
The Shift in Parental Literacy Sponsorship and Its Value According to the Children of Immigrants

YADILEX ALI

Produced in Jacob Stewart's Spring 2015 ENC 1102

Introduction and Literature Review

In the field of writing and rhetoric, there have been many studies conducted on adolescents' acquisition of reading and writing skills, also known as literacy (Waldfoegel 39-44; Lahaie 684-95; Haneda 342). Throughout the history of this research, many determinants have been considered, but recently there has been a focus on immigrants and their literacy experiences. When immigrants arrive to the United States, the adjustment to conventional standards of American society is often so disruptive that it leads to perceived differences when comparing their educational capabilities to those of native-born Americans (Lahaie 685, 691-98). This difference, identified by researchers, has been documented as "gaps in literacy or literacy related skills that appear even before children begin school and that in many instances widen thereafter" (Waldfoegel 40). These almost innate gaps that come along with relocation to an advanced country can be rooted in factors such as socioeconomic, political, and occupation status (Brandt 43; Lahaie 686; Waldfoegel 41, 43). These influences can determine how immigrant parents distribute their efforts in molding their children to fit into the American educational tradition (Brandt 49; Waldfoegel 41-43, 49).

Parental Involvement

Researchers have acknowledged that the participation of immigrant parents in their children's lives is a source of literacy association. It has been proven that parental involvement can increase English proficiency and literacy skills, even more exceptionally when it is practiced in early childhood (Lahaie 684, 691-98). In my research as well as the research of Claudia Lahaie, the term "parental involvement" is used in a broad sense that includes multiple forms of participation in school as well as education outside of the school setting (685). This can simply be involvement in school homework or "at home and out-of-home activities with cognitive content" (Lahaie 685), with a specific emphasis on out-of-school factors that may not include the usual school environment and influences (Haneda 337-339; Waldfoegel 39). It has been noted that the presence or lack of parental involvement is one of the most influential factors when considering the continuity of education in various settings outside of school (Lahaie 686-704; Waldfoegel 40-41).

Aspects of home life and parents' cultural backgrounds influence the abilities that are passed down to their children. Such traits and customs can potentially contribute to the outcomes

of the children's literacy development, such as the availability, accessibility, and quality of tools parents provide to facilitate their children's literacy development (Brandt 50-51). For example, educational CDs, television programs, books, and other technologies are examples of literacy facilitating tools (Lahaie 686; Brandt 51). Building on this idea, Waldfogel suggests that is the responsibility of parents to provide and cater to the educational needs of their children early in their childhood—the most crucial part of vocabulary attainment—before they have entered the school environment (40, 43-44). In terms of literacy influence, when parents assume responsibility to be involved in a child's literate development, they can be very persuasive and influence reading and writing skills for the better. However, this may not always occur. In other situations, parents may be ignored when other opportunities are presented.

With the need to dive into American culture and sustain its expectations comes several priorities that may not be ordered in a way to account for the importance of a child's education. As immigrants enter the American mainstream society, they face obstacles that may be considered ahead of education, due to the fact they are establishing themselves into a new and different setting. These obstacles include "childcare, inflexible work schedules, limited income, and lack of transportation to participate in school programs and events" (Lahaie 685). Parallel to the attempt of accommodating to American culture, speaking a language other than English at home can result in a decrease of English proficiency (Olneck 381; Lahaie 684, 695, 698; Waldfogel 41). Researchers understand parental involvement as not only one-on-one engagement with their children, but also as providing the tools and maintaining interaction in both verbal and nonverbal ways to improve literacy through language development, reading, and writing through both indirect and direct input.

Positive Sponsorship, Negative Sponsorship, and Sponsorship Plasticity

The opportunity to fulfill the literacy needs of children of immigrants may not solely come from the parents themselves, but also by institutions, people, and circumstances (Wardle and Downs 43). This act of shifting responsibility may be unintentional, as some immigrants feel as if they are incapable of providing efficient literacy skills to their children. In some cases, immigrant parents "are also self-conscious about their levels of schooling, feel uncomfortable in institutional settings, and fear that they are not educated enough to be helpful in the classroom" and just ignore the topic of being involved in their child's literacy learning because they lack knowledge on the material or standards of education in America altogether (Hammill 114; Lahaie 686).

