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English Learner Families, Rural County Public Libraries, and Rural Public Elementary Schools

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English Learner Families, Rural County Public Libraries,
and Rural Public Elementary Schools

by

Carmel A. Murphy

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Researcher Background

How would you describe your earliest memories of reading? My first memory of reading was learning words in coloring books with my older sister around the age of five. My childhood home in rural Central Minnesota had only essential printed materials: the Bible, a dictionary, one fairy-tale book, and the local newspaper. As the youngest of eight, I have no memories of being read to by my parents or older siblings. Even so, I believe I learned to value education from my parents, who completed their schooling at eighth grade in a farming community. Formally taught to read at a Catholic school, which had its own small library, I remember traveling to the local public library by bicycle or walking with neighborhood friends. The selection was sparse, but I was thrilled to check out books with my own library card for free! Reading became an adventure for me, traveling to unique places and learning about different people. I believe this is where my love of literature began.

Traveling the world became a reality after college. With a double teaching degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Elementary Education, I became a United States Peace Corps Volunteer (USPCV) in Liberia, West Africa. For two years, I worked with education counterparts in rural elementary schools to implement the Primary Education Project (PEP) curriculum funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). At that time, Liberian public elementary schools were concrete buildings with wooden benches and tables, a single

chalkboard, and English-language curriculum packets from USAID, the only printed materials in the classrooms. English was Liberia's official language, the spoken version being creolized or pidgin English, although most Liberians' native language was one of ten tribal languages.

I lived in Voinjama City in Lofa County, near the Guinea border, and traveled dirt roads by motorcycle to several village schools. While venturing around Voinjama City one day, I discovered the hidden treasure of a closed city library. After several official meetings with both the public elementary principal and the mayor, the library was reopened to the community. The Peace Corps' mission is to promote world peace and friendship. The program helps interested countries meet their needs for trained men and women and works to foster better understanding between its American volunteers and the countries and communities it serves. Joining the Peace Corps sparked my interest in other cultures, my desire to pursue a professional career in educating diverse learners, and my personal commitment to lifelong learning.

Decades later, while teaching English Learners (ELs) at a rural Minnesota elementary school, I asked my students, "Does your family go to the public library?" They hesitantly replied, "What's *that*?" That response prompted a field trip with two dozen Hmong-, Spanish-, and Somali-speaking students, who were mostly first and second-generation immigrants. The students had strong oral language skills in their home languages, but only a few demonstrated literacy in their home language. The closest county public library was a five-mile school bus ride away on busy roads. The public librarian facilitated our visit, presenting a variety of resources and programs, and the ELs

quickly became comfortable in their community library. From there, they shared their experience with their extended families, bridging learning between school, library, and home in our rural area.

Each summer, I volunteer at my local public library, where multigenerational families participate in educational programs and presentations, use devices, and check out materials for their homes. As a member of one Friends of the Library organization, additional funds are raised for library programs due to limited county, state, and federal resources. Each of my roles, as a volunteer, a member of the Friends organization, and a patron of my rural public library, has provided me with a unique perspective of the library system, in addition to allowing me to be an integral part of the library's positive impact on the community.

As both a lifelong educator and active library patron in my rural community, I am inspired to promote collaboration between public elementary schools and county public libraries to improve literacy for families, especially for EL families, in outstate Minnesota. While this inspiration motivated the research, other personal influences and limitations may affect the results. Some of these limitations include my education and experiences, my middle-class socioeconomic status, and my European white heritage. Throughout the research process, recognizing and addressing personal biases has been a continuous, conscious effort to ensure objectivity and transparency in this study, with the goal of facilitating collaboration between schools and libraries in rural areas.

English Learners and Literacy

English Learners and Language Acquisition

Who are English Learners? According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) website, ELs are identified as follows:

English learners (ELs) are identified through a two-step process: 1) identification of primary language using responses from parents or guardians on the Minnesota Language Survey (MNLS) completed upon enrollment and 2) screening for English language ability using a state-approved language proficiency assessment. All students enrolling in Minnesota districts and charter schools must have a parent or guardian complete the MNLS. Based upon the results of the survey, a potential English learner must be screened using the age appropriate screener. An assessment would confirm whether or not the student should be identified as an English Learner (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017, p. 3).

Minnesota is one of 42 state members of the WIDA Consortium (formerly World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment), which provides language development resources to support the academic success of multilingual learners. The three MDE-approved English Language Proficiency (ELP) screeners in Minnesota include the WIDA Screener for grades K-12, the Kindergarten WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), and the WIDA MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) for Kindergarten, available via online or paper formats. The baseline ELP assessment measures a child's current proficiency level in English in the areas of

listening, speaking, reading, and writing to determine whether or not the student is proficient in English (MDE, 2017).

With a qualifying screener score and parental permission, students are enrolled in English language development (ELD) instruction. These programs include Minnesota ELD standards-based instruction that aligns with the respective grade-level content areas, such as language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, in order to support growth and full proficiency in social, instructional, and academic language domains across these content areas. These students, known as second language learners (SLLs), receive language development lessons in listening, speaking, reading, and writing from a teacher holding a K-12 English as a Second Language (ESL) license, either in the classroom and/or a resource room. EL service continues until the student acquires academic language proficiency as determined by the Minnesota annual ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency assessment. ELs may also be referred to as ELLs (English Language Learners), ESL (English as a Second Language) students, DLLs (Dual Language Learners), or MLLs (Multilingual Language Learners).

ELs are a diverse group of students with a variety of life experiences, schooling, and family backgrounds that affect their learning. For students identified as EL in Minnesota, districts may screen the student for potential identification and qualification in the following categories: Immigrant Children and Youth; Migratory Children; Recently Arrived English Learners (RAEL); Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE); and Special Education (MDE, 2017). ELs that qualify for these specialized categories may be entitled to additional educational resources and

considerations for their public school education. Chapter 2 further describes these categories and special circumstances relative to ELs.

Over the past 50 years, researchers and linguists have had various theories regarding language acquisition. According to linguist and researcher Stephen Krashen, language acquisition and language learning are two different ways to develop ability in another language (2013). Krashen distinguished between language acquisition, a subconscious process through which we acquire our first language, and language learning, a conscious process of formal rules and grammar. Linguist Noam Chomsky's model of acquisition theory focuses on the language acquisition device (LAD), a structure in the brain that processes innate language learning (Chomsky, 1986). Krashen and fellow education theorist Tracy Terrell theorized *The Natural Approach* for SLLs (1983). Professor Jim Cummins' theoretical framework distinguishes between social language and academic language development (2008). Each of these theories will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

SLLs may have different literacy experiences compared to native English-speaking families. Dixon and Wu examined research on how home literacy practices influence L1 and L2 literacy development for immigrant children (2014). They acknowledged several factors that influence L1 and L2 development, including community language use, availability of literacy resources, socioeconomic status, heritage (community) school practices, and education policies. Dixon and Wu concluded that current family literacy programs ought to be replicated with further evaluation of their effectiveness at improving L2 literacy in immigrant communities.

Libraries and English Learner Access to Literacy

What role do libraries play in literacy development? In many communities, there are libraries in private and public schools, as well as county public library systems available in rural, suburban, and urban areas. According to key statistics from the 2019 Minnesota Public Library Key Statistics, Minnesota had 12 regional library systems, 140 public libraries, 356 library locations, and eight bookmobiles (MDE, 2019, pp. 1-3). The report estimated the public library system had nearly 4 million registered customers throughout the state; 75% of these patrons lived within the established service areas of the libraries, and 25% used reciprocal borrowing privileges at libraries outside of their local community. Library guests borrowed more than 43 million physical materials, such as printed books, magazines, DVDs, and CDs. By contrast, patrons borrowed nearly 8 million digital materials, mostly ebooks, downloadable audiobooks, and videos. Some county public libraries had bookmobiles bring library media to neighborhoods by vehicle, serving as a traveling extension of the traditional brick-and-mortar county institution.

There are other options for accessing literature and reading material in addition to the library. Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization based in St. Paul, MN, whose mission is to be a catalyst for building community, inspiring readers, and expanding book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Libraries (<https://littlefreelibrary.org>). Also unique to Minnesota is The Floating Library (<https://thefloatinglibrary.org>), a custom-made, public pop-up library option circulating a collection of artist-made books and printed matter aboard a raft on a lake, accessible by boat. According to a Pew Research Center report about ebook lending (2012), many

people began borrowing or buying ebooks through library systems or online bookstores and websites. Data cited in the report was collected from phone surveys of more than 6,000 Americans ages 16 and older, conducted in December 2011. The summary of findings states that “Americans strongly value the role of public libraries in their communities, both for providing access to materials and resources and for promoting literacy and improving the overall quality of life” (Pew Research Center, 2012). Of those polled, 48% had visited a library or bookmobile in the past year, and 27% had used a library website, which was a notable uptrend from previous polling.

Many EL families may not be informed about county public library resources in their communities. They may be new arrivals to the United States or newly relocated to a rural area and unaware of the free publications and services available. They may not know that they can sign up for a free library card at their county public library as long as they can provide a mailing address. Additionally, there may be language barriers, transportation challenges, unfamiliar cultural norms, or privacy concerns that inhibit some families from benefiting from their local library. A 2008 study by the American Library Association (ALA), which is further reviewed in Chapter 2, analyzed some of these barriers in linguistically isolated communities of non-English speakers in U.S. public libraries.

At most public schools, students have access to printed English language materials from the school media center, as well as classroom libraries, yet these libraries remain limited in their selection of bilingual books for ELs in their home languages. For example, one rural elementary school in a local Minnesota community only had 13

bilingual Spanish-English titles available via the digital catalog. This lack of bilingual resources within school libraries creates an accessibility barrier to culturally appropriate literature from a primary source of reading and educational materials, further highlighting the unequal distribution of key academic resources for non-English speaking learners in a rural public elementary school.

The history of the American library spans nearly 300 years. In 1731, Benjamin Franklin established the first American subscription library, the Library Company of Philadelphia, which allowed its members to borrow books (as cited in Brady & Abbott, 2015). A century later in 1833, the Peterborough Town Library in New Hampshire became the first free, tax-supported public library. Steel industrialist Andrew Carnegie's company funded many of the nearly 1,700 libraries operating in the United States by the early 1900s. Decades later, the Library Services and Construction Act of 1964 was enacted to fund new library spaces for underserved communities (2015). Now, in the 21st century, public libraries have morphed into community centers with digital resources; STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) and STEAM (STEM, plus the arts) activities; and flexible Makerspace rooms available for patrons to use and access.

Context of Research

This research was specifically designed for rural communities outside of urban and suburban areas, with particular attention to EL families. As the researcher, special considerations were made to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants throughout the research process and express mutual trust and respect for their contributions. The research occurred during a global pandemic, which impacted the

collection of data to some extent. The pandemic exposed some challenges in the public school systems and county public library systems for EL families that may not have otherwise been revealed.

Rural Public Schools and Rural Public Libraries

How do rural communities differ from urban communities for ELs? One rural Minnesota school district could have several elementary schools within a 20-mile span, encompassing three counties. Considering the EL population of one rural school community with Hmong-, Spanish-, and Somali-speaking EL families, there are varying levels of language proficiency between school and home. In this scenario, the majority of adults speak fluently in their home language, and often at least one parent also speaks English. Most of the children speak fluently in their home language, although some children may understand the home language but speak only English. Some families may request interpreters for parent communication, and others may request written school information in their home language, as indicated on district registration forms and required under legal obligation on behalf of ELs. Families with literacy skills in their home language have a communication advantage when bilingual materials are available to them.

Compared to urban areas, library resources for EL families in rural areas are not as easy to access. The library locations are often farther away and not safely accessible to pedestrians or bicyclists. Furthermore, public transportation may not be available in rural areas, and Wi-Fi may not extend to all parts of the community.

In Minnesota, public libraries are county based, and patrons may live closer to one public library in a different county. There is a reciprocity agreement among county public libraries, so patrons with library cards from different counties may borrow materials from the library of their convenience. Even so, the limited number of home language resources available, as well as access to print materials in those languages, may still be a barrier for EL families using their rural county public library and borrowing those bilingual materials. These are just a few factors that need to be considered for this research in rural communities.

COVID-19 Impact on Public Schools and Public Libraries

How has the COVID-19 virus impacted libraries and schools? The unexpected arrival of a worldwide pandemic caused by the coronavirus, or COVID-19, in early 2020 caused major changes to American schools, libraries, and communities. Schools and businesses were suddenly closed by state and federal leaders in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. The country came to a virtual halt as citizens responded to the new directives and a different way of life. Only those businesses and services deemed as “essential” were allowed to continue in Minnesota, while others were either closed or required employees to work remotely to limit personal contact. Schools were required to create distance learning lessons for students, replacing in-person instruction with technology-based lessons. After the arrival of COVID-19, ebooks and digital resources were among the few library materials available to patrons in some parts of the United States.

