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**Storybook reading strategies and academic literate
cultural capital: Closing the literacy gap before it opens.**

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Abstract

While New Zealand reading achievement ranks highly in the international arena, the gap between high- and low-ability readers is far greater than that in most other countries. The lower-ability readers hail disproportionately from homes with low income, and their cultural capital often does not match the culture of their schools. They commonly have less academic literate cultural capital (ALCC), which encompasses skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are related to conventional literacy. Prior to conventional literacy development, ALCC and emergent literacy skills are similar. Storybook reading is a beneficial parent-child activity which has been harnessed by intervention research as a vehicle through which to build on emergent literacy skills. Much print-referencing and dialogic reading-strategy research has been conducted, showing positive effects on children's emergent reading development and therefore on their ALCC.

The quasi-experimental study, on which this thesis is based, used two DVDs to educate parents from low-income areas about print-referencing and dialogic reading strategies. Thirty parent-child dyads were recruited through kindergartens which were geographically close to a decile one school. Fifteen dyads formed the intervention group, which was given two DVDs over a four week intervention period, and 15 dyads formed the control group. Data was collected before, during, and after the intervention from parents and their young children, using a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures. Parental reading behaviours and beliefs appeared to change as a result of the intervention; parents from the intervention group reported the use of more print-referencing behaviours during storybook reading than their control group counterparts. In particular, intervention parents made significantly more references to letter knowledge (LK). Most parents believed the intervention to have been beneficial to them and their children, and deemed the study material effective. Children from the intervention group reported more reading to occur post-intervention than it did pre-intervention. While the majority of their tested emergent literacy skills increased more than those of the control children after the study, the differences were not significant. The thesis concludes by recommending more research of a similar nature, taking into account several important changes. Additionally, it recommends qualitative research into the cultural capital of New Zealand's ethnic minorities.

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Abbreviations

ALCC	Academic literate cultural capital
ANCOVA	Analysis of covariance
CAP	Concepts about print
CGC	Control group children
CGP	Control group parents
DVD	Digital video/versatile disk
HIPPY	Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IGC	Intervention group children
IGP	Intervention group parents
LK	Letter knowledge
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OM	Onset matching
PA	Phonological awareness
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RM	Rime matching
SES	Socio-economic status