chances to grow up.

Parents should work diligently with teachers and schools to offer what they know about their child so that this can in turn be helpful and useful in facilitating the teaching and learning experience for the child. This fact becomes extra important in cases where the children are second language speakers. Awareness of the socioeconomic, racial, and cultural inputs can help education planers and providers to deal more professionally and carefully with children from other ethnicities.

Parents should look for more active role to play in schools and higher level of involvement and participation. Parents should not be passive and wait until schools and teachers call them in, but they should act energetically and contact schools and teachers offering their help and contribution. At the same time, the child himself feels more comfortable and relaxed to see his parent(s) in touch with the school and maintain good relationship with teachers.

Arab parents should cooperate effectively together to find a solution for their dilemma namely teaching their children Arabic language. If there is no institution or an organization that

can help them in finding out a solution for their situation, then parents should live up to their responsibility and commit themselves to their parental role in raising a bilingual and a biliterate Arab child.

This matter should be taken seriously and should be handled carefully. Parents can start by schooling their children at home, and they should take care of providing the instructional materials personally. Parents might also make arrangements with other parents too to share schooling the children according to their schedule. Parents can also look for someone to hire who can offer this service to their children. Or they can pool together and try other options by asking the ISD or the mosque for example to play a bigger role in offering bilingual educational services to their children.

The mosque. All kinds of religions have certain places where followers of that religion go to perform and practice their rituals and attend the sermons of their preachers; for example, Christians go to the church, Jews go the synagogue, and Muslims in their turn go to the mosque, as well. The mosque, with its religious practices, is another component of the religious literacy of the family. In the past, mosques played a major role in not just educating Muslims in their religion but in every domain of their lives, developing and sharpening their skills in various fields of science and knowledge. Besides teaching the Islamic sciences, which center around the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, mosques were centers for enlightenment in other kinds of sciences and branches of knowledge. Mosques had graduated great scientists, educators, and philosophers in all domains of knowledge, which their writings and research at that time are, still used as valuable resources for knowledge.

But the story is different these days with the appearance of other institutions (schools and universities) which individuals attend to get their education and the degree they seek. With all

the secularism that takes place in the globe to divorce life from religion, mosques, as the case with other religious centers, retain their mission as places for worshipping and other related religious practices. Muslims attends mosques for their prayers and worship, to go about their religious practices and rituals, and to hold their religious celebrations and holy days.

Concerning the role of mosque and its contribution in raising bilingual and biliterate Arab child, local efforts in this regard are not successful yet, and families are looking for the mosque to play a more active role. The mosque may be the only institution outside the family that could help them in teaching the Language of the Holy Qur'an to their children. Due to the shortage in the Arab families' serious and continuous follow-up with their children's Arabic literacy, the mosque should play a greater role and should extend the hand to help those families in schooling their children in Arabic language.

Arab families do not have access to family literacy programs anywhere to develop their children's literacy in their first language. Families lacking the necessary resources and the materials make teaching their children their mother tongue an incomplete effort. Living up to a greater role, the mosque could have helped many other Arab families in this area. So far, there have been scattered efforts, coming from the Imam personal concerns and efforts, to provide Arabic lessons to this underrepresented community, but the success was very limited. His 'cry' did not find the echo he was looking for, and volunteers in this regard are limited too.

Recommendations for researchers. The next step is to investigate more specific relationships between the literacy practices discussed in this study with children's actual levels of bilingualism and biliteracy. Research which would give more information about specific cause and effect relationships between Arab family literacy practices and levels of fluency and academic achievement is needed. As the sole limitation of this study was limited access to the

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homes because of the gender of the researcher, female researchers are strongly encouraged to pursue this line of research. This would add even greater depth and clarity to the findings of the current study. This topic invites interested researchers to work hard on investigating and describing the Arab home environment and its role in raising a bilingual and a biliterate child in the . Researchers can expand the circle and start researching Arab families who live in other places all over the world and then they might come to compare their results and look for common factors and common themes. When we reach that level of richness in literature and research, at that time Arab families will feel more comfortable regarding the future of their children.