In "Sponsors of Literacy," Deborah Brandt considers individuals' multiple interactions with literacy and identifies the initiators of these interactions as "sponsors." Literacy sponsors, according to Brandt, are "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy" (Brandt 46). Therefore, parental involvement, in this case, has the ability to advance or limit literacy, which leads to an outcome that can be measured as positive if literacy learning is improving or negative if literacy learning is declining. Literacy gains signify that literacy has improved and literacy losses indicate that literacy learning has declined. However, events that may seem negative on the surface can actually have a positive impact on another person's literacy. For instance, in her work, "Teaching and Parenting: Who Are the Members of Our Profession?" Bobbi Hammill illustrates an occurrence in which one of her participants, named Karen, was influenced *not* to take the same path as her mother who dropped out in the eighth grade, but instead worked through an English doctoral program to better herself (116).

The existence of efficient sponsors in society presents endless opportunities to advance oneself by encountering them. However, though many opportunities exist, access to the most elite sponsors in society is often limited by socioeconomic factors (Brandt 48-51). Statistical correlations between socioeconomic status, race, "recession, relocation, immigration, technological change, governmental retreat all can—and do—condition the course by which literate potential develops" and as a result affect academic achievement and performance (Brandt 49, 51). Unfortunately, due to

these factors and ones like them, immigrants often fall into a pattern of decreased access to high quality sponsors, which helps to explain the literacy gap between immigrants and native-born Americans. Due to this almost inevitable experience that comes with entering a new country, immigrant parents may recognize this gap as a threat to a successful future for their children and shift literacy sponsorship from themselves to another individual, place, or circumstance. Intuitively, the act of shifting, or placing responsibility on a different source, can be best classified as *sponsorship plasticity*, which occurs when there is a need to adapt, adjust, replace, substitute, or completely change a literacy sponsor due to new environmental conditions in hopes of finding the most suitable sponsor based on resources and the situation. Before this act can occur, the presence or absence of one or more sponsors must be recognized as an influence by the parents. For immigrant parents, this is the action that is triggered when they feel incapable of providing sufficient literacy development for their child or feel as though there is sponsorship that can better promote literacy than they can.

Extending the Research of Immigrant Parent Sponsorship

Throughout the generations of American citizenship, school leaders have evolved the standards of education according to new technology as well as areas of learning that need improvement such as literacy amongst children. This trend of literacy improvement for children is specifically common in families with immigrant parents when considering them as literacy sponsors. Based on the circumstances of entering an unfamiliar setting, immigrant parents may approach the task differently as they get involved, seek, or neglect literacy sponsorship when they are presented with opportunities to participate in their child's reading and writing development. When scrutinizing a shift in literacy sponsorship, from parent to another person or object (e.g. books and CDs), it seems that out-of-school factors are equally significant in influencing or sponsoring literacy as they provide background as to how the slightest details in experience translate across a different setting and context. This topic is important because those born in countries outside the U.S. make up a great portion of America's population, but there is still a divide between children of immigrants and those of native-born American populations (Lahaie 691-98). Taking action to minimize the gap is a way to improve the educational success in America overall. This would also provide equal opportunities for everyone that inhabits America. Understanding the obstacles and reasoning immigrant parents have for shifting literacy sponsorship is significant in lessening this gap because it must be accepted as a product of emerging into a new lifestyle and culture. More specifically, it is important for the literacy gap to be recognized and addressed at school. At school, educators are in a place to provide materials and encourage parents to play a role in their children's development if the literacy responsibility is shifting to them because of a parent's lack of capabilities.

Recent research has done a fair job of identifying and explaining some causes and effects of immigrant parent sponsorship in their children's lives through studies that include settings outside of school. While studies have established the importance and influence of parental involvement in a child's life using the circumstances of immigrants, they have not yet addressed the specific reasons for their actions and roles due to the fact that they are not native to America and familiar with American standards. My study attempts to clarify the reasoning for a shift in literacy sponsorship specific to the experiences and abilities immigrant parents have or lack, as told by the children of immigrants. Using the accounts of children of immigrants allows exploration of a different realm of perception, as told by individuals who were directly affected by their immigrant parents. This demonstrates that it is not unusual for a shift in literacy sponsorship to occur in households managed by immigrant parents due to the challenges they face immersing themselves into a new country. I do understand that all stories are different and what I anticipate may not be consistent or will fit into an overall pattern in the data I collected. Factors such as socioeconomic constraints, living conditions, and demographics are not balanced between different populations; therefore, it is

my role as the lead in this study to locate the elements that the subjects—the children of immigrants—were limited to, had an advantage in, or lacked as a consequence of their parents' approach on literacy.