By early fall 2020, county public libraries in Minnesota were again opened to the public with COVID-19 protocols in place. For public school districts, the governor allowed options to teach in person, with a hybrid learning model (part in person, part online), or via distance learning. While most large urban school districts chose to start the school year with distance learning, other small rural districts chose to start with in-person learning or hybrid learning. However, with a resurgence of COVID-19 outbreaks in late fall 2020, many districts made the decision to teach utilizing full distance learning for the winter. Even with the FDA approval of a vaccine in December 2020, COVID-19 continues to impact schools, libraries, and businesses across the world in 2022. For this research, data collection via interviews was conducted using video meetings to ensure researcher and participant safety. The impact that COVID-19 had on this study's research design is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Research Focus

Research Questions

Based on personal and professional experience with literacy and EL families, my primary research question is: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* My secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* For this research, the literature review will define collaboration between stakeholders in rural communities, specifically public

organizations. The results of this research will inform stakeholders of a possible model for future collaboration to improve literacy for ELs in rural Minnesota.

A working definition of collaboration from Mattessich and Johnson is “a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals” (2018, p. 77). Collaboration involves a commitment between separate organizations, requiring specific communication and planning while sharing resources and products. Mattessich and Johnson distinguished collaboration from informal cooperation and coordination. This research focuses specifically on collaboration between the government-funded organizations of public elementary schools and county public libraries.

Scholarship

This dissertation was designed to reflect the scholarship of engagement and the scholarship of application, as defined by the Boyer Model of Scholarship (Boyer, 1996). The scholarship of discovery applies to the original research of the current and relevant nature of collaboration between public elementary schools and county public libraries, and the results will be used to improve literacy for EL families in rural communities. As the requirements of education continue to change, methods and resources must also change to address the needs of a community. With evolving demographics in the United States, it is necessary for public schools to collaborate with public libraries to meet the unique literacy needs of our diverse America.

Importance of Research

Related Literature

Based on keywords from the research questions, historical and empirical evidence is reviewed in Chapter 2. The literature review provides historical context to American public education and public libraries, with legislation and legal cases specific to ELs. Literature explicit to the process of second language learning and constructivist learners provide necessary background knowledge of the research's target population. Studies relevant to the relationship between EL families, schools, and libraries in a rural community are presented to address the unique circumstances of the research topic.

Preview of Research Design

For this research, a qualitative research design was selected to allow the researcher to collect the data, or perspectives, of the stakeholders involved in this particular community relationship. Qualitative research focuses on collecting data in narrative form, using a variety of methods to discover a naturally occurring phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Grounded theory methodology requires the researcher to collect data from a variety of perspectives to compare and analyze the data until categories of information present a central theme or storyline to explain the social and historical conditions of the phenomenon. Interviews with parents of EL children, rural public elementary school educators, and rural public librarians provide various perspectives from these community members. Based on the interview results, it is expected that mutual respect for other perspectives will provide the foundation for future collaboration to promote the literacy of EL families in rural communities.

Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms provide the reader with background knowledge for the purpose of this research. The terms are listed in alphabetical order: barrier, collaboration, community, English Learners, home language, and rural.

Barrier (physical and nonphysical): a material or immaterial object that interferes with or blocks community members from access to resources that are readily available to them.

Collaboration: a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals (Mattessich & Johnson, 2018).

Community: a group of people in a given geographic area that has a shared sense of belonging, beliefs, experiences, and values.

English Learners (ELs): children in grades K-12 within the Minnesota public school system who have been identified as using a language other than English on the MNLS and whose English language proficiency has been assessed using a state-approved screener with a qualifying score, as recognized by MDE.

Home Language: the primary language that families choose to use at home, also known as native language, heritage language, or first language.

Rural: of or relating to the areas outside of the urban and suburban communities in Minnesota. Minneapolis and Saint Paul, known locally as the Twin Cities metropolitan area, or “The Cities,” are surrounded by more than 100 suburbs. Rural communities include farmland and small towns beyond the suburbs in outstate or greater Minnesota.

Summary

As Minnesota becomes more diverse in both urban and rural areas, there is an increasing need for improving literacy for EL families in these communities. According to the 2020 Census, the EL population in Minnesota increased 7.6% from 2010 to 331 million, and the diversity index increased from 55% to 61% in that decade. Each community is unique with its own traditions and culture to be valued and respected. This research is important to me not only as an EL teacher but as an advocate for education and a rural community member in Central Minnesota. The data collected and analyzed in this research will be shared with the community members involved, specifically EL families, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians. The goal is to provide relevant information to rural communities to improve collaboration and literacy for residents learning English.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review of several related categories. First, summaries of American public education and American public libraries provide readers with historical context. Following that, the literature review describes prior research related to second language acquisition (SLA) for ELs, as well as provides an overview of EL communities in Minnesota. Next, a review of collaboration options creates a framework for public schools and public libraries to enhance literacy learning opportunities. Finally, an analysis of community building identifies the efforts needed for success between the public entities in rural areas. Each of these components is essential to answering the research questions.

Chapter 3 describes grounded theory, the qualitative research design used for this study. Interviews with parents of EL children, public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians were conducted, then coded and analyzed. After that, Chapter 4 explains the results, including the coding and categorization of the interview data, as well as reveal themes unique to each stakeholder group. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of overarching themes across the three groups of stakeholder data, provide connections to the literature review, identify implications as well as limitations of the study, recommend possible future research, and present a plan to share and use the results in the rural community.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

As the researcher, Chapter 1 included both personal and professional experiences in public schools and public libraries, as well as background information about ELs, rural schools and libraries, and the impact of COVID-19 on this research. Chapter 2 reviews relevant empirical studies related to the research questions. The primary research question is: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?*

The literature review begins with a historical summary of American public education and legislation that has determined education policies. Next, a review of American public libraries, which are essential to the social infrastructure of any community, will provide context to the research questions. This will be followed by working theories of second language learning, as well as an overview of categories for ELs in Minnesota, the target population of the research. Collaboration models will be examined for possible adaptation, and community-building methods in rural areas will be analyzed to develop a research framework. Given the global pandemic's evolving situation, the limitations of this literature review will be addressed.

McMillan and Schumacher defined a review of literature as a survey of scholarly sources that “establishes important links between the existing knowledge and the problem being investigated” (2010, p. 73). By acknowledging the research that preceded this dissertation and publications related to the research questions, the literature review will provide a foundation for the research design.

Historical Context of American Public Education

History of American Schooling

Living in the United States in the 21st century, it is vital to understand the context of the past and learn from those experiences. Traditions from England influenced education in the colonial era, as did the newfound religious freedom of these early settlers. Society changed as American pioneers expanded to the west coast, agriculture changed with immigration, and the country’s developing democracy created the foundation for our current American education system. The following is a summary of notable benchmarks that have determined the trajectory of progress for schools in the United States.

The American public school system has evolved from the colonial times of one-room schoolhouses to the digital age of technology-based education. It was first modeled after the British educational framework and influenced by both religious and private entities, surviving the American Civil War, expanding through numerous immigration waves from Europe and Asia, and progressing with the Industrial Age, global conflicts, and an influx of refugee populations (Reeves, 1999). Now, present-day public schools have more diversity than ever. The American public school system has

been defined by laws and choices of school options for parents to provide education to their children. In 2020, the impact of COVID-19 forced the closure of schools, required distance learning, and once again redirected American public education.

In his book, *Education and Social Change: Contours in the History of American Schooling*, Rury (2013) wrote about how American schools and society mutually affect each other, historically and currently. American society began with the agricultural age and was impacted by the societal forces of industrialization, technology, urbanization, globalization, the social division of labor, and cultural conflict throughout its evolution. Each has been pivotal to social change and the development of schools and other educational institutions in the United States. Rury stated that “culture is especially useful in thinking about schooling, because education can itself be defined broadly as the process of cultural transmission” (p. 10). In modern American education, culture, diversity, and equitable learning opportunities are primary learning objectives. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations in 1948, addresses this foundational right of education for all, proclaiming, “Everyone has a right to education ... to the full development of the human personality and parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (UN General Assembly, 1948). This foundational right to education for all influences American society as much as social change influences education.

Pivotal Supreme Court Cases and Legislation

In the United States, education is a right that has evolved for ELs through significant legislation. Within the past 50 years, several federal laws and critical Supreme

Court cases have improved EL access to equitable education. Additionally, Minnesota statutes and rules determine standards and requirements for ELs that are within the federal guidelines, according to the MDE's *English Learner Education in Minnesota, 2020-21 Report*.

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* resulted in the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) unanimously deciding that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional. Next, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, and national origin. This landmark civil rights labor law determined that students who do not demonstrate English language proficiency should have the same rights and access to academic content instruction that all children are entitled to, including a language instruction educational program (LIEP). The following year, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) authorized the federal government to have a deciding role in K-12 education policy, including Title I, a federally funded program that helped districts cover the cost of educating disadvantaged students. Then, with *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974, SCOTUS ruled that identical education does not constitute equal education under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The ruling directed the local education agency (LEA) of a California school district to take steps to overcome educational barriers for non-English speaking Chinese students. In the 1981 case of *Castañeda v. Pickard*, a favorable ruling by the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals led to the establishment of a three-part test to evaluate the adequacy of an LEAs program for EL students. This evaluation included a program based on educational theory recognized as sound by experts in the field, practices and personnel to implement the theory

effectively, and ensuring language barriers were being overcome. Soon after, in the 1982 landmark decision of *Plyler v. Doe*, SCOTUS overturned the ruling from a lower Texas Supreme Court, with its determination that all children, regardless of citizenship, are entitled to free public education (MDE 2021).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 further increased the federal government's role in public school education, establishing school accountability systems that relied heavily on standardized test results tied to high-stakes outcomes such as graduation and funding. Perhaps most remarkable, NCLB set the daunting goal of 100% English language proficiency for all of the nation's students by 2014. That was the year Minnesota passed the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act in support of the state's growing EL population; the legislation revised existing statutes specific to curriculum and teacher licensing and also added a provision for districts to institute bilingual or multilingual seals on high school diplomas for students who demonstrate proficiency in native and world languages. The following year, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB with updated provisions intended to ensure ELs and immigrant children and youth alike have the opportunity to attain English proficiency. Each one of these laws and court cases has impacted public school education policy in efforts to best address the changing needs of ELs in Minnesota (MDE, 2021).

Historical Context of American Public Libraries

History of the American Public Library System

Public libraries have been important community institutions in the United States for nearly 300 years (Brady & Abbott, 2015). Reviewing the history of American

libraries provides context to their development in our democracy. Originally, libraries were buildings that housed printed materials for citizens to borrow. In the 21st century, libraries have evolved to include digital and technical materials to borrow or download, as well as provide flexible community meeting spaces for a variety of purposes.

Brady and Abbott created a digital exhibition, *A History of US Public Libraries* (2015), to present important eras of American libraries. In 1731, Benjamin Franklin established the first American subscription library, the Library Company of Philadelphia, which allowed paying members to borrow books. Twelve years later, the Darby Free Library in Darby, Pennsylvania, allowed residents to borrow books without membership. The first tax-supported free public library in Peterborough, New Hampshire, was established in the early 1800s, followed by the founding of the ALA in 1876. The industrial era of the early 1900s transformed the American economy and led to the rapid expansion of the U.S. library movement, funding many of the first libraries across the country. By 1920, nearly 1,700 American public libraries were funded by steel industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who is often referred to as “the Patron Saint of Libraries.” Within decades, public libraries were central to most communities, and today - more than a century later - public libraries continue to evolve into community centers offering STEM and STEAM activities, as well as a variety of digital services, to its patrons. The full impact of the 2020 outbreak of COVID-19 on community libraries is yet to be seen. A detailed historical timeline of American libraries can be found in Appendix B.

Libraries as Part of Social Infrastructure

Modern authors describe libraries in different ways. According to sociologist Erik Klinenberg in his 2018 book, *Palaces for the People*, libraries are one form of vital social infrastructure that has a pivotal role in a community. Klinenberg defined social infrastructure as “the physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact” (p. 5). He contrasted social capital, a concept of measuring relationships and interpersonal networks, with the physical conditions of social infrastructure. Social infrastructure is an important and powerful part of a neighborhood because it facilitates community building through daily interactions between residents. Public institutions, such as libraries, schools, playgrounds, parks, community gardens; community organizations, including places of worship, YMCA; and civic organizations are examples of social infrastructure within urban and suburban areas. In rural communities, the services and structures of social infrastructure include town halls, county fairgrounds, and hunting clubs. Public libraries continue to serve as evolving civic institutions that serve as cornerstones of a community. Klinenberg observed and interviewed several library patrons in New York City as part of his ongoing social infrastructure research. Generations of Americans have experienced books, media, and relationships through their local library.

Access to Library Services

The American public library system has provided a safe and accessible learning environment for immigrant groups over the centuries. In her book, *Serving New Immigrant Communities in the Library*, professor and author Sondra Cuban, the

grandchild of European immigrants and a former librarian, gives the following reasons why new immigrant adults come to the library: “to read, to improve English, to use computers, to form community affiliation, and for their own reading enjoyment and that of their children” (2007, p. 7). While highlighting the many benefits to immigrants using the library, Cuban also identified the numerous accessibility barriers to immigrants using the library, including institutional barriers (procedural), personal and social barriers (cultural interactions), environmental barriers (transportation), and perceptual barriers (not knowing that the library could be helpful) as well as hours of operation (pp. 30, 113). Addressing and meeting the needs of immigrant groups with a range of individual and cultural characteristics requires careful efforts from library and community leaders. Furthermore, Cuban recommended that librarians conduct research to assess the needs of new immigrants in rapidly changing communities, including their information needs, cultural differences, and barriers they face.