To sum up, the over-arching purpose for becoming literate in the Arab Muslim family is to be able to read the Holy Qur'an-the Book of Allah (SWT). However, the different uses of literacy show that Arab family members use literacy in the way it makes sense to them and facilitates their daily life. As far as biliteracy is concerned, the Arab family living in the U.S. channels literacy in the direction that helps the family members to overcome the challenges of the new life. It seems the family finds itself in a situation where the family needs to become creative and at the same time conservative; creative in order to adapt to the new life and its system, and conservative in order to hold firmly on their religion, culture, identity, and language.

Literacy, regardless of the form it takes, in its basic forms brings power to the Arab family; in the fact of the matter, it means power because of the changes it brings to their lives. Those families want to bring life again to their lives in terms of economic development, equality of opportunity, and the possibilities of liberty and democracy (Rockhill, in Street 1993, p.160). We should not forget that these families are paying a high price though to reach their goals; they

are away of their families and love ones, and may be some of them will be away for along time if

not forever.

APPENDIX A

GRAND TOUR QUESTIONS

Interview questions for the parents'

Grand and mini tour questions:

1. How long have you been in the U.S.?

2. What is/are the primary reason(s) for your coming to the U.S.?

3. For how long do you plan to stay?

4. Do you have any concerns regarding your child (ren) skills in using Arabic language? How do you classify these concerns; weak, fair, strong?

5. Do you encourage your child (ren) to interact using Arabic at home? Why?

6. Do you (as a family) have relationships with other Arab families? If yes, do you exchange visits?

7. Do these families have children? If yes, are they in the same age as your children?

8. Did it happen that you watched your children play or interact with other Arab children? If yes, what language did they use; Arabic and/or English?

9. What is more you use in your home; Arabic or English? Do you make a conscious decision on what to use or it happens unconsciously?

10. Who speaks Arabic more at home, you or your spouse? Who speaks English more at home, you or your spouse?

11. What does literacy mean to you?

12. While thinking of literacy, what kinds of events do come to your mind? Can you talk about them in more details? Do you have some artifacts that you can show to me?

13. What role do you play within these literacy interactions?

14. How do you classify your interaction with your child (ren), weak, fair, or strong?

15. Do you read to your child? How often? In what language?

16. How much time have you and your family spent on book reading?

17. Do you keep a list of the books that you read to/with your child (ren)? Do you mind showing it to me?

18. Is there a special place where you keep the books in your home?

19. Do you have access to books? How do you classify this access; easy, fair, or difficult?

20. Do you have access to a public library? Do you make visits to the library with your child (ren)? How often do you go over there? Can you talk about one or more of these visits?

APPENDIX B

DOMAIN ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Domain Analysis Worksheet

- Semantic Relationship: _____
- Form: _____

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term

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- Semantic Relationship: _____
- Form: _____

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term

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- Semantic Relationship: _____
- Form: _____