Methods

Some research questions I based my studies on include:

1. How often does a shift in literacy sponsorship occur for children of immigrants?
2. Based on the transition of a shift in literacy sponsorship, how much, if any, do these children of immigrants value the use of literacy in their current lives?
3. If there was a shift in responsibility, what experiences or limits may have caused the shift?
4. How do these immigrant parents assume their role of sponsorship?
5. Do children give more or less credit to their parents for being positive or negative sponsors?

In order to find answers to my questions, I used two basic primary research methods as a way to obtain both opinions and explanations in the freest way possible. I used the technique of using two methods as a system to acquire a variety of data in hopes that it will assist in determining a cause and explain the reactions and reasoning for it. Thus, to best study the perceptions of individuals, using both a questionnaire and an interview was crucial to discover why and how often particular events occurred according to the children of immigrants.

The subjects in my study were asked to complete the questionnaire before being interviewed as a way to prime them for how they might answer an interview question. When completing the questionnaire and responding to interview questions, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences from their time of childhood to now, in 2015. My population of subjects was not part of a random sample and was also all females. But they were carefully selected based on the following criteria: they must have two immigrant parents from the same country of origin, they must have been born in the United States, and they must attend a Florida college institution. Also, they were selected not to generalize, but to represent different domains of the American population according to the governmental census of ethnicities including White, African American, and Hispanic.

The questionnaire was used to gather information on my subjects' viewpoints, perceptions, and feelings on the way their parents influenced their literacy development. In addition, the questionnaire allowed me to gain some background information on how often certain literacy-promoting activities occurred. The subjects were asked their names, age, country of origin, if they speak a second language, ethnicity according to U.S. governmental census standards, and whether they attended public or private schools in their past. Participants were asked to respond to 43 statements about their perception of their parents' literacy sponsorship and involvement, the availability of literacy facilitating tools, emphasis on literacy, the importance of literacy, and to whom they accredit their current literacy abilities. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A

I also interviewed participants. Each interviewee was asked eighteen standard interview questions; however, I did create some questions along the way if I needed clarification or further explanation. The interviews lasted an average of fourteen minutes. The conversations were audiotaped using the voice memo app on my phone and shortly after were transcribed to make the data easily accessible. During the interviews, various questions were asked, including:

- Tell me a little about where your parents are from and their journey to America.
- Do you think your parents had the capability to teach you how to read and write? Why?

- What were your parents' reactions to summer breaks in regards to a hindrance on schooling?
- Do you think your parents made a difference in your reading and writing skills? For the better or for the worse, and why?
- Do you think that the fact that your parent grew up in a different country affects the way they value education in America?
- Do you believe your reading and writing abilities are efficient? How much do you think your parents have influenced this outcome? Do you give credit to you parents for this outcome? Why?

The full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Once both forms of data were collected, I analyzed them by looking for patterns and correlations between the responses I obtained from the interview and their rankings to the statements in the questionnaire. The measurement of literacy gains and losses is based on information obtained from the various interview responses, but especially by focusing on the knowledge acquired because of environmental influences and sponsors. After examining the details of the data I collected, I connected responses to explanations and attitudes as a way to summarize a theme that appeared in both forms of data collection. I categorized the overall outcome of each experience according to what kind of literacy sponsor the child saw their parents as, whether that be a positive or negative sponsor, and whether the literacy sponsorship participation was direct or indirect by the parents (despite these generalizations of primarily assigning parents to one out of two groups, a special case identified later in my research will be discussed).

Just as with any research, I did encounter instances of bias, limitations, unequal representation, and generalization in my study. The fact that the population I studied was three females makes my study neither officially representative nor part of a random sample. In addition, all my subjects are from the central Florida area and all of them attend college, which further decreases my ability to make generalizations. Finally, there is room for personal bias. I am a child of two immigrants myself and what I may unintentionally choose or not choose to state can have potential effects on the way I understand my research. Nevertheless, I did attempt to purposely limit bias by using subjects from different ethnic groups. Regardless of the potential bias of this study, it does offer a way to observe and evaluate opinions as elements that are attributable to past experiences that further develop into future attitudes, actions, and habits.

In my research, pseudonyms were used to protect identities and respect subjects' privacy as they narrate their stories. I also replaced any names the individuals mentioned in their stories.