The same year as her previously mentioned book, Cuban coauthored *Partners in Literacy: Schools and Libraries Building Communities Through Technology* with her father, Larry Cuban. Cuban and Cuban compared and contrasted these two public entities, schools and libraries, through two centuries; both authors are literacy promoters, yet each utilizes different strategies to achieve this shared goal. “In the age of cyberspace, two community institutions share a common mission of educating both adults and children - to serve communities in different strategies because of fundamental differences ...” (2007, p. 31). Educators and librarians are both professionals requiring college degrees; educators teach children to read, and librarians promote adult lifelong learning. Public

schools are compulsory, while participation is voluntary at public libraries. State and federal guidelines determine public school curriculum, yet library resources are patron-driven, determined by the county and city. Schools are open on weekdays for a set school calendar, whereas libraries are open year-round with flexible hours. Schools focus on academic and digital literacy, while libraries offer multiple literacies, including environmental, health, media, and multicultural.

Cuban and Cuban identified three periods in the history of American schools and libraries: the early period of 1850-1920, the mid-period of 1920-1980, and the late period of 1980 to the present. Initially, the early period for these institutions was a time of development with limited resources; structures and policies were established separately. Later, the mid-period was notable for developing professionalism to gain credibility, expanding with federal funding for complementary entities. More recently, the late period was marked by business-influenced schools and libraries, infused with innovation and technology-driven services, as partners in literacy. Cuban and Cuban acknowledge the limitations of access to technology or the digital divide in some areas of the United States. They make recommendations for complementary partnerships and collaborations to benefit communities. Specifically, they recommend transformative collaborations with “a shared vision, mission and goals translated into altered governance and decision making by developing planning strategies and interdisciplinary approaches that support interdependence“ (p. 105). This approach allows the flexibility for local, everyday needs to be met in a joint effort, while remaining adaptable to regional change. A fundamental component of transformative collaboration is community-based research (CBR), which is

particularly beneficial in rural areas. “CBR is conducted with, not for or on, members of a community. Questions driving CBR come from the needs of the community members, and the work itself is collaborative and change-oriented” (p. 106).

Another researcher, educator, and author of *Public Libraries in the 21st Century*, Ann Prentice, concurred with Sondra Cuban about the library’s vital role in serving immigrant communities. From providing opportunities to connect with a new culture to being a source of information about schools, jobs, and learning English, the public library is a free access source for many needs of immigrants (2011, p. 11). In this 21st century, the challenges facing the public institution of the public library include limited access to information, limited internet services, and limited funding. Library staff are required to be as flexible as the physical space to accommodate changing needs and requests from the community. Prentice concluded, “The public library is a place, both virtual and physical, where people can come together to discuss issues and enjoy the company of others, where they can learn, where they can bring their children to learn and enjoy, and where they can be part of a community” (p. 217).

An ALA study, “Serving Non-English Speakers in the U.S. Public Libraries: 2007 Analysis of Library Demographics, Services and Programs,” provided information about library services and programs developed for non-English speakers. This study was based on survey results from nearly 500 libraries identified by the U.S. Census 2000 data as linguistically isolated communities. It analyzed the effectiveness of services, barriers to library use, as well as the most successful library programs by languages served. The findings of the study identified “reading and library habits negatively impact use of the

library by non-English speakers, and knowledge of the services offered by the library” as the most frequent barriers to their participants (2008, p. 6). The most successful library programs for these patrons, based on participation and usage, were ESL, language-specific materials and collections, computer use and computer classes, storytime, and special programs. With these findings, librarians can develop better and more precise materials, services and programs for languages served in their communities.

Another ALA study, *The New America’s Literacy Project*, focused on how libraries can more effectively serve new Americans (2019). Researchers collected information from dozens of public library programs throughout the United States. Following the data review, researchers conducted site visits at six public libraries in various locations to interview new American patrons, library and community partner organization staff. The study recommended a partnership approach between libraries and community organizations, a collaboration which provides both organizations with access to more materials and resources, to meet the specific needs of its unique community. The result of this study is a collection of resources and cultural training for public libraries to access for their community needs.

In Minnesota, a 2020 study of library services for immigrants and refugees was conducted between the Saint Paul Public Libraries (SPPL) and the Wilder Foundation, a nonprofit, mission-driven research and evaluation organization (Gracias & Ly, 2021). Wilder Research, the independent research unit of the foundation, conducted surveys and interviews with Karen, Latinx, and Somali SPPL patrons, as well as library staff. The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory (CFI) is a free and publicly available qualitative

survey that is used to assess community collaboration among nonprofit organizations and/or government agencies. The questionnaire requires participants to rate 44 statements that represent 22 research-tested success factors of collaborations on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) (Mattessich & Johnson, 2018, p. 7). The factors are grouped into six categories: environment, memberships, communication, purpose, process, and resources.

The assessment collected in-depth qualitative data related to the positive role of cultural liaisons for patrons from these three language groups and the perceived need for expanding professional development by library staff to better serve the community needs. The findings of Wilder's surveys and interviews informed recommendations for activities with community members and library staff, as well as improvements to SPPL's Community Services model. The Wilder CFI was used to develop interview protocols for this research.

Second Language Acquisition and Constructivist Learning

Second Language Acquisition

There have been numerous theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and best practices for ELs over the past 50 years. As referenced in Chapter 1, several linguists and researchers are well known in the field, including Chomsky, Krashen and Terrell, and Cummins. Starting in the 1960s, Chomsky theorized that the language acquisition device (LAD) in the human brain has the innate ability to enable infants to acquire and produce language (Chomsky, 1986). According to Chomsky's theory, the human brain is already

encoded with the basic structures of language at birth. Children are born with the tools to learn any language, and their environment determines the language they learn.

As early as the 1970s, Krashen presented his theory of SLA with five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis (<http://www.sdkrashen.com>).

Krashen views acquisition as a subconscious process, such as a child learning its first language or an adult gaining a second language from using it in a language-rich environment. This natural process of acquisition is in contrast to learning a language as the conscious process of developing language through language lessons and grammar features, as students or adults formally learn a new language through structured courses.

The monitor hypothesis asserts that individuals who speak or write in a second language use the learned language system to self-correct, or monitor, what is produced by their acquired language system. The natural order hypothesis suggests the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a similar order to first language acquisition, implying that learners comprehend rules of language in a predictable order. In the comprehension hypothesis, Krashen (2004) proposed that individuals acquire language when they understand what they hear or read, and further asserts that mastery of language skills is the result of getting comprehensible input. The affective filter hypothesis contends that learners have a mental block that prevents them from fully utilizing input to further language acquisition. Factors such as anxiety, motivation, or self-confidence may affect input from entering the LAD, delay comprehension, and limit competency.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) identified a process of five stages for SLLs: pre-production (silent, without speech), early production (one- or two-word response), speech emergence (phrases and simple sentences), intermediate fluency (developing academic language), and advanced fluency (near native-like language). The length of time spent in each stage depends on several factors for the individual learner, including personality, trauma, motivation, and L1 literacy, among others.

Krashen is a strong proponent of Free Voluntary Reading (FVR), which encourages children and adults to read whatever interests them, rather than an assigned academic reading. Krashen's research (2011) found that when children and adults with lower literacy levels read for pleasure, their reading comprehension and writing style improved, including spelling and grammar (2004). He believed FVR is one way to achieve advanced second language proficiency. For EL families, public libraries can offer a plethora of English reading materials, in both print and digital formats for diverse abilities and areas of interest. However, the inventory and availability of heritage language resources may be a barrier for EL community members in some areas.

Cummins (2008) was a third researcher from the 1980s; he made the distinction between two kinds of language proficiency: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), the social language of listening and speaking; and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), the academic language of reading and writing. Whereas SLLs may acquire BICS oral language competency within two years of instruction, CALP skills may require five or more years before a student is academically competent in the second language. Research has indicated that literacy in the native language promotes the

acquisition of a second language; furthermore, when students are encouraged to maintain their heritage language, the process of acquiring a second language is accelerated (Cummins, 1981).

Cummins reviewed extensive international research on literacy development for students with immigrant backgrounds and socioeconomic disadvantages (2017). He maintains a causal relationship between literacy engagement and school success, stating, “the literacy engagement framework posits that print access/literacy engagement is a direct determinant of literacy attainment for L2 learners in particular” (p 15). Dimensions of literacy engagement include scaffolding language, connecting instruction to students’ lives, affirming identity, and reinforcing curricular language, awareness, and understanding. The theoretical framework provides effective instruction for educators of multilingual students and a tool for stakeholders and policymakers of literacy development.

Lily Wong Fillmore (1991) contributed to the linguistic research regarding second language learning in the 1990s. She published a study concerning the loss of primary languages for ELs in the United States. The study used mixed methods of surveys and interviews with immigrant and American Indian families to determine how family language patterns affected children’s early learning of English. The analysis looked at families whose children attended Spanish-only preschool programs compared with families whose children participated in English-only or bilingual programs. The findings suggested that the loss of a primary language, especially if it is the only language spoken by parents, can negatively affect children and their families. Studies such as Fillmore’s

have contributed to a renewed interest in valuing and developing home languages and cultures in American communities today.

Researchers Honigsfeld and Dove (2010) have developed further strategies for ESL specialists and general education teachers to collaborate and co-teach for the benefit of students. They considered the cognitive, academic, sociocultural, and linguistic needs of the increasingly diverse communities of ELs in the United States. Co-teaching and collaboration are becoming more commonly used for EL instruction at all levels in public school settings. Dove and Honigsfeld (2014) analyzed a co-teaching model in a suburban elementary school. The case study documented a year-long process at a New York suburban elementary school with a predominantly Latinx population in Grades 3 to 6 to improve instruction for ELs through an ESL co-teaching model.

General educators and ESL specialists formed cooperative partnerships to develop a collaborative delivery framework in support of this endeavor. Using mixed methods such as classroom observations, teacher surveys, participant interviews, and field notes, the researchers determined that the co-teaching model was successful. The positive outcomes promoted increased collaboration between ESL and mainstream classroom teachers and also created a greater sense of shared responsibility and accountability for all students (p. 65). This case study not only provided a framework for increased inter-school collaboration between ESL and mainstream teachers in other schools but may also extend beyond the education system to other community organizations.

Constructivist Learning

In 1936, psychologist and cognitive constructivist Jean Piaget (1936) introduced his theory of children's cognitive development. He suggested that children move through four stages of intellectual development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. All children go through the same stages in the same order, but not all at the same rate, and each stage represents a different type of intelligence (as cited in McLeod, 2018). Children develop language simultaneously within those stages, and as they construct their first language skills, they naturally experiment with different needs and uses of language. From birth, children are surrounded by language from caretakers and home environments. They acquire language abilities through both playful and purposeful experiences, and they will learn to communicate more effectively and efficiently through formal literacy often in a structured or school setting when they are developmentally ready.

Around that same time, Lev Vygotsky claimed that "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (1978, p. 90). Vygotsky, a social constructivist, believed social learning preceded development and that community and environment influence a child's meaning-making process. The goal of teaching and learning is to share and build upon knowledge acquired through language and social interaction. More specifically, a child's cognitive development comes from social interactions through guided learning in their zone of proximal development (ZPD), when children co-construct knowledge in cooperation with an adult. Vygotsky used the term *zo-ped* to describe the place where a

child's spontaneous concepts meet the systematicity and logic of adult reasoning (Fosnot, 2005, p. 23).

According to Fosnot (2005), the focus of instruction for constructivism is cognitive development and deep understanding rather than behaviors or skills. Learning has a complex and nonlinear construction and should not be viewed as a linear process. While constructivism may have roots in biology and evolution, it is recognized as a way for learners to make meaningful connections through concrete experiences.

Overview of English Learners

As American society developed, two theories emerged: the melting pot theory and the salad bowl theory (Berray, 2019, pp. 142-144). In the late 1700s, the melting pot theory of assimilation developed as immigrants from many nations worked together toward a homogeneous society. Later in the 1960s, the salad bowl theory of integration recognized different identities and cultures with an appreciation of a multicultural society. Immigrants come to the United States for economic and educational opportunities, while also contributing to American society for the greater good.

Across the United States, the number of ELs continues to increase. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022), the percentage of public school students who were ELs was higher in the fall of 2018 (10.2%) than in the fall of 2010 (9.2%). Today more than 400 languages are spoken nationwide, with Spanish as the majority, followed by Arabic and Chinese. As listed previously in this research, there are many labels for ELs, including ESL, ELL, DLL, MLL, and LEP individuals. This unique

population of public school students is representative of the overall diverse population of the United States.