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term

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APPENDIX C

LIST OF INITIAL DOMAINS

List of the Initial Domains

A. Strict-inclusion semantic relationship

1. Literacy practices I Ramadan

2. Children-as-teachers

3. Family interactions within the community

4. Islam-literacy practices

5. ESL program impact on my wife

6. Socio-cultural effect on my wife

7. Roles of wife-as-a mother

8. Arab family concerns

9. Arab parents' concerns about schools

10. Arab parents' role

11. Home-school interaction

12. Arabic literacy practices at home

13. English literacy practices at home

14. English-at-use

15. Child (Alhareth) attitudes toward learning Arabic

16. Family responsibility toward the community

17. Family friends

18. Family friends gatherings

19. Environment effect on literacy

20. Shahd (my baby) learn the second language/English

21. Shahd's emerging literacy behavior

22. Different roles children play

23. Asia and school literacy

24. Child literacy

25. Literacy habits

26. Literacy practices/general

27. Reading

28. Bed-time story event

29. Storybook

30. T.V. impact/negatives

31. T. V. impact/positives

32. T.V. channels at home

33. Watching cartoons

34. Daily life routine

35. Family cooperation

36. Family literacy routine

37. Reinforcement and punishment

38. Disturbances to literacy practices

39. Teaching academic Arabic

40. Self dependence

41. Sharing literacy with others

42. Privacy and literacy practices

43. Entertainments and literacy

44. Formal literacy institutions

45. Parent-child interaction

46. Types of a reader

47. Literacy tools

48. Settings were literacy is practiced

49. Child toys

50. Furniture as part in literacy practices

51. School literacy

52. School folder content

53. School assignments

B. Means-Ends

1. Learning Arabic

2. Learning English

3. Respecting guests

4. Encouraging children for literacy behavior

5. Choosing storybooks

6. Running family affairs

7. Discovering meanings

8. Parenting

9. Book talk

10. Asking questions

11. Developing second language skills

12. Home-school communication

13. Passing away academic sessions in the first language

14. Encouraging learning the first language

15. Writing stories

16. Checking comprehension

17. Making toys and three-dimensional objects

18. Visiting a friend

19. Expressing opinions

20. Shopping

21. Finding privacy

22. Helping mom developing second language skills

23. Doing homework

C. Function

    1. Associating with community members

    2. Teaching English

    3. Teaching Arabic

    4. Telling story

    5. Having access to print

    6. Shopping

    7. Teaching-learning environment

D. Cause-effect

    1. Supervising children

    2. Family size impact on the wife

    3. Parents' concerns

    4. Obeying parents

     5. Watching T.V.

E. Rational

     1. Dominant use of the second language

     2. Teaching Alphabets

     3. Writing letters

     4. Resisting first language academic learning

F. Sequence

     1. Spelling practices

     2. Bedtime routine

     3. Teaching Arabic language

     4. Teaching English

     5. Making wallets

     6. Cooking

G. Attribution

     1. Mohammad's biliteracy experience

     2. Alhareth 's biliteracy experience

     3. Asia's biliteracy experience

     4. Shahd's biliteracy experience

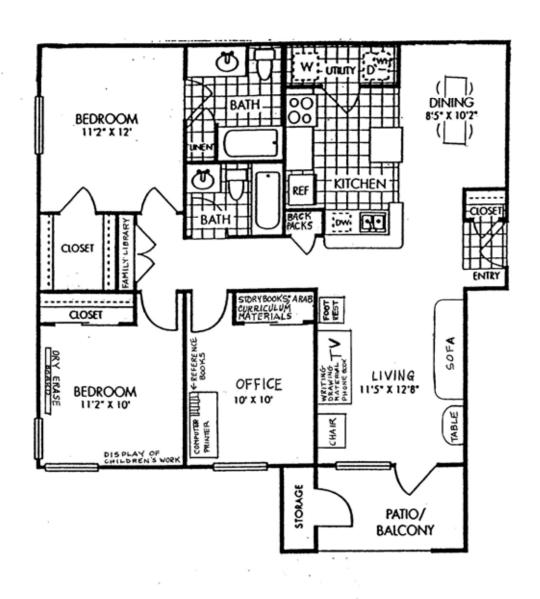   5. My wife's biliteracy experience

H. Location-for-action

     1. Literacy events and practices

     2. Supervising the children while playing

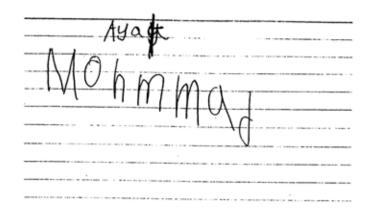   3. Reading

I. Spatial

    1. literacy sittings/the home

J. Time-for-action

    1. School literacy

    2. Other literacies

APPENDIX D

FLOOR PLAN

BEDROOM
11'2" X 12'
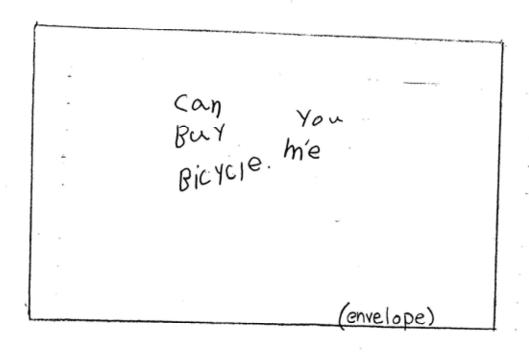
BATH

LINEN

BATH

W UTILITY D

DINING
8'5" X 10'2"