Results and Discussion

After gathering my data and analyzing it from my subjects, patterns in the involvement of immigrant parents and the value seen in literacy indicated by the child became evident. In my studies, it was random luck that the complexity of each one of my interviewees' lives was different, yet resulted in the same amount of value they placed in their rankings on the questionnaire. These responses allowed me to draw conclusions to identify three different types of sponsorships as well as an instance of sponsorship plasticity. It was through the analysis that I realized the mobilization

Based on the narratives of my participants, I identified three different kinds of literacy sponsorship, but this is not to state that only three variations of literacy sponsorship exist.

of literacy sponsorship may be plainly expressed one way, but the way it is interpreted is unpredictable and depends on the person. Through my studies, I had the chance to witness that the value placed on literacy is merely a mobile thought that is constructed not only due to past experience, but also realization (as shown in the story of Danielle Polanco). It was noted that a path to success in literacy is not carved out to a specific outcome, but instead interpretation is just as important a force to literacy learning as experiences are. Based on the narratives of my participants, I identified three different kinds of literacy sponsorship, but this is not to state that only three variations of literacy sponsorship exist. First, sponsorship can be distinguished as positive or negative. If positive, sponsorship can be known as direct or indirect. If negative, sponsorship is labeled only as indirect. The following stories shared by the children of immigrants explain what led me to categorize the three kinds of sponsorship areas solely based on their accounts as illustrated in Figure 1. Using the diagram shown helps to identify the categories developed in this study.

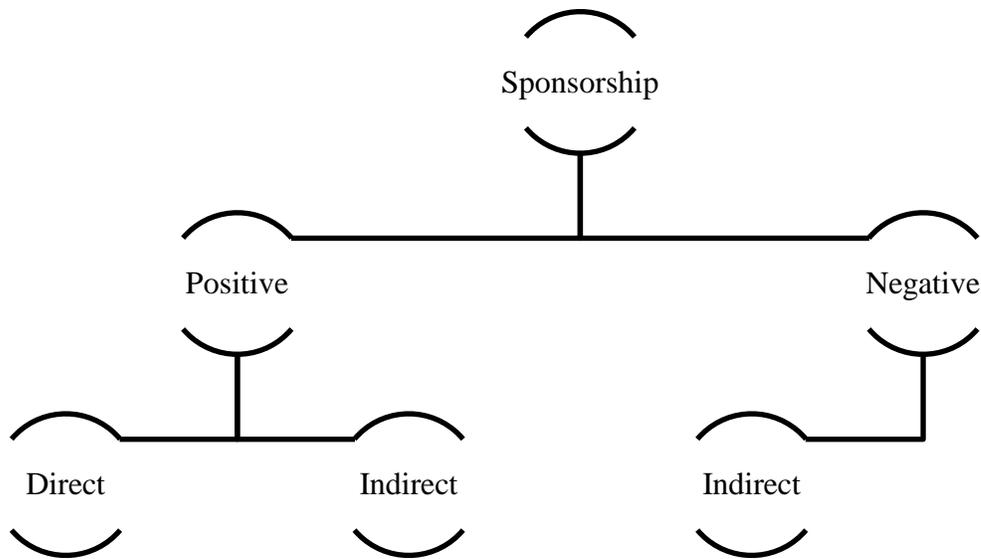


Figure 1: Labeling Types of Sponsorship

Direct Positive Sponsorship: The Story of Melissa Hamid

My interview with Melissa Hamid took place on April 3, 2015, at 12:36 p.m. in the library of the University of Central Florida. Melissa is 18 years old, of Middle Eastern descent, and defined as Caucasian according to United States governmental census of ethnicities. Her parents’ location of origin is Palestine, and she has attended public school in her past. Melissa’s father first moved to America alone to get a college education and then returned back to his homeland. There, he married her mother before came back to America to finish his education and for her mother to start and complete her education. Both of Melissa’s parents hold PhDs in their studies and are currently professors at universities. I was told that her parents’ first language was Arabic and that they taught themselves English, proving they have the capability of passing along the language to their child.

Throughout her childhood, Melissa was quite inspired simply by how educated both of her parents were, and always looked up to them as knowledgeable role models. She also mentioned that her parents frequently read books to her and were involved in her homework by often asking her how she was doing in school and looking over her work. They not only supplied her with common literacy items such as books, they also provided a household occupied with educational

CDs. Her parents were consistent in maintaining cognitive stimulation inside and out of the home environment. For example, Melissa remembers taking trips to the universities her parents were enrolled in. When her parents were not around, the learning stayed constant through childcare. The way her parents were consistently involved in her education validates her perception of her parents' belief in the power of education:

I think no matter where they grew up, they will value education the same. They value education very highly so I don't think it matters where they were from but they were probably not in the best situation there so they definitely want me to do better here.

It is apparent that she was heavily influenced early in her childhood. Her parents even had a long-term goal in mind for her, as she told me: "They started talking about college since elementary school." This influenced her development early on as a foundation to set the idea that literacy and education are key elements that lead to success, allowing her to become inspired almost to mimic the actions of her parents to become successful.