According to the MDE's *English Learner Education in Minnesota, 2020-21 Report*, the number of EL students enrolled in pre-K and K-12 increased to more than 76,000, about 8.5% of the total enrollment in Minnesota public schools systems (MDE, 2021). ELs may include immigrant and refugee children and youth, ages 3-21, who were not born in a U.S. state or territory, and have not attended school for more than three full academic years. ELs may be considered as Long-Term English Learners (LTELs) if they have not attained English proficiency within five years of being identified as such. For example, a child who is identified as an EL in kindergarten would be an LTEL if they require EL support after the fourth grade. Migratory children are school-aged persons who have moved into a community with an itinerant agriculture worker or fisher for seasonal employment in the past 36 months. Because of frequent transfers between school systems, these students may need additional academic support to complete grade level requirements and assessments successfully. Recently Arrived English Learners (RAEL) are ELs who have been enrolled in a U.S. school for less than 12 months. They may be considered newcomer students. Lastly, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) include individuals entering school after the sixth grade, whose home language is not English; are at least two years of schooling behind their peers; function at least two years below their grade level in reading and math; and may be preliterate in their native language. According to the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System

(MARSS), there are more than 260 home languages, the three most common being Spanish, Somali, and Hmong (MDE, 2021).

The Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM) has provided support to low-income immigrant and refugee families for 25 years. Under U.S. law, refugees are people who have been forced to flee their country of origin due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (<https://www.ilcm.org>). Minnesota has the highest number of refugees per capita of any state, according to the U.S. Census and refugee support agencies. Since 1979, Minnesota has welcomed refugees from more than 100 countries and recognizes the economic, linguistic, and cultural contributions those families have to offer. The diversity of rural Minnesota provides the setting for this research study.

MDE defines an EL as a pupil in grades K-12 whose first language on the MNLS is identified as other than English, and who has been determined to lack the necessary English language proficiency to participate and/or achieve standards in grade-level content (MDE, 2021). Once students qualify for EL status, they are entitled to language development services by a licensed EL teacher. Depending on their individual language needs, students may receive EL support in the classroom or in a separate EL resource room on a daily or weekly basis. The goal is to provide ELs with specific language instruction to help them reach academic language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills across the content areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Under ESSA in Minnesota, ELs are required to participate in an annual English proficiency assessment, ACCESS for ELLs, to document their progress in academic language development for the domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (MDE, 2021). This assessment determines whether a student continues to qualify as an EL student or whether they have acquired the necessary language proficiency to succeed without EL support. When students are deemed language proficient, the MDE no longer requires their participation in direct EL instruction.

For new-to-country ELs, such as recent immigrant families, the literacy process begins in the home. Dixon and Wu (2014) examined published research to study the home literacy practices of immigrant children that affect L2 literacy development and school achievement. They reviewed nearly 100 articles of empirical analysis conducted before 2000, and their findings supported the connection between home literacy activities and societal language literacy, such as the benefit of home book reading. Dixon and Wu identified the need for further research into other factors influencing literacy development, including government policies, community resources, family literacy programs, and alternative language environments (p. 445).

Duursma, et al. (2007) looked specifically at vocabulary development within literacy acquisition for the bilingual population in the United States. Their study investigated the Spanish and English vocabulary for nearly 100 fifth-grade Latino English language learners in three locations: El Paso, TX; Boston, MA; and Chicago, IL. Parents completed written questionnaires or phone interviews in Spanish or English. Student vocabulary achievement was measured using the picture vocabulary subtest of

the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised (WLPB-R) for English and Spanish. From the data, Duursma, et al. (2007) found that becoming or staying proficient in English did not require parental use of English in the home. However, maintaining proficiency in Spanish required both instructional support at school and social support at home. This study highlights the importance of bilingual family literacy for ELs.

Collaboration

Authors of collaboration publications use a variety of definitions. Hank Rubin (2009), best-selling author and founder of the Institute for Collaborative Leadership, defined collaboration as “a purposeful relationship in which all parties strategically choose to cooperate in order to achieve shared or overlapping objectives” (p. 2). He maintained that relationships are at the core of collaborations, and more specifically, “Building relationships between schools and the public and community institutions that surround them is essential for the effectiveness and continued viability of both schools *and* communities” (2009, p. xvii). Rubin presented a mental model of collaboration as a life cycle of 14 phases organized into five clusters of activities, including the foundation of relationships among stakeholders. These essential stakeholders could include individuals or organizations with knowledge, history, influence, resources, as well as being invested in the outcomes of the collaboration. For this research, the stakeholders were parents of EL families, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians.

Collaboration models for education have taken various forms. Some may be more cooperation-based, in which members or groups agree to work side by side for their

mutual benefit. Other models are considered partnerships, with each partner accountable for specific actions or responsibilities. In educating ELs using co-teaching configurations, “the partnering teachers will share the responsibility for planning, instruction, implementing the lessons, and assessing student performance and outcomes,” (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2010, p. 81). In communities, collaboration models may involve private-public partnerships, cooperatives, and school-business relationships.

Carol Brown discussed collaboration specific to schools and libraries. She stated, “Collaboration is constantly promoted as a valued activity for educators, librarians, and social service professionals” (2005, p. 1). According to Brown, sharing resources and responsibilities can reduce costs and increase the positive outcomes of a collaborative project. In a study of 18 North Carolina libraries funded through The Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), Brown utilized mixed methods of surveys and telephone interviews to determine the qualifying characteristics of successful collaborative projects in educational youth outreach between libraries and community partners. The Wilder Foundation provided recommendations of partnership guidelines for the Powerful Partners Collaboration Grant, which was one of the grants offered by the State Library of North Carolina, as part of the LSTA’s initiative of collaborative projects. Brown acknowledged the small number of study participants, yet respondents from urban, suburban, and rural populations were receptive to the projects requiring interagency collaboration in their area. Brown acknowledges the need to provide full access to all people, including those with disabilities, those living in rural or remote areas, and those

with economic disadvantages. She suggests that data from this study could be generalized to library communities in other regions and states.

Research from Marcela De Souza showed “concrete evidence of the strong link between the library and the academic and reading achievement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly English learners” (2010, p. 40). De Souza found that the local public and school libraries positively influenced the personal and academic lives of low socioeconomic ELs of Mexican descent, as described in interviews with adults reflecting on their childhood education in Southern California. When libraries were properly staffed and well inventoried, the library environment provided EL families helpful resources and unique opportunities for connection in a welcoming, non-threatening environment, whether it be in the form of EL-specific reading materials, words of encouragement, or homework help.

Another study by Sophia Rodriguez (2019) evaluated a library-based, school-district partnership focused on newcomers’ sense of belonging in Hartford, Connecticut, over a three-year period. Rodriguez used mixed methods of interviews and focus groups, including school and library leaders and students, and were facilitated by a community-based researcher. She found that the library was a hub for resources, community, and connections for newcomers. This study highlights the importance of a library-school district partnership with a community-based researcher to identify the unique social-emotional needs and sense of belonging newcomer youths have to their community.

Cuban and Cuban (2007) provided another alternative of transformative collaboration, an opportunity for decision-makers to realize a shared vision, mission, and goals by developing strategies and interdisciplinary approaches that encourage interdependence in a community. Transformative collaborations can bring different public entities together in joint efforts to meet current local needs while preparing for future needs. These partnerships involve stakeholders of community-based education that share resources and work toward a common goal.

Community Building in Rural Areas

Community building is essential to the collaboration process. Peter Block, author of *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, maintains this overall premise: “Build the social fabric and transform the isolation within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole; shift our conversations from the problems of community to the possibility of community” (2009, p. 177). The family is the first community, which extends to a group of families in a neighborhood, then extends to a neighborhood public school, which extends to other groups or places common to its members. Each community is unique, with its culture and climate, expectations and understandings, and similarities and differences to other communities. A rural community has qualities unique to its small town and the families who choose to live within it. Rural communities may slowly assimilate outsiders who are willing to adopt established family traditions; in turn, community members may be inclined to change and accommodate newcomers.

Community building for both urban and rural areas may include family outreach. Library outreach that extends beyond the library walls includes mobile service vehicles

(bookmobiles) or programs hosted at parks, laundromats, or homeless shelters. As described by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), “Libraries are transforming how they engage with children and families in underserved communities through creative, learning- and family-focused programs and services that take place in community locations, driven by community needs, wants, and aspirations” (as cited in Mills, Campana, & Martin, 2019, p. 1). Outreach is vital to ensure that all children have access to resources; it serves community members where they are while attempting to eliminate barriers based on socioeconomic status, language, and culture, among other factors. These same researchers provided case studies to document the four stages of their research-based outreach framework, which are *engage*, *cultivate*, *provide*, and *assess* (Mills et al., 2019). Libraries *engage* their communities using tools such as census or school data, as well as conversations with community members to learn more about resident needs and wants. From there, libraries *cultivate* partnerships by building relationships with schools, businesses, food banks, health services, and other community organizations. Next, libraries *provide* customized programs based on community dynamics and available resources, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. Finally, libraries *assess* by collecting participation and circulation data, reviewing goal-oriented outcomes, and analyzing the impact of services through ongoing conversations to advocate for outreach development. The interactive cycle of these components provides the necessary information for offering future library services that encourage intergenerational learning within a community.

Using libraries for school-community collaboration and multigenerational family learning can benefit schools, libraries, and communities. Historically, libraries have been essential community centers and may provide meaningful connection to places beyond school walls in modern times.

Limitations of Literature Review

I have provided a comprehensive literature review of the keywords related to the research questions. However, there were several limitations to the literature available at the time of this research. It was challenging to access empirical studies specifically for rural schools and libraries, since most relevant research has been done in urban or metropolitan areas. Some studies provided information regarding native English speakers, rather than ELs. Collaboration has been defined in various ways using situational synonyms, some of which are not applicable to the specific purpose of representing the relationship between EL families, public elementary schools and county public libraries. Conducting research during a global pandemic presented challenges, exposed systemic limitations, while also providing exceptional learning opportunities that may not have otherwise been possible for this research.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided a literature review of historical publications and empirical evidence related to the following primary research question: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools*

and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome? The literature review provided historical context to American public education and public libraries, with legislation and legal cases specific to ELs. Explicit literature on the process of second language learning and constructivist learners provided the necessary background knowledge of the target population for this research. Studies relevant to the relationship between EL families, schools, and libraries in rural communities were presented to address the unique circumstances of the research topic.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methods used for data collection, such as the grounded theory of qualitative research, which include interviews with parents of EL families, rural public school educators, and rural county public librarians. Analysis of categories of meanings that emerge throughout the interview process will be used to inform future collaboration with these community stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the current collaboration between public elementary schools and county public libraries to improve literacy for EL families in one rural community. Chapter 3 describes the research design of qualitative research, specifically grounded theory, through interviews with stakeholders in one rural community. The identified stakeholders include parents of EL students, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians in rural Central Minnesota. As the researcher, I believe the data collected provided new information for the schools and libraries to better serve the bilingual families in the area. Several special considerations for conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as circumstances unique to rural community participation, are explained in this chapter. The primary research question is: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* This chapter reviews the methodology of the study, including the research paradigm and rationale, setting and participants, data collection methods and tools, analysis methods, and limitations.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm of qualitative research addresses the research questions. Qualitative research design focuses on collecting data on naturally occurring phenomena, often in the form of words (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). More specifically, grounded theory methodology requires the researcher to collect primarily interview data “to gain a variety of perspectives on the phenomena; then the inquirer uses constant comparison to analyze across categories of information” (p. 24). The intent of this research was to collect and compare data from stakeholders in residences, schools, and libraries of one rural community to improve the literacy of EL families and promote collaboration between schools and libraries to meet those unique needs.

Research Paradigm Rationale

In order to examine collaboration and barriers to improving the literacy of EL families in a rural community of Central Minnesota, the method of research chosen was qualitative research. The primary reason for this choice was to directly and thoroughly hear and document the authentic voices of parents of ELs, rural public school educators, and rural county public librarians. Interviews began with bilingual, English-proficient EL parents from several language groups; it was expected that one parent would represent each language group of Hmong-, Somali-, and Spanish-speaking families for a total of three EL parents. Since the research question focuses on improving the literacy of EL families, the responses from EL parents provided the direction for consecutive interviews with rural public elementary school educators and rural county public librarians in one

rural community. I developed an interview protocol and conducted pilot interviews prior to data collecting interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

When assessing new immigrants' needs, Sondra Cuban (2007) suggested that it can involve both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, including gathering demographic data, observing, conducting interviews, focus groups, and surveys. For this study, I conducted interviews to collect data. Considerations for cultural identities were needed to ensure the research was authentic, relative, and culturally sensitive. Cuban cautioned researchers "to listen carefully, clarify, question, and reflect throughout the process" (p. 41). Researchers who are involved participants and actively interact with community members use an ethnographic approach to data collection and have an invested interest in the process and outcomes of the research. From personal interactions that developed a rapport and long-term relationships, interviews provided in-depth information from the stakeholders. I have established rapport and respect with the interviewees from years of interactions that support mutual trust and understanding for this research.