REF

KITCHEN

BACK
PACKS

DW

CLOSET

ENTRY

CLOSET

FAMILY LIBRARY

CLOSET

STORYBOOKS, ARAB.
CURRICULUM
MATERIALS

FOOT
REST

REFERENCE BOOKS

TV

OFFICE
10' X 10'

WRITING-
DRAWING
MATERIAL
PHONE BOOK

SOFA

DRY ERASE BOARD

BEDROOM
11'2" X 10'

LIVING
11'5" X 12'8"

COMPUTER
PRINTER

CHAIR

TABLE

DISPLAY OF
CHILDREN'S WORK

STORAGE

PATIO/
BALCONY

APPENDIX E

ARAB CHILD LITERACY

Ayah

Mohmmad

Example E1: Mohammad

135

Sleepy Dog

Time for bed sleepyhead sleep sleepy up to bed head on pillow. Nose under covers. cat on bed kiss me kiss me good kiss me Good night. turn on the moon Turn off the light. sleepy sleey sweet dreams tonight. I dream I am eating. I dream I am jumping. I dream I am running someone is chasing me Halp! Now I am awake. I need a drink of water sleepy sleepy back to bed. Tick Tick Tick says tick tick tick tick the cloc clock shouts ring ring the

136

I Love you.
You are
the Bast.

Example E3. Asia's letter to her parents.

i Can. you
Buy m'e
Bicycle.

Can you
Buy m'e
Bicycle.

(envelope)

Example E4: Request for a Bicycle

أنا بلدي أروح على الوطن حارث

على الوطن حارث،

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

أنا حارث أنا مشتاق لا
اسماعيل و خالتي صفا و
جدتي و جدة و عمو منتصر
و نصر

جدتي جده هنم

جدي

مشتاق

Translation of Alhareth's Letter

I want to go home to Jordan.

Peace be upon you. I am Alhareth. I feel homesick. I want to see my cousin Ismael, my Aunt Saf'a, Grandma, Grandpa and my Uncles Muntasser and Nasser.

Example E5: Alhareth's Homesick Letter

Shahd

Example E6: Shahd's Writing

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What a great Mom

Dear mother,

Mom you always help me when I need you. You also teach me something everyday. Mom you also make food, buy us anything we want, and help us clean our rooms. I don't know how I would live without you.
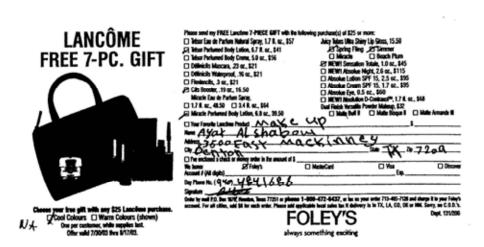
> Sincerely, Alhareth
> Love, Ayat

Example E7: Alhareth's Letter to his Mother

APPENDIX F

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

It's The Experience!

RE/MAX

Nancy Lewis, ABR, CRS, GRI

1877 777 3570

1800 81

621982

TAKE
A STEP
ABOVE
THE
CROWD!