The parental involvement in the case of Melissa was direct because they interacted with her one-on-one and did not call for a shift in literacy sponsorship. Her parents were fully capable of providing literacy facilitating tools, tracking their child's school progress, and displaying their belief that literacy is significant and required to succeed. This situation demonstrates positive sponsorship because not only does the parents' involvement take many forms, but also the subject, Melissa, displays learning gains and perceives her parents as individuals that earn credit from her literacy success. She explained, "They influenced me in being educated and having motivation to be educated. They were definitely my main motivation so I give them credit." Not only does she express appreciation for her parents throughout her interview, but she also displays this in the questionnaire, strongly agreeing that her parents bettered her academic performance and that they influenced her reading and writing skills positively. The stabilization of literacy or lack of a shift explains her reason for strongly agreeing with all the statements of valuing literacy in her questionnaire results.

Indirect Positive Sponsorship: The Story of Sabrina Monclair

My interview with Sabrina Monclair was conducted over the phone and took place on April 4, 2015, at 6:10 p.m. Sabrina is 20 years old, of Haitian decent, and defined as African American (Black) according to the United States governmental census of ethnicities. Her parents' location of origin is Haiti and she has attended public school in her past. Sabrina also speaks a second language. Upon arriving to America, Sabrina's parents did not speak English, almost automatically setting boundaries to their involvement in language and literacy development in Sabrina's life. She revealed to me that her parents had limited schooling themselves in their own country and took advantage of America's education to improve and secure better living conditions and futures for their children since they could not accomplish it back in their homeland.

In her childhood, Sabrina faced the limitation of a decreased English vocabulary at a time when it was crucial for her learning to prepare for schooling. She recognized this hindrance but had complete understanding as to why it occurred:

I had to deal with many challenges that my parents had to overcome since they couldn't speak English... I was the, how do you say it...the experimental child. Since I am the oldest out of four children I really needed the help and my parents really wanted to help me but they couldn't.

At the time, her parents did not notice how strongly affected their daughter was because of their limited English vocabulary. It wasn't until a rude awakening occurred that her parents finally realized that what they had planned out for their daughter's future was in jeopardy: Sabrina failed not one but two grades in elementary school. Consequently, she was placed into an ESOL class. Her parents also took action by sacrificing money to hire and pay for a tutor for Sabrina and placed her

in a childcare program that supported her educational needs to learn English. Accepting the fact that they didn't know how to facilitate her language and literacy learning, they turned to other sources. She explained to me that her parents had to make a trade because they did not have extra money to spend. Both of her parents had to work in order to provide a tutor for Sabrina, "They would work day in and day out to provide the money so the lady could come over and help me out, she says. "It's not like they had the money. It's because they thought that I needed it." Not only did they invest in childcare and a tutor, but they also began to supply materials at home to help Sabrina, such as books and flashcards. Using all these outlets to establish and pursue a strong educational career, Sabrina began to improve in her literacy skills, passing Florida's standardized tests and even graduating on time.

The parental involvement as told by Sabrina is indirect for the reason that interaction from parent to child did not exist because her parents were incapable of developing her English reading and writing skills. Her experiences led to a shift in sponsorship due to the lack of capabilities her parents had in teaching her English. But it is also as a result of their realization that they did not have the abilities to teach and facilitate her literacy learning, which indicated the need for other literacy sponsors such as the tutor, ESOL class, books, and flashcards. This shift was an act of sponsorship plasticity. Sabrina's parents—seeing themselves as incapable of advancing her academic performance—reached out to other sources, replacing the lesser literacy tool with a more beneficial one. A correlation between the parents and the resource can be drawn in which a parent sacrifices something of their own to introduce this more powerful literacy sponsor than themselves for their child. The reasoning for such a move is due to seeking a resource that will ensure a more advantageous result. Although the existence of involvement is completely there, it is indirect because her parents invested in other means of learning when they knew they couldn't provide it. Their asset contribution was using money to promote Sabrina's literacy learning gains. She even recognized it herself, rating a "disagree" on the questionnaire statement, "My parents hold the most responsibility in the outcome of my reading and writing skills." In comparison to Melissa's situation, this experience still remains positive because there is evidence that her parents' investment in sponsors did improve her literacy. Sabrina agrees with this statement, declaring, "I give them credit for every achievement that I overcame. They gave me that support." Her sincere attitude and thankfulness for her parents' participation, at their maximum possible potential, is seen in her questionnaire rankings as well. She strongly agreed in areas of appreciating her parents' dedication to advancing her education and their effort in doing so. Experiencing the gradual improvement in her literacy and the difference it made justifies her motive for strongly agreeing to all the statements of valuing literacy.