Community-Based Research

Cuban and Cuban (2007) defined community-based research, or CBR, as a "fundamental component of transformative collaboration, conducted with, not for or on, members of a community" (p. 106). Under this framework, community members' needs determine questions to ask rather than imposing the interests of outside experts on a community. CBR combines skills development with social action to provide better resources for self-efficacy, power sharing, and decision-making among community

stakeholders. Cuban and Cuban advocated for technological collaboration, specifically between public schools and public libraries, to increase access to lifelong learning opportunities and engagement and to foster literacy development at the community level. This research used data from community member interviews conducted by myself, a resident of the community working within the public school system and volunteering at the county public libraries of one rural community.

Research Setting and Participants

Research in Rural Areas

Conducting research in a rural area presents unique challenges that differ from urban research. “A challenge for outsiders can sometimes be gaining the trust of individuals or the community as a whole” (White & Corbett, 2014, p. 193). More specifically, a researcher needs to be respectful of the values and contributions of others, adhere to confidentiality and ethics, and be willing to engage in reciprocal relationships with the goal of collaboration and sharing results in a transparent manner. Engaging people as contributors rather than passive participants or objects of research makes it easier for researchers to connect with members of rural communities. Additionally, researchers should be self-aware of their own assumptions and preconceived ideas and self-reflective about the context in which the research is being conducted, as well as who owns the knowledge acquired, which may vary depending on the culture.

The setting of this study was a rural Central Minnesota community. This rural community encompassed three counties, including several small towns surrounded by farmland with an average population of fewer than 5,000 residents, and less than 5%

non-English speaking citizens, according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau. This rural community represented a rural public school district in the area. This community was chosen due to its location outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, beyond the suburban areas, in outstate Minnesota.

Researcher Role

While known to the participants, I do not make any decisions on behalf of the families, schools, or libraries involved in the study. However, because of my familiarity with the participants, they were more likely to be interviewed and respond to questions on the basis of mutual trust. I reside and work in the rural community with the participants, so all have a shared interest in the research process and results.

Contextual Considerations Related to COVID-19

Conducting research during a global pandemic requires special considerations, flexibility, and adaptability. After two years of navigating the reality of the COVID-19 virus and its multiple variants, in accordance with health and safety policies in public schools and libraries, research data was collected via virtual interviews. I offered interviewees in-person interviews with social distancing and/or in an outdoor setting, or the option of a virtual meeting. Allowing interviewees to choose the environment and mode most conducive to their participation demonstrated cultural sensitivity to EL parents.

Participating Interviewees

Each of the selected interviewees was invited by email to participate in this research (see email invitation in Appendix C). Multiple attempts were made via email to

include three participants for each stakeholder group of parents of ELs, rural public school educators, and rural county public librarians for various perspectives. After participants agreed to be interviewed, they were given the choice of either Google Meet or an in-person interview, and they determined the date and time of the interview. Prior to the interview, participants received an electronic copy of the interview protocol, as well as the Hamline-approved consent form for their signature. For the purpose of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of identifying participants and locations, the only identifiers for participants were letters and numbers for each group: Parents (P1), Educators (E1), Librarians (L1).

Because the primary research question focuses on improving the literacy of EL families, initial interviews were conducted with parents of EL students. Parents were selected based on their willingness to be interviewed and whether their participation was contingent upon their need for an interpreter or translator. Parents interviewees represented two different language backgrounds to adequately reflect the diversity of this rural community. Data collected from this primary set of participants informed and determined interview questions for rural public school educators and rural county public librarians.

After parent interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded, that data was used to determine some interview questions for rural public elementary school educators. These educators included a classroom teacher, an EL teacher, and a literacy coach in the rural school district. I selected three educator participants based on their experience with EL families, and willingness to be interviewed for this research.

Finally, I selected two rural county public librarians to be interviewed. These individuals included librarians from the county public libraries in closest geographic proximity to the rural community. Given the population density of this rural area, public librarians from different counties participated in the interviews to best represent the patron demographics. As a gesture of gratitude upon completion of each interview, a gift card of \$25 was offered to all interviewees for their participation.

Data Collection Methods and Tools

Data Collection Sequence and Timeline

Data collection began with parent interviews, followed by transcribing and coding. This data analysis informed subsequent interview questions for rural public elementary school educators. In turn, the responses from the educator interviews were transcribed and coded to compare and contrast themes against the parent data. These results directed the focus of some questions for the county public librarians as the final group of interviews. Upon completion, the librarian responses were transcribed and coded to compare and contrast with the previously collected data. Follow-up interviews were not needed with the parents of EL students previously interviewed.

The timeline for the interviews, including transcribing and coding, was four weeks. In the interest of gathering data within a specific time period, I scheduled consecutive interviews with each stakeholder group (parents, educators, librarians) to ensure the interviews were conducted as seamlessly as possible to achieve an accurate ethnographic snapshot of the community.

Interview Protocols

Interview questions were open-ended for participant responses. Questions were carefully written so as not to lead interviewees to preconceived ideas from the researcher. Several questions were repeated for each of the interviewee categories; other questions evolved based on responses by parents. Interviews consisted of no more than seven questions, with the opportunity for interviewees to add any comments following the predetermined questions to ensure consistency and efficacy. Complete interview protocols for parents can be found in Appendix D, for educators in Appendix E, and for library staff in Appendix F.

The Wilder CFI (as cited in Mattessich & Johnson, 2018) was adapted into appropriate interview questions for this research. The CFI provides 44 statements about collaboration factors rated by members of a group. Collaboration factors related to environment, membership, process, communication, purpose, and resources are included in the inventory. Interview data was analyzed for responses related to the six factors of successful collaboration. An excerpt from the inventory can be found in Appendix G.

Data Analysis

The analysis of interview data occurred as each group of interviews was completed. After the parent interviews, data was transcribed and coded, then analyzed for specific needs identified by EL families to improve literacy. Analysis focused on barriers observed and/or experienced by the parents of EL families, as well as possible solutions to these barriers. Based on the analysis of the parent data, some of the interview questions for educators and librarians were changed to more accurately reflect literacy needs and

barriers identified by parents. Upon completion of all interviews, the data from the transcripts was coded for the categories of meaning and factors of successful collaboration to facilitate the implications of the findings.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of this research included researcher bias, accessibility related to virtual interviews (conducted via Google Meet), and cultural factors specific to the parent interviews. The research took place in the rural community where I reside, work, and volunteer. While this is an advantage for rural research, it required me to be objective during the interviews. For those interviewees who chose a virtual interview, I needed to monitor participant body language and gestures via this platform that may indicate response hesitancy. Interviews with participants from EL families required cultural sensitivity from me to be respectful of time, questions, and responses from individuals.

Delimitations of this study included two different language groups from the rural community. I chose these groups based on common languages of EL students in the rural school district. Another delimitation was the time involved to interview participants in the roles of parents of ELs, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians. After the parent interviews, I needed to take the necessary time to transcribe, code, and analyze that data to incorporate those results into the modified questions for the subsequent interviews with educators and librarians.

Institutional Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board approval was received on July 11, 2022, from the Hamline University IRB. The Hamline University Informed Consent to Participation in

Research form was provided to interview participants for their signatures prior to interviews, as well as a copy of the approved protocol questions for three specific categories of participants: parents of ELs, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an outline of the research design for this study. I determined that qualitative research, specifically grounded theory using data from interviews with stakeholders in the community, was most effective to show the results of the research. I analyzed the interview data to reveal shared themes identified by each of the three groups of interviewees: parents of EL families, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians. Chapter 4 describes the data collection methods, the data analysis process, and the summary of results for each stakeholder group. These authentic perspectives are explained through categories of meaning, then compared and analyzed to uncover common themes that emerged from participant responses. The results provide data for implications of future collaboration between parents of EL families, public elementary schools, and county public libraries for the purpose of improving literacy for EL families in rural communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to obtain authentic data via interviews from stakeholders in one rural community to inform future collaboration between public elementary schools and county public libraries on behalf of EL families with the intention of improving literacy. The primary research question is: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* Each of these questions directed the research data collection and coding methodology that were central to the data analysis process.

Chapter 4 describes the data collection methods, the data analysis process, and the summary of results. I chose a qualitative research design focused on collecting data in the form of words to discover a naturally occurring phenomenon. Specifically, grounded theory methodology requires the researcher to collect data from a variety of perspectives, compare and analyze the data until categories of information present a central theme or theory, and then explain the social and historical conditions of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Interviews were purposefully conducted in this specific order: parents of ELs first; rural public elementary school educators second; rural county public librarians third. Parents of ELs were interviewed first to ensure that their

perspectives were prioritized as the foundation of the research. After parent interviews were completed, transcribed, and coded, interview questions for rural public elementary school educators were modified to address specific barriers identified by parents. Educator interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded immediately upon completion. Finally, interviews with rural county public librarians were conducted with questions parallel to educator questions, addressing specific barriers identified by parents. Librarian interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded immediately upon completion. All interviews were completed over a two-week period in July and August of 2022. In this way, a variety of authentic perspectives were collected, then compared and analyzed, to uncover common themes within each group of participants.

Interview Results and Analysis

An overview of the interview methodology, including participant selection, interview procedures, questions addressed in the interview with individual responses, and coding methodology is provided here. For this study, interview analysis focused on meaning from the participant responses, and coding was concept driven (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Interview responses were described by narration for each category of participants. The results have been organized to reflect the responses from the parent participants first, then educator responses, and finally librarian responses. Some interview responses were presented as quoted excerpts to highlight categories of meaning with each question. Following these descriptions, common themes within each stakeholder group were identified. Participants were only identified by letter and number to maintain

anonymity: Parents (P1, P2); Educators (E1, E2, E3); Librarians (L1, L2). This chapter closes with a summary of the results.

Description of Parent Interviews

The parent interviews occurred with two parents of EL families. Each of the selected parents was invited by email to participate in this research. Multiple attempts were made via email to include a third parent from another home language; however, those email invitations resulted in no response. After the two parents agreed to be interviewed, they were given the choice of either Google Meet or an in-person interview, and they determined the date and time of the interview. Both parents opted for a virtual interview, and I sent a Google Meet invitation as agreed upon. Prior to the interview, participants received an electronic copy of the interview protocol for parents of ELs, as well as the Hamline-approved consent form for their signature.

Participants gave verbal permission to record the Google Meet for the sole purpose of recording the interview questions and responses only. As the researcher, I was purposeful to reassure participants that their privacy would be protected throughout the interview process, that no names or identifying locations would be included in transcripts, in addition to secure storage of the recorded Google Meetings. For the purpose of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of identifying participants and locations, the only identifiers for parent participants were P1 or P2.

In exchange for their time and willingness, each participant was offered a \$25 gift card and sent a personal thank-you note following the interview. I transcribed each interview using the recorded virtual meeting assisted by a voice typing tool. The

transcripts did not include names or locations in participant responses to maintain confidentiality; any name or location given was replaced with an X.

Parent Responses. The parent interview protocol consisted of seven open-ended questions. Parents were informed prior to recording the interview that they could pass or respond “no comment” should they feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions. The researcher’s role was to read each question aloud, and then respectfully listen to the full responses of each parent, with minimal interruptions or comments, unless the participant requested clarification of a question. The average amount of time for the recorded parent interviews was 14 minutes. The following paragraphs state each of the parent questions and summarize their responses.

Parent interview question one: *Please tell me about your family and the language(s) you speak at home.* P1 responded that she is a first-generation Hmong American from immigrant parents, fluent and literate in Hmong. Her husband was a Hmong immigrant as a young child, is fluent in Hmong although not literate in Hmong. Both parents were educated in Minnesota and taught their children Hmong at home from birth. The children learned English from cousins and in school, yet prefer to speak English when talking with their parents or grandparents. P2 responded that she and her husband grew up in Minnesota from immigrant parents, and they speak mostly English and some Spanglish, which she defined as English and Spanish together, at home. The children understand some Spanish from communication with grandparents, and speak mostly English at home. Similarities of P1 and P2 responses included learning English as

their second language as children of immigrants, or first-generation Americans, and being active with their extended families.

Parent interview question two: *How could public schools help bilingual families like yours to improve reading and writing skills in your home language and in English?*

P1 responded that schools could integrate the cultural traditions of ELL families in the curriculum and throughout the school to encourage more parent involvement, and also offer bilingual stories and activities to enhance reading and writing skills. She mentioned the previous urban school district for her children focused on cultural traditions and activities, which the children and parents enjoyed. P2 responded that if schools did not have bilingual staff, they could offer immersion or Spanish classes starting in pre-K or at a young age. She suggested having a writing class at school for bilinguals would be helpful. Both P1 and P2 suggested that schools could provide more bilingual opportunities to improve literacy for their families. These parent responses provided information to answer the primary research question regarding improving literacy of EL families.

Parent interview question three: *How often does your family use the county public library? What kinds of materials or activities does your family use most?* P1 responded that her family had not been to the county public library in the two years they have lived in rural Minnesota. P2 responded that she had searched for the nearest library, got a library card, and found some books for her children. They go to a small local library when her husband is home with the car and hope to go more often. Both P1 and P2 stated that their families moved into the rural school district within the past two years during the

pandemic, when libraries were closed to the public. Similarly, they shared memories of frequently visiting their previous urban neighborhood libraries that had bilingual staff, materials, and activities.