The Greatest Compliment

Example F1: Grocery List

Example F2: Coupon

APPENDIX G

MY WIFE'S REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING

أنا والحارث اليوم برنامج البيت وكان الكلمة التي نفهمها ... مرتين لأسأله عن هذه الجمل قال لي ... ثم تشجع على الدرس ... قصة ... Jenna Appis summer

وكتبها على طريقة الخاصة يتصير بعض الكلمات ... وكل فقرة يحكي عنها إلي عن ذلك عند هذا أنه ... كتابته للقصة

بسم ... عندما يكتب القصة بحب يشرح القصة لكل واحد يسمع لي كلامه إسيا بتحب تقلدها ... في الكتابة وكتبت بعض الكلمات ... بس آسيا بتحب القراءه بل العربي أكثر

Basically it is Ayat's reflection on her session with Alhareth when he read a story, wrote it in his own words and explained the content to her in his own words. This helped in developing his writing. When he reads a story he wants to rewrite it in his words and then he will explain it. Asia copies Alhareth in writing some words and she likes reading in Arabic a little bit more than Alhareth.

Example G2: My wife's Reflection on Teaching the Kids

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APPENDIX H

ARAB WOMEN AND LITERACY

It's The Experience!

RE/MAX

Nancy Lewis, ABR, CRS, GRI

shiak ستنلك

عالقي او فلزق

asdul اقول

best of brand مي مستسا

you can com to

TAKE A STEP ABOVE THE CROWD!

bast

ayal Al-A

Ayal Al-shabawl

crawd

THE CROWD!

Trajr ailnd

جريرة

إضرب

dunek ميانلة

juggle بضربا

chikin sbots

نيعى

Example G1: My Wife's Self-Selected Vocabulary

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APPENDIX I

SCHOOL LITERACY

castle to make it look fabulous. Then, we also created a sand king and queen because we wanted everything to be made out of sand. Now, I't was time to decorate all 50 windows. Next, we decorated the castle with wonderful flowers and gorgous carpets from inside and outside. Second, we put the final touches to make it look wonderful. Then, my friend Jim and I, saw a group of people gatherd around the judges it was a contest to see the best and biggest sand castle. So next we joined the contest with our parents, we wish we could win. Finally, the judges chose the biggest and best sand castle and it' was are sand castle that won first place,

   As I walked to the judges to get my trophie, I realized that Jim was a true friend to me, and that friends are always there when you need them, friends are a marvelous and wonderful thing to have because thy can help you and play with you any time,

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APPENDIX J

LITERACY AND PLAY

Judge

Flogger

Thief

Inspector

Role Cards for the Game *Jallad*

APPENDIX K

RELIGIOUS LITERACY

قُلْ هُوَ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ. ٱللَّهُ ٱلصَّمَدُ. لَمْ يَلِدْ
وَلَمْ يُولَدْ. وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ.

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلْفَلَقِ. مِن شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ. وَمِن
شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ. وَمِن شَرِّ ٱلنَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي
ٱلْعُقَدِ. وَمِن شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ.

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ. مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ. إِلَٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ.
مِن شَرِّ ٱلْوَسْوَاسِ ٱلْخَنَّاسِ. ٱلَّذِي يُوَسْوِسُ فِي
صُدُورِ ٱلنَّاسِ. مِنَ ٱلْجِنَّةِ وَٱلنَّاسِ.

Alhareth's Copying of Three Verses from the *Holy Qur'an*

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APPENDIX L

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

"What Literacy Interaction Take Place Within the Arab Family"

Directions: Please read carefully the statements below. If you agree to participate in the investigation, please sign in the designated space. Thank you for your assistance.

I have read or have had read to me all of the above.

Yousef Al-Shaboul has explained the study to me and answered all of my questions. I have been told there are no risks and/or discomforts as well as the possible benefits of the study. I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and my refusal to participate or to withdraw will involve no penalty, loss of rights, loss of benefits, or legal recourse to which I am entitled. The study personnel may choose to stop my participation at any time.

In case problems or questions arise, I have been told I can contact Mr. Al-Shaboul at telephone number: 940-484-1686.

I understand my rights as research participant and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, how the study is conducted, and why it is being performed. I have been told I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date

For the Investigator or Designee:
I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the known benefits and risks of the research. It is my opinion that the subject understood the explanation.

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

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