Indirect Negative Sponsorship: The Story of Danielle Polanco

My interview with Danielle Polanco was conducted over the phone and took place on April 5, 2015, at 9:02 p.m. Danielle is 19 years old, of Hispanic descent, and defined as Hispanic according to the United States governmental census of ethnicities. Her parents' location of origin is the Dominican Republic and she has attended public school in her past. Danielle also speaks a second language. Her mother and father came to America in their teen years along with their families and began their American lifestyle as a low-income family. When they arrived, they did not know very much English and struggled themselves as students in the American public education system, especially Danielle's mother, who graduated three years late from high school. Throughout the interview, Danielle made multiple comments on how different her parents were in their academic lives. Her father attended college and expanded his English vocabulary. She explained that, "He knew a lot of words. He was just like a lot more advanced than my mom. He kind of helped her a little bit, like with English and stuff." In our conversation, she voiced that both she and her older sister, Karina, were affected by the lack of their parents' involvement in school. Danielle strongly agreed that her parents were capable of teaching her to read and write, but throughout her account

there are instances where her parents, mainly her father, had other priorities to manage and he did not become involved in her literacy development.

Reflecting on Danielle’s account, it seems that her childhood was lacking in literacy facilitating tools in multiple environments outside of the typical school setting. Her parents did not involve themselves in Danielle’s literacy in either at-home or out-of-home activities almost completely. Educational books, CDs, games, and trips to the library were not recalled from her childhood experience, nor did she experience any positive encouragement or pressure from her parents to practice literacy skills to aid her development. When confusion with schoolwork occurred, she took the independent approach of looking something up on the computer or in a textbook, or seeking help from one of her two sisters on the assumption and feeling that her parents were too busy or just could not help her. Danielle attributes the rationality of her parents’ not placing her education as one of their top priorities and interacting with her about her life at school as follows:

My mom was just always scared to ask me if I needed help with stuff because she knew she couldn’t help me anyway. And same thing with my dad, he was always just like, I have work to do. I have to pay bills and like do stuff and like...I have to like, do stuff. Basically they never had the time to stop and be like oh, are you doing okay, like in school? Like I don’t think they ever asked me.

When asked if she self-taught more than her parents taught her she quickly responded, “Yes. Absolutely.” Almost as if she was taking advantage of her parents’ lack of attention to literacy, she did not continue her self-taught practices throughout summer breaks when school was inactive. As a matter of fact, she identified her sister, Karina, as the most influential person on her reading and

writing skills as a result of learning from her sister’s mistakes. Karina did not graduate high school because she could not pass Florida’s standardized tests. Danielle was really influenced by this and she asserts, “It pushed me to be better in my reading and writing.” Danielle realized she needed to act on her own to better her education.

Literacy sponsorship is a flexible way of describing influences on reading and writing skills that are both positive and negative.

Danielle’s account demonstrates indirect parental involvement because her parents did not give her one-on-one attention to her education, nor did they prioritize it, even though they saw the ability to read and write as somewhat valuable. Her situation can be classified as negative sponsorship because the lack of her parents’ sponsorship in literacy caused her to primarily see literacy as unimportant.

This landed her in multiple reading intensive classes that she did not take very seriously.

However, what is unique in Danielle’s case is how her early perception of literacy differs from her perception of literacy now. Through interpretation, she noticed the importance of literacy in everyday life, stating, “You have to literally live to read and write. Like reading stop signs and like writing a check. You...that is so crucial to being a person.” And even though her parents paved a path to a deficit in literacy learning by not placing emphasis on her literacy development, she gives credit to her parents’ lack of involvement for whatever increase there was in her literacy learning:

Like if I was raised another way like, my parents actually gave me everything I wanted and like... it would be like my life was handed to me on a silver platter until the day I die. And like... what if that platter falls? Then one day that platter is gone then you don’t know what you’re doing?

Her belief also positively correlated with the value she currently places on literacy, marking “strongly agree” in response to all questions on this portion of the questionnaire. The shift in literacy did not occur directly by her parents, but the way it was interpreted in this situation

represents that literacy sponsorship can be reversed on behalf of the person receiving the influence.