Parent interview question four: *How could the county public library help bilingual families to use the library more?* P1 responded that the library could offer a more diverse selection of books, stories, and movies from different cultures and countries. She recommended bilingual storytime with authors that speak the same language or have the same cultural background as their diverse communities. P2 responded that there were no Spanish speakers at the library to help families look for books, and the library did not have the Spanish books they wanted. P2 recommended a computer to use with Spanish language options or a translator through the phone to help families learn the organization of the library system. Once again, P1 and P2 both spoke of their previous urban neighborhoods where the library had bilingual staff and bilingual materials available.

Parent interview question five: *What challenges or barriers make it difficult for bilingual families to use the local public library?* P1 responded with many barriers, including unfamiliarity with where county public libraries are located in the area, feeling unwelcome or unsafe in certain spaces, no diversity of library staff, language barriers because the library staff does not speak the same language as the patrons, library accessibility and transportation issues for rural public libraries miles apart, and limited library hours. P2 responded with the language barriers between library staff and families, difficulty understanding the library system and where things are in the library, not

knowing how to look for activities, and transportation as a problem in rural areas. Common to P1 and P2, the language barrier was the biggest barrier, followed by transportation, and then unfamiliarity with the library system. All parent-identified barriers were used for interview questions with educators and librarians and directly informed the secondary research questions.

Parent interview question six: *What suggestions do you have to remove or lessen those barriers?* P1 offered several suggestions in response to the barriers she mentioned, including libraries creating a welcoming and safe space, hiring more library staff of color who speak the same language as patrons, helping families navigate the library system, providing access to resources for the communities, and offering a wide range of library hours for working families. P2 gave these suggestions for the barriers she noted, such as offering tours or classes to teach people to use the library system, having a computer or phone translator for parents that do not speak English, having signs with different languages at the door, and having a central place in the community where families could drop off books to avoid late fees. Both P1 and P2 responded quickly with these suggestions, with specific concerns for parents who do not speak English. Parent suggestions for overcoming the barriers directly informed the secondary research questions.

Parent interview question seven: *Is there anything else you would like me to know?* P1 and P2 responded to this last question similarly, with positive memories from their own childhoods using the library frequently in their urban neighborhoods. Both recounted good memories with family and friends at the library, especially during the

summer, and wanting to spend time at their local library. They each reiterated that their children enjoyed their previous library experiences in their urban locations and hoped they could provide that for them again in the new rural area. They each acknowledged that as bilingual speakers, they do not have as much difficulty using libraries as some parents that only speak their home language.

Coding and Categorizing of Parent Responses. Each of the parent interview questions connected to these specific research questions: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities? What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* These research questions provided the following keywords for concept-driven coding and categorizing by interpreting the meaning of the parent interview responses: EL families, literacy, libraries, schools, rural communities, barriers. The order of the open-ended parent interview questions was carefully considered, starting with a general family question to elicit personal experiences unique to the participant's family, then moving to a literacy question regarding schools, and finally, library-related questions. The final question provided participants with the opportunity to add information to the overall interview or to clarify anything previously stated. Each of the parent interview questions addressed one of the keywords, which directed me to develop categories of meanings from the parent responses.

The analysis process of the parent interview transcriptions involved repeated readings and codings for each question. The first reading of the entire interview was to

gain a sense of the whole. With additional readings of responses for each question, natural meaning units became apparent. This process included highlighting specific responses from each parent and similar answers from both, creating a meaning condensation chart organized by each interview question to compare and contrast both transcripts (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The chart allowed the researcher to take meanings expressed in the interviews and rephrase them with a few words, noting questions as needed. The blank coding chart for parent interview responses can be found in Appendix H.

From the simplified chart notes, categories of meanings for parent responses led to the discovery of overall themes for parents of ELs. The categories are presented in the next section in relation to how they developed from the interviews. The categories of meanings with quoted excerpts from the parent transcripts are presented for each interview question. Excerpts are direct quotes from the interviews, with explanations to give context to the quotations. Finally, descriptions of common themes that emerged overall from the parent interview responses are summarized in this next section.

Categories and Excerpts of Parent Responses. Parent question one: *Please tell me about your family and the language(s) you speak at home.* The two categories of meanings from this question are family and language.

P1 stated:

We have five children. When they were first born, Hmong is the primary language that we taught them. English is our second language, it is actually my children's

primary preferred spoken language. I feel like they seem to have lost their Hmong somehow.

This quote from P1 expresses her family background and the decision to teach her children Hmong at home. In contrast, P2 replied, “We are four in the family. Our languages at home that we speak mainly is English. Here and there we will speak Spanish, usually Spanglish, English and Spanish together.” P2 has made a different choice in using English more at home. These family decisions as to which language(s) to speak at home with their children are an important part of the first generation of immigrants.

Parent question two: *How could public schools help bilingual families like yours to improve reading and writing skills in your home language and in English?* The category of meaning from this question is schools helping to promote literacy in the home language and English. P1 shared these ideas from her previous experiences, saying, “I think that schools can definitely integrate our cultural traditions, you know of ELL families throughout the school, if there are resources, like offer bilingual stories and activities to enhance reading and writing skills.” P2 had a different viewpoint, specifically for writing. “I feel like for writing skills at home, like maybe helping the students do it at school, having a class I don't know or like a 30-minute session for those bilingual.” These parent suggestions are extremely valuable to this research, since parents may not otherwise be consulted by schools for their important input.

Parent question three: *How often does your family use the county public library? What kinds of materials or activities does your family use most?* The categories of

meaning for this question are library usage and library materials. These parent responses provide a baseline of library experiences for EL families for this research.

P1 readily acknowledged:

So since moving out here, honestly we have not been to a public library out here you know. When we moved out during the middle of the pandemic, so a lot of places were still closed and so we have not utilized any of the county public libraries out here.

P2 has had limited experience with a county public library. “This year we went and I started searching where the library was because X wanted to get some magazine kind of looking books, and we opened a library card, and the library is smaller over here.” These comments were made honestly, given the limitations due to the pandemic and traveling through rural areas as compared with the families’ previous urban neighborhoods.

Parent question four: *How could the county public library help bilingual families to use the library more?* The category of meaning for this question is libraries helping bilingual families. Speaking from her personal experience, P1 said, “I think by offering a diverse selection of books, stories, and movies and different cultures, different countries, offer bilingual storytime.” However, P2 was concerned about the language needs of some patrons, saying, “I feel like, I don't know, maybe having a specific Spanish computer somewhere. I know it's a lot but I feel like it would help or like a translator through the phone.” These creative ideas address the realistic needs of the bilingual community and provide a pathway for improving library usage.

Parent question five: *What challenges or barriers make it difficult for bilingual families to use the local public library?* The category of meaning from this question is barriers. This parent question is pivotal in the research and most important to this study. P1 replied, “The language barrier, that's huge or there's no staff that speak the same language. I think that depending on where the libraries are, feeling unwelcome or unsafe in certain communities and space.” This response highlights real challenges for bilingual families, according to this parent. P2 highlighted another considerable barrier in non-urban areas, saying, “Like I said for me is it right now it's hard I don't have transportation to the library.” These are just some of the barriers that were identified, and each is equally important to the families.

Parent question six: *What suggestions do you have to remove or lessen those barriers?* The category of meaning for this question is solutions. P1 gave possible solutions to another named barrier. “Hire more staff of color who speak the same language to possibly help families navigate the library system because not a lot of people know or maximize the use of the library.” P2 asked about another solution to this common problem, “Do they have like tours or like classes for people to help you read how to find books?” Both parents were prepared to give solutions, confidently sharing their opinions.

Parent question seven: *Is there anything else you would like me to know?* The category of meaning that emerged for this last open-ended question was childhood memories.

P1 shared:

I wish we used more libraries like how I did growing up. Using myself as an example, you know we lived in the urban area, there's a library like not even a mile maybe two blocks away. As a kid there was no social media, no electronics and so the library was it. You know me that's all we did was we spent from the crack of dawn like the opening hours to the closing hours inside of the library and read every book that we could get our hands on.

P2 added her own fond memory, saying, “When I was younger I would go to the library to use like the internet, hang out with my friends.” These final comments were organic, and surprisingly similar for both parents. P2 had this last encouraging thought to share, “I feel like you know don't let it stop you from going to the library.”

In addition to the categories of meanings from each parent question, there were several themes that emerged specifically from parent responses. One theme was the cultural pride of the family and a desire to maintain the language, traditions, and history of each family, in knowing where they came from, while at the same time recognizing the need to adopt the American culture and English language. The EL families are the focus group of this study, as stated in the primary research question.

Another theme was the parents' priority of educational opportunities for their children, wanting them to have all they had and so much more for the next generation. This theme connects to the primary and secondary research questions. A third theme highlights that the families have chosen to live in a rural community, requiring adaptability within the new area, especially during a pandemic. The rural community is the named setting of the study. These overall themes became evident following the

in-depth analysis process and after listening to the entire, uninterrupted interviews a final time by the researcher.

Description of Educator Interviews

The rural public elementary school educator interviews were conducted with three participants. Each of the selected educators was invited by email to participate in this research. After the three educators agreed to be interviewed, they were given the choice of either Google Meet or an in-person interview, and they determined the date and time of the interview. All educators opted for a virtual interview, and I sent a Google Meet invitation as agreed upon. Prior to the interview, participants received an electronic copy of the rural public school educator interview protocol, as well as the Hamline-approved consent form for their signature.

Participants gave verbal permission to record the Google Meet specifically for the interview questions and responses. As the researcher, I took care to reassure participants that their privacy would be protected throughout the interview process, that their names and identifying locations would not be included on transcripts, and that the Google Meet recordings would be securely stored. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, E1, E2, and E3 were used as the only educator identifiers.

In exchange for their time and willingness, each participant was offered a \$25 gift card and sent a personal thank-you note following the interview. I transcribed each interview using the recorded virtual meeting assisted by a voice-typing tool. The transcripts did not include names or locations in participant responses to maintain confidentiality; any name or location was replaced with an X.

Educator Responses. The rural educator interview protocol consisted of seven open-ended questions. Participants were informed prior to recording the interview that they were free to pass or respond with “no comment” if they felt uncomfortable answering any of the questions. The researcher’s role was to read each question aloud, and then respectfully listen to each participant’s full response without interruptions or comments, unless the participant requested clarification of a question. The average amount of time for the recorded educator interviews was 16 minutes, 30 seconds. The following paragraphs state each of the rural educator questions and summarize their respective responses.

Educator question one: *Please tell me about your role in the public elementary schools.* As an elementary literacy coach for teachers, E1 stated she is responsible for analyzing student assessment data and improving reading instruction at her school. E2 is an elementary school teacher responsible for teaching younger children directly, as well as co-teaching with other classroom teachers. Through translating and interpreting services, E2 facilitates active participation in public schools for EL families to ensure equitable access to school time. E3 is a general education classroom teacher of primary level students, with 20 years of experience in several districts. These are three different examples of educator roles in a rural public elementary school serving grades K-6; all three are employed by the same rural school district but not all teach at the same school.

Educator question two: *What has been your experience with English Learners (ELs) and bilingual families at your school?* While she does not work directly with students, E1 explained that she keeps ELs in mind when analyzing data to ensure the

language acquisition requirements are being met, recommending curriculum support or modifications to provide learning aids for content knowledge, academic language, and any intervention strategies that may be required as needed.

According to E2, her experience with EL families was largely positive, noting that parents are invested in their child's schooling and want the best education possible for them. She added that EL parents are highly respectful of their child's teacher, and any conflicts with families were due to misunderstandings of the public education system; she went on to note that parental involvement has increased significantly in the six years she has been teaching.

E3 shared a variety of experiences with EL families, Hmong, Spanish, and Somali-speaking families over the past 10 years. Given the language barriers, she emphasized the benefits of using interpreting services and how this has improved family communication and led to building stronger relationships between parents and educators. Her interactions with parents have been really positive, and she has found them to be good listeners, eager to participate in their child's education, and showing a high level of trust in teachers. All three educators responded positively to the question, despite their varied professional experiences with EL families. These educator responses informed the primary research question, which focuses on improving the literacy of EL families.

Educator question three: *To what extent do you use the county public library as an educator?* E1 frequently uses the county public library for educator resources, specifically mentioning ELM 4 You, BookFlix, and the interlibrary loan system. E2 has only used the county public library a few times to obtain additional resources outside of

the school's media center and as a neutral place to meet with families when requested. E3 is a frequent user of the county public library to supplement the school's media center resources, especially when seeking early reading materials on specific interest topics or additional resources on a content area unit. Educator usage of the county public library within these three situations varies greatly. They each identified county public library resources as supplemental to the public elementary school's media center resources readily available on site.

Educator question four: *What is the relationship between the public elementary school and the nearest county public library?* E1 remarked that the school district encompasses three counties rather than just one county, making its relationship with the local library system tricky. In most years, the county public libraries send her email communication about their summer learning programs, and she has forwarded that information on to teachers within the school.

E2 acknowledged that she is not aware of any relationship between the school district and county public library branches, other than seeing the libraries circulate flyers about the summer reading programs. She views the county public library as a separate entity from the school district, and teachers conduct themselves independently of the library's offerings, although she was pleased to see a library representative at a recent EL family night event.

E3 echoed E1's earlier observation regarding the fact that the district covers three counties and the libraries are responsible for sharing information regarding summer reading programs; the schools do not reach out to the libraries for these details. E3

expressed concern for the lack of library involvement with the schools during the school year and suggested more could be done to promote a collaborative relationship between the two. The reality that one rural school district comprises three counties, and consequently three county public library systems, is a challenging situation that requires specific attention in this research. These educator responses directly informed the primary research question regarding collaboration, which requires mutual efforts toward the establishment of a working partnership between the rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries.

Educator question five: *Parents of EL families that were previously interviewed have identified these barriers to using the county public library (including language barriers, transportation, work and family schedules, limited library hours, unfamiliarity with the library system, and unwelcoming or unsafe spaces). What possible solutions would you recommend to overcome these barriers? What resources would be needed in order to make that happen?* E1 suggested public elementary schools could serve as convenient drop-off locations for county public library books to help families avoid late fees for overdue books. She recommended writing a grant to request funding for additional transportation to and from the library. She also advocated for organizing a “welcome night” at the library as an opportunity for EL families to familiarize themselves with the library system, or a library field trip for the EL students and their EL teacher to facilitate an introduction to the library system with a familiar educator, and from there, introduce their families. E1 admitted she was surprised by the feelings of unwelcomeness

expressed by EL parents, proposing that multilingual signage be posted at library entrances to direct families to the appropriate resources or support services available.

E2 recognized the transportation barrier caused by the out-of-town location of the county public library and suggested the school district provide bus service between the schools and the library, or bring the library to the schools by offering school-sponsored pick-up and drop-off locations for library resources ordered online. She echoed the idea of a field trip for students and/or families or an EL family night with interpreters, liaisons, and educators to tour and experience the library together. She also recommended libraries order more books in different languages and have more signs translated to address the language barriers. E2 was sad to hear that some people do not see the library as a safe place and suggested more cultural training for library staff to teach them how to help people from different cultures.

E3 proposed that public elementary schools and county public libraries might build stronger relationships during the school year with co-taught lessons about using the library EL families at the schools. Like E2, she wondered if perhaps the school district could provide some bussing for families to go to the library. To address the language barrier, she suggested the library could offer more translators, interpreters, bilingual speaking services, and print mailings in different languages to inform families about what the library has to offer for internet and computer use, as well as other activities.

Each of the educators acknowledged the seriousness of the parent-identified barriers and wanted to provide solutions for the EL families. Limited resources within the rural school district and the added complexity of the three-county public library system

highlight real challenges as viewed by educators. These responses directly informed the secondary research questions regarding overcoming the barriers of using libraries for EL families.

Educator question six: *How could public elementary schools and county public libraries benefit from collaborating on behalf of EL families in our community?* E1 replied that the three county public libraries could coordinate with the EL teacher for families, possibly via school visits or videos to highlight what the library has to offer. Furthermore, she recognized how electronic resources offered through the libraries could benefit upper elementary students with research projects and suggested that an EL educator provide instruction to EL students about those resources.

E2 remarked that EL families would benefit from more books for school-age children, as well as consistent access to the internet and printing available at the library, where students can complete their homework. She believes that having a safe and interactive public library builds a stronger sense of community. E3 responded that collaboration between the library system and school district would strengthen educators' EL family connections, create a safer space, and make it easier for students to trust adults and feel comfortable asking for help. She views collaboration as 100% positive, making it better for specific needs, and ensuring a more positive learning experience for all involved.

Overall, these educators agreed that mutual effort between the school district and library system would be positive, helpful, and strengthen relationships with EL families. While willing to be part of the process moving forward, they hesitated to initiate the

collaboration themselves. These educator responses directly informed the primary research question of collaboration as a means to improve literacy for EL families.

Educator question seven: *Is there anything else you would like me to know?* E1 emphasized that the foundational principle here is relationship building, and face-to-face interactions are needed, wondering if flyers and email communication are really reaching the EL families. E2 added that she is willing to help build that connection between public elementary schools and county public libraries, although she stated that the libraries need to do more. E3 replied that it was good to hear from the families and sought to find solutions specific to the EL community. These final comments ended the interviews with hope for future collaboration and aimed to provide successful connections for everyone involved. The question remains as to who will initiate and be responsible for the relationships and collaborations between families, schools, and libraries.

Coding and Categorizing of Educator Responses. Each of the educator interview questions contributed valuable qualitative data responses to these specific research questions: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities? What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* By interpreting the meaning of the educator interviews, these research questions provided keywords for concept-driven coding and categorizing: EL families, literacy, libraries, schools, rural communities, barriers, and collaboration. The order of the educator questions was carefully considered, starting with general questions that established the

educator's role and experiences with bilingual families and then moving on to questions about their use of the county public library and the relationship between the public elementary schools and county public libraries.

Next, the educators responded to questions about specific barriers previously identified by EL parents as a means of exploring possible solutions and resources to address and overcome the underlying issues central to this research. Educators were also questioned about the benefits of collaboration between public elementary schools and county public libraries for EL families. The final question gave participants the opportunity to add information to the overall interview or to clarify anything previously stated. Each of the educator interview questions addressed one of the keywords, which directed the researcher to develop categories of meaning from educator responses.

Analysis of the educator interview transcriptions involved repeated readings and codings for each question. The first reading of the entire interview was to gain a sense of the overall content. Additional readings of each question's responses began to reveal natural meaning units. This process included highlighting specific details from each educator, as well as similar answers from all three, creating a meaning condensation chart organized by each interview question to compare and contrast all three transcripts (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The chart allowed me, as the researcher, to take meanings expressed in the interviews and rephrase them with a few words, noting questions for further clarification or where appropriate. The blank coding chart for educator interview responses can be found in Appendix I.

From the simplified chart notes, categories of meaning within the educator responses led to the discovery of overall themes for educators. These categories are presented in this next section, in relation to how they developed from the interviews. The categories and excerpts from the educator transcripts are presented with each interview question. Excerpts are direct quotes from the educator interviews, with explanations to give context to the quotations. Finally, descriptions of common themes that emerged overall from the educator interview responses are summarized at the end of this section.

Categories and Excerpts of Educator Responses. Educator question one:

Please tell me about your role in the public elementary schools. The category of meaning from this question was role. E1 described her role this way: “I’m an elementary literacy coach, so I work in a K-6 building, and my job is to work with teachers, review data, and see what we can do to improve reading instruction in the schools.” This role is unique to the district, providing support directly to public elementary school teachers as a means to improve literacy for all students. E2 gave this reply: “I am an English Learner teacher at a K-3 public elementary school. My role comprises multiple facets of teaching students, working with teachers, and co-teaching.” This role involves first-hand experience with bilingual students, interacting directly with ELs and teachers within the school. E3 explained her role as follows: “In terms of educating students, most of my experience is first and second grade. I have about 15 years experience.” This general education classroom teacher has daily interaction with EL students in her homeroom. While all three participants are educators, their roles determine how they directly or indirectly

impact the education of their elementary school students, as well as how they interact professionally with each other at school, for example, when co-teaching ELs.

Educator question two: *What has been your experience with English Learners (ELs) and bilingual families at your school?* The category of meaning from this question was experience with EL families. E1 provided this overview of her approach and objective. “I look at EL data to make sure that students, their data make sense where they are on their journey of language acquisition, and whether our instruction is meeting their needs.” For this educator, school-wide progress data from standardized assessments provides a snapshot of EL literacy skills. E2 has had positive experiences as an EL educator, stating with excitement, “I have found that my families, as in bilingual families or English Learners, are so invested in their students, they want the best for their students.”

E3 shared a similar sentiment about working with EL families:

I would have to say almost all of my interactions with the parents have been really positive, and you know these are parents that want to be a part of their child's learning, they want to know what you're doing in the classroom, but at the same time they trust you.

Despite challenges related to communication limitations, these educators agreed that EL families want to be involved in their child's education. These responses were not specific to or indicative of cultural bias or language. Independently of each and unprompted, all three educators referred to the parents of EL students as supportive and engaged stakeholders in the literacy of their family's next generation.

Educator question three: *To what extent do you use the county public library as an educator?* The two categories of meaning from this question were use of county libraries and materials. While the three educators used the library and its materials to varying degrees, each had some experience with it. E1 said, “I use the ELM 4 You service so I get professional articles, books that I need. I use the interlibrary loan system if I need a professional book.” She sees these kinds of materials as useful for coaching teachers.

E2 answered, “I have gone to the public library to check out books that were not available at our school library if I needed an additional copy or something.” She uses the county public library as an additional resource to supplement the standard educator materials provided for student use and classroom lessons.

E3 consistently uses materials from the county public library: “I’m really just trying to get a lot of resources and fun books for the kids to just really fall in love with and have that joy for reading at school.” This educator is clearly passionate about literacy and her vocation and has the desire to pass her love on to her students. As evidenced by the range of responses, educators have specific needs and reasons for seeking out library resources, and these three indicated they might use their county public library more in the future for their students and colleagues. Each acknowledged individual responsibility to educate themselves about the resources available at their rural county public library, as well as those available within their own smaller school media centers.

Educator question four: *What is the relationship between the public elementary school and the nearest county public library?* The category of meaning from this question was relationship. “I think the want is there, and I think the willingness is there, but it’s

like we need to establish an avenue of communication and opportunities in order for people to take advantage of it.” Here, E1’s statement reflects the general interest and openness within the educator community to develop more substantial relationships with local library stakeholders while acknowledging the need to make more of an effort to improve communication in pursuit of that outcome. E2 expressed the institutional dynamic well. “It kind of seems like the library is its own entity, and we are doing our own thing at school.” County public libraries and public school districts are two distinct and separate systems, and there is little interaction or activity between them to facilitate their collaboration and integration. E3 confirmed this: “I don’t hear so much about the public libraries being involved, not as much during the school year.” While there is potential for a stronger relationship between the rural public elementary school and the rural county public library, neither one is actively pursuing collaboration beyond existing summer programs.

Educator question five: *Parents of EL families that were previously interviewed have identified these barriers to using the county public library (including: language barriers, transportation, work and family schedules, limited library hours, unfamiliarity with the library system, unwelcoming or unsafe space). What possible solutions would you recommend to overcome these barriers? What resources would be needed in order to make that happen?* Several categories of meaning that came from this question were barriers, solutions, and resources.

E1 addressed the barrier of EL parents feeling unwelcome at the library, saying, “One thing that surprised me was the unwelcoming feeling and I can kind of see how that

would happen,” and went on to offer a possible solution, “I think we could probably do a better job of having a more welcoming entrance, like multilingual signage or something like ‘this person is here to help you.’” She did not elaborate on who might be responsible for creating the signage or how it would be paid for, however.

E2 had another approach to this parent-identified barrier. “I also wonder if our elementary schools could do field trips to the library at least so students can experience the building, and maybe we can invite parents to come too and tour the library together, would be super fun!” While this may be a viable option, the logistics of scheduling and paying for this idea were not provided.

E3 gave a solution for the transportation barrier, saying:

I think of transportation, wouldn't it be really cool if the district could come up with something ... almost like a huge minivan bus ... one day a week or if you can call and make an appointment or a reservation on this day at this time, is someone willing to take my family and I to the library?

This solution was inspired after E3 saw a district preschool program bus at a park one day, and she wondered if the bus could be used to transport families to the library. Each of the educators was prepared with responses to the parent-identified barriers and gave possible solutions to particular barriers. All educators were willing to participate in finding solutions to improve the situations for EL families in this rural area, although none offered to lead the efforts.

Educator question six: *How could public elementary schools and county public libraries benefit from collaborating on behalf of EL families in our community?* One

category of meaning from this question was the benefits of collaboration. All three educators acknowledged positive effects for EL families in several ways.

E1 mentioned this:

I think that EL teachers would have to coordinate that connection and figure out a way to have the kids either meet or have them come visit our schools or something like that so that bridge can be made so they see a familiar face.

One designated county public librarian could partner with one designated public elementary educator to facilitate this collaborative effort between the two institutions on behalf of ELs.

E2 believes public library and public school collaboration is worth the effort. She went on to remark on the need for a wider multilingual library book selection:

Ultimately the families would benefit the most and that books would be more accessible, and especially with children and we all know how important it is for children to be reading on their own or listening or hearing stories and that would benefit school-age children reading at home, it's going to make our jobs a lot easier.

E3 gave this perspective: "I think you know it's important for kids to see we're all working together, we're all helping support each other, we're on the same team, we're all trying to do what's best for kids, we're all trying." To improve literacy for EL students, collaboration between educators and librarians will require time and commitment. These educators have expertise in specialized areas of elementary education and within the

broader school community, so they are already expected to use their individual strengths to complement their colleagues' strengths for the benefit of their students' education.