Comparative Analysis

Literacy sponsorship is a flexible way of describing influences on reading and writing skills that are both positive and negative. Dissecting the stories told by Melissa, Sabrina, and Danielle show how the examination of how one was raised by their parents makes it possible to predict the educational success of children when looking at literacy skills. Yet being successful in terms of literacy is not predetermined because of the factor of interpretation. Melissa's experiences are quite simple and easily anticipated because positive direct sponsorship remains consistent. Plus, the outcome is straightforward because having good literacy skills is seen as an inspiration and powerful ability in society. Despite having strong values for reading and writing skills, Sabrina and Danielle learned the advantages of literacy skills independently from their parents by encountering what it was like to have parents who were incapable of assisting in literacy opportunities or having parents that lack of motivation for literacy development. Although Melissa's and Sabrina's parents had control in their child's literacy development by nearly steering the path to their literacy skills, Danielle, on her own, created a route to her own success by perceiving her parents' actions as a motivation for her own literacy gains. Even though the participants' stories are different, all of them ranked the question on how they value literacy as "strongly agree." It is possible that their experiences set the perception of what having developed literacy skills can do for you, such as in Melissa's experience, and how lacking literacy skills make an individual feel deficient in school and society, as shown in the stories of Sabrina and Danielle.

Conclusion

Immigrants make up a large part of America's population. But to become a part of America's population is to try and blend into a society that already has set standards and expectations. Although this does affect immigrant parents upon arrival, the heavier impact lies in the experiences immigrant children will face depending on their parents' reactions to the new environment. Because of this, my research, unlike others, focused on the effects, interpretation, and perception of how children of immigrants feel they have been influenced in literacy learning by their parents. My findings indicate a variety of sponsorships. The results explain how backgrounds and a change in culture can have an effect in the shifting of literacy sponsorship from parent to child because of both a parent's capabilities and understanding of America's culture and educational demands.

This area of study needs to be further investigated to determine the other types of literacy sponsorships that exist that were not found in my research. It can also be extended to identifying sponsorships that occur in a single parent, immigrant family. Because sponsorship can improve itself, it would be valuable to examine the changes in sponsorship within a group of siblings. Such suggestions might allow parents to discover alternative, positive literacy sponsors when a parent cannot provide that sponsorship directly themselves. I hope this research can be used by parents and educators as a way to make children feel comfortable with their backgrounds, when forming their identity through aspects such as education and literacy that are influenced by their parents. With this approach, it is possible to narrow and potentially eliminate the gap between native-born American and immigrant children. As a child of an immigrant myself, I learned to be independent in my literacy attainment because of my parents' lack of involvement. I hope that absences of literacy involvement can be recognized earlier so children of immigrants and their parents can learn strategies and locate resources for literacy improvement when it comes to finding other routes to shift their literacy sponsorship when a child's parents cannot provide effective literacy sponsorship themselves.

Works Cited

- Brandt, Deborah. "Sponsors of Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 49.2 (1998): 165-85. Rpt. in *Writing About Writing: A College Reader*. 2nd ed. Ed. Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. 43-60. Print.
- Hamid, Melissa. Personal interview. 03 April 2015.
- Hammill, Bobbi A. "Teaching and Parenting: Who Are the Members of Our Profession?" *College Composition and Communication* 59.1 (2007): 98-124. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Feb. 2015
- Haneda, Mari. "Becoming Literate in a Second Language: Connecting Home, Community, And School Literacy Practices." *Theory Into Practice* 45.4 (2006): 337-345. *Education Full Text*. Web. 25 Feb. 2015.
- Lahaie, Claudia. "School Readiness of Children of Immigrants: Does Parental Involvement Play a Role?" *Social Science Quarterly* 89.3 (2008): 684-705. *FRANCIS*. Web. 25 Feb. 2015.
- Monclair, Sabrina. Personal interview. 04 April 2015.
- Olneck, Michael R. "What Have Immigrants Wanted from American Schools? What Do They Want Now? Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigrants, Language, and American Schooling." *American Journal of Education* 115.3 (2009): 379-406. *ERIC*. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.
- Polanco, Danielle. Personal interview. 05 April 2015.
- Waldfoegel, Jane. "The Role Of Out-Of-School Factors In The Literacy Problem." *Future of Children* 22.2 (2012): 39-54. *ERIC*. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

Yadilex Ali



Yadilex Ali is a sophomore at the University of Central Florida where she is majoring in Writing and Rhetoric and completing her pre-medical requirements with a minor in Biology. She plans to enter the medical field with the goal of becoming a pediatric cardiologist. Along with being a doctor, she hopes to become a professional writer. As a dedicated student, she has learned to prioritize her academics despite tough battles she encountered in her personal life. It was because of these experiences that she learned to love writing as a way of expression. Outside of her studies, she currently works at a breakfast café as a host. When she is not studying or working, she enjoys exercising, watching cultural documentaries, and cosmetology.

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Name: _____

Age: _____

Parents' country of origin: _____

Do you speak a second language (Y/N): _____

Ethnicity according to U.S governmental census standards: _____

Attended a public or private school: _____

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|---------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 1. My mother participated in my reading and writing activities. | | | | | |
| 2. My father participated in my reading and writing activities. | | | | | |
| 3. My parents made sure all my assignments were completed on time. | | | | | |
| 4. My parents took me to the library. | | | | | |
| 5. My parents enjoyed reading and writing. | | | | | |
| 6. My parents read paper documents I wrote. | | | | | |
| 7. My parents were involved in my schoolwork at home. | | | | | |
| 8. My parents monitored my class attendance. | | | | | |
| 9. My parents checked my homework for me. | | | | | |
| 10. My parents were involved in my school. | | | | | |
| 11. My parents read books to me. | | | | | |
| 12. My parents told me stories. | | | | | |
| 13. My parents were capable of teaching me how to read and write. | | | | | |
| 14. My parents designated a time and place for me to do homework. | | | | | |
| 15. My parents encouraged reading and writing. | | | | | |
| 16. My parents helped me with my reading and writing activities. | | | | | |
| 17. My parents had enough money to efficiently support my educational needs. | | | | | |
| 18. My parents created conversations with me. | | | | | |
| 19. I attended childcare or a Head | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Start program. | | | | | |
| 20. My parents spoke English in my household. | | | | | |
| 21. My parents allowed me to play educational games on the computer. | | | | | |
| 22. My parents asked how I was doing in school. | | | | | |
| 23. My parents were able to help me when I encountered difficulties in reading and writing. | | | | | |
| 24. My parents had educational CDs in the house. | | | | | |
| 25. Technology was available for me. | | | | | |
| 26. My parents allowed me to watch educational TV programs. | | | | | |
| 27. My parents supplied school-related books at home. | | | | | |
| 28. I attended after school tutoring session on my parent's behalf. | | | | | |
| 29. My parents made sure transportation to was available me. | | | | | |
| 30. I played non-educational games on the computer more than I did educational games. | | | | | |
| 31. I appreciate the amount my parents participated in school assignments. | | | | | |
| 32. My parents saw the ability to read and write valuable. | | | | | |
| 33. My parents made a difference in my academic performance for the better. | | | | | |
| 34. My parents saw school as a way for me to blend with American culture. | | | | | |
| 35. My parents were the primary individuals to teach me how to read and write. | | | | | |
| 36. My parents worked so I can have a better education. | | | | | |
| 37. I think my parents used school as a way to blend with the American culture. | | | | | |
| 38. My parents were dedicated to advancing my education. | | | | | |
| 39. I believe my parents influence my reading and writing skills positively. | | | | | |
| 40. My parents hold the most responsibility in the outcome of my reading and writing skills. | | | | | |
| 41. I view reading and writing as an | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| important skill. | | | | | |
| 42. I believe reading and writing is an essential to becoming successful. | | | | | |
| 43. I value the ability to read and write. | | | | | |

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about where your parents are from and their journey to America.
2. Describe how your parents influenced your development and experience learning to read and write. Also, mention any other individuals who played a role.
3. Did you self-teach yourself? More than your parents taught you? Why? If so, what materials did you use?
4. Who, out of anyone you know, had the most influence in reading and writing?
5. How has your mother played a role in your literacy skills development (reading, writing)?
6. How has your father played a role in your reading and writing skills development (reading, writing)?
7. Do you think your parents had the capability to teach you how to read and write? Why?
8. What were your parents' reactions to summer breaks in regards to a hindrance on schooling?
9. What economic class do you think your parents belonged to upon arriving in America? How to do believe your parents' income affected your reading and writing skills in terms of buying educational games, books, CDs, etc.?
10. Do you think your parents made a difference in your reading and writing skills? For the better or for the worse and why?
11. Were your parents involved in your school homework? Why do you think that is so?
12. Do you think reading and writing is important skills? Why?
13. What do you think is the reason why your parents placed or did not place emphasis on your learning to read and write?
14. Do you think your parents saw you getting an education as their top priorities? Why?
15. Why do you think your parents sent you to school?
16. Do you think that the fact that your parent grew up in a different country affects the way they value education in America?
17. What do you think is the reason your parents was or was not involved?
18. Do you believe your reading and writing abilities is efficient? How much do you think you parents have influenced this outcome? Do you give credit to you parents for this outcome? Why? Do you blame them for this result?