Educator question seven: *Is there anything else you would like me to know?* These quotes were categorized with meanings previously identified. E1 added the following comment about relationships: "I think it's that interaction, face-to-face interaction, is what we need in order to really build a bridge." E2 shared her thoughts on collaboration, "I kind of think that this change or this building of connection between the schools and libraries, right now at least, needs to come from the libraries in my opinion." E3 enthusiastically promoted collaboration between educators and librarians: "I would love to see more of a presence of the public libraries in our schools. I would love to see collaboration. I would love to see my students there." These final remarks show the desire for personal interactions with parents, educators, and library staff.

In addition to the categories of meaning from each educator question, there were several themes specific to educator responses. One theme that emerged was the importance of relationships, among families, educators, and community members. Relationships are vital for effective collaboration efforts in support of EL student literacy, specifically between EL families, rural public elementary schools, and rural public libraries, the stakeholders named in the primary research question.

Another theme that addresses the secondary research questions was related to the sense of educator responsibility for acknowledging the reality of current barriers identified by EL parents while searching for reasonable solutions within their rural community. Given that these experienced educators have chosen to teach in rural

communities, the named setting of this research study, it is clear that their priority is to provide the best education possible to rural public school students, knowing there are limited resources and funding available to them. These broader themes emerged following the initial in-depth analysis process and were further solidified after I, the researcher, listened to the entire, uninterrupted set of interviews a final time.

Description of Librarian Interviews

The librarian interviews occurred with two participants. Each of the selected librarians were invited by email to participate in this research. Multiple attempts were made via email to include a third librarian from another county; however, those email invitations resulted in no response. After the two librarians agreed to be interviewed, they were given the choice of either Google Meet or an in-person interview, and they determined the date and time of the interview. Both librarians opted for a virtual interview, and the researcher sent a Google Meet invitation as agreed upon. Prior to the interview, participants received an electronic copy of the rural county librarian interview protocol as well as the Hamline-approved consent form for their signature.

Participants gave verbal consent to record the Google Meet solely for the purpose of digitally capturing the interview questions and responses. They were reassured throughout the interview process that their privacy would be protected, that no names or identifying locations would be included in transcripts, and that the recorded Google Meet would be securely stored. To further maintain anonymity and confidentiality, L1 and L2 were the only identifiers for library participants.

In exchange for their time and willingness, each participant was offered a \$25 gift card and sent a personal thank-you note following the interview. As the researcher, I transcribed each interview using the recorded virtual meeting assisted by a voice typing tool. The transcripts did not include names or locations in participant responses to maintain confidentiality; any name or location given was replaced with an X.

Librarian Responses. The librarian interview protocol consisted of six open-ended questions. Participants were informed prior to recording the interview that they were free to pass or respond with “no comment” if they felt uncomfortable answering any of the questions. The researcher’s role was to read each question aloud, and then respectfully listen to each participant’s full response without interruptions or comments, unless the participant requested clarification of a question. The average amount of time for the recorded librarian interviews was 16 minutes. Each of the rural librarian questions is stated in the following paragraphs, along with a summary of their respective responses.

Librarian question one: *Please tell me about your role in the county public library system.* L1 is a branch librarian at one rural county public library, which is part of a consolidated system serving six rural counties in Central Minnesota. In this role, she oversees all aspects of the library, including resource management, circulation operations, collection maintenance, and staff supervision. She is also responsible for helping patrons locate materials and use library resources, as well as implementing all-ages programming and community outreach. L2 responded similarly, describing his role as a branch librarian in a different rural area library. L2 is responsible for the daily operation of the library and

also implements library programming for all ages. Both librarians work in rural communities, with responsibilities to the patrons as well as the library system, and in their respective remarks, each individually mentioned the superior quality of service that rural county public librarians are expected to provide their communities.

Librarian question two: *During your employment at the library, what has been your experience with English Learners (EL) and their bilingual families in this community?* According to L1, she has fairly limited experience interacting with ELs, given the predominantly white demographic of her rural community. She had occasionally used her limited Spanish and Google Translate to help bridge the language gap when a patron did not speak English. L2 replied that he had seen a few (bilingual) families, namely Spanish speakers, who were looking for materials in Spanish. He informed them that there were not a lot of (bilingual) resources at that location, so he encouraged them to use the library databases to search for materials in Spanish or English within the library system. While both rural librarians had limited interactions with non-English speaking patrons, they both were willing to help as much as possible, each utilizing different technological tools to assist patrons. Since the primary research question names EL families as a stakeholder, the librarian responses directly informed this part of the research question in the rural county public library setting.

Librarian question three: *What is the relationship between this county public library and the nearest public elementary school?* In L1's community, there was one public elementary school about a mile away from the county public library, which was close enough for some first-grade classes to walk over from the school in the spring for a

tour. She said the library has reopened after being closed for much of the pandemic period, and students can once again sign up for a library card and learn about the summer reading program as a way to build literacy and encourage continued learning. While there are no formal partnerships between the county public library and the one public elementary school, L1 said the two institutions have worked together to some extent in the past, such as collaborations with community education staff to distribute summer program flyers to the elementary classrooms. She has established relationships with teachers when they come to the library or if she happens to visit the school. During the busy school year, it is difficult to get the attention of educators and other staff, so L1 admitted that she waits for teachers to interact with or show interest in visiting the library or using its resources before engaging the school in specific activities or initiatives.

L2 expressed his commitment to improving the library's relationship with the school district, but unfortunately, pandemic restrictions over the past two-plus years have interfered with his proactive efforts to facilitate more face-to-face interactions with students and educators, as visits between the school and library were not permitted until recently. Earlier this year, before the schools closed for summer vacation, second-grade students walked from the school about a mile over to the library for a tour and to learn about the summer programs. L2 believes that building a relationship with the local public elementary school is crucial to promoting literacy and continued learning in the community, especially during the summer months when the county public library can help both teachers and students by ensuring school-age children have books to read at home while school is out. Both librarians expressed their interest in developing a more

collaborative relationship with educators at the local public elementary school, acknowledging that the majority of limitations imposed by the pandemic conditions were behind them, and they hoped to have more opportunities to work together on behalf of the students in the near future.

Given the busy schedules of public elementary school teachers and rural county public librarians, however, L1 and L2 had differing opinions regarding who should initiate this mutually beneficial partnership. These librarian responses directly relate to the collaboration portion of the research questions, specifically to establish and/or build upon a collaborative relationship between public elementary schools and county public libraries in a rural community.

Librarian question four: *Parents of EL families that were previously interviewed have identified barriers to using the county public library (including language barriers, transportation, work and family schedules, limited library hours, unfamiliarity with the library system, unwelcoming or unsafe space). What possible solutions would you recommend to overcome these barriers? What resources would be needed to make your suggestions happen?* L1 acknowledged the parents' valid concerns about language barriers and agreed this was an important consideration for rural libraries. She asserted that hiring bilingual staff is vital to helping ELs understand complicated library procedures, navigate library organization systems, and bridge the gap in communication to ensure ELs find the materials and activities they seek. In addition to teaching ELs how to use the library, bilingual library staff can develop and translate media releases, signage, and outreach materials that promote library programs and services in multiple languages,

although library capabilities in support of this effort can vary by community based on funding priorities and available resources. L1 added that the desire and intention to make the library an accessible space for all is more challenging in rural areas, where one librarian is responsible for all library operations. However, she maintained that every library has the ability to create a welcoming and safe space for all community patrons, since the library, by its nature, is intended for use and access by anyone in the general public. She recommended using displays, books, materials, and wall decor to represent a range of bodies and cultural experiences, and also advised it may be necessary to integrate cultural competence training into the library's diversity efforts.

L2 expressed how the parent-identified language barrier makes assisting EL patrons difficult when neither party can understand each other; he suggested that librarians learn key phrases in certain languages to facilitate basic communication. He recognized the importance of improving outreach to EL families in the community, and proposed inviting them to the library to promote the free library card and ensure they are aware of the value and benefit of their county public library system. Furthermore, if patrons do not live within walking distance of the library, and transportation is a problem, L2 wondered whether funding from the county could provide weekly rides for programming to address this barrier. He maintained the need for the county public library system to commit to providing more funding and resources for outstate communities with changing demographics. Both librarians provided some possible solutions to the language barriers in their community. Each viewed different barriers through their own rural librarian lens, yet both were hesitant to state what they could do specifically at their

respective locations to address, resolve, or mitigate these barriers. The librarian responses directly informed the secondary research questions regarding possible solutions to overcome the parent-identified barriers within their communities.

Librarian question five: *How could public elementary schools and county public libraries benefit from collaborating on behalf of EL families in our community?* L1 strongly stated that libraries could greatly benefit from public elementary schools with EL children in their classrooms. She suggested that libraries collaborating with public school EL staff is key to building and facilitating relationships, and by inviting ELs into the library to introduce how things work and that it is a safe space. She ended by saying that both libraries and schools could get more value out of collaboration by networking, resource sharing, and relationship building, and could greatly benefit from working together. L2 boldly stated that public libraries have a lot to offer families with summer programs, since children cannot go to the school media center during the summer. He recommended that families go to the library to get resources to help them become more fluent readers of English. L2 noted that lower-income families might not have much reading material at home, so it benefits families to have that collaboration between public schools and libraries. Both rural librarians recognized positive outcomes from collaboration between public elementary schools and county public libraries for different reasons. Whether during the summer and/or during the school year, increasing collaboration would benefit EL families at home, in schools, and in libraries. These librarian responses directly informed the primary research question regarding collaboration to improve, or benefit, the literacy of EL families in rural communities.

Librarian question six: *Is there anything else you would like me to know?* L1 reiterated that rural libraries are at a disadvantage due to fewer resources, and librarians have many different responsibilities. She claimed that it is challenging to meet the needs of the small EL population in the community, when libraries allocate more time and resources to higher priorities. She recognized that EL families are no less important, yet she finds it really difficult to meet those needs in her rural community. L2 added that he is looking forward to the library establishing a closer relationship with the elementary school and continuing to foster engagement from the summer programs. Each of these librarians expressed their differing opinions based on experiences at their specific rural locations.

Coding and Categorizing of Librarian Responses. Each of the librarian interview questions contributed valuable qualitative data responses connected to these specific research questions: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities? What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* These research questions provided keywords for concept-driven coding and categorizing by interpreting the meaning of the librarian interviews: EL families, libraries, schools, rural communities, barriers and collaboration. The order of the rural county librarian questions was carefully considered, starting with general questions that established the librarian's role and experiences with bilingual families, then moving on to questions about the relationships between the library and the schools. Next, the librarians

responded to questions about solutions and resources for specific barriers previously identified by EL parents and were also questioned about the benefits of collaboration between schools and libraries for EL families. The final question gave participants the opportunity to add information to the overall interview or to clarify anything previously stated. Each of the librarian interview questions addressed one of the keywords, which directed the researcher to develop categories from the responses.

The analysis process of the librarian interview transcriptions involved repeated readings and codings for each question. The first reading of the entire interview was to gain a sense of the overall content. Additional readings of each question's responses began to reveal natural meaning units. This process included highlighting specific responses from each librarian, as well as highlighting similar answers from all three, creating a meaning condensation chart organized by each interview question to compare and contrast both librarian transcripts (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The chart allowed me, as the researcher, to take meanings expressed in the interviews and rephrase them with a few words, noting questions for further clarification or where appropriate. The blank coding chart for librarian interview responses can be found in Appendix J.

From the simplified chart notes, categories of meaning within the librarian responses led to the discovery of overall themes for the librarians. The categories are presented in the next section, in relation to how they developed from the interviews. The categories and excerpts from the librarian transcripts are presented with each interview question. Excerpts are direct quotes from the librarian interviews, with an explanation of how that quote represents the participant. Finally, descriptions of common themes that

emerged overall from the librarian interview responses are summarized at the end of this section.

Categorizing and Excerpts of Librarian Responses. Librarian question one:

Please tell me about your role in the county public library system. The category of meaning from this question is role. L1 explained her all-encompassing role this way: “My role in that system is I manage one of the branch libraries in the community. What that role looks like is I oversee everything that goes on in the branch.” The role for L2 is similar: “I think a big part of any branch librarian, we do everything, but it's probably the programming, determining, I guess, what people would like to see here, and then try to arrange to have that type of program.” These excerpts from both librarians emphasize that the role of a rural librarian encompasses many responsibilities to the library system and to patrons of all ages in the community.

Librarian question two: *During your employment at the library, what has been your experience with English Learners (EL) and their bilingual families in this community?* The category of meaning from this question is experience with EL families. L1 has had limited experience with EL families, stating, “Because there is not a large percentage of non-English speakers in the community, I have not had that many interactions with them.” L2 concurred. “You know I really haven't seen a whole lot come in here, I've seen a little, and that probably has been Spanish speakers, and so they have asked for books that are printed in Spanish.” These librarian responses reflect the rural community's lack of diversity, as well as the low representation of EL families within the county public library system.

Librarian question three: *What is the relationship between this county public library and the nearest public elementary school?* The category of meaning from this question is relationship. L1 described it this way:

So we have one elementary school in our community. We don't have any formal community partnerships in place, like I haven't met or have relationships with the administrators at the school or anything like that. But we have worked together in the past. I know a handful of the teachers there, mostly just through organic relationships built in the public library.

This is one example of the informal relationship between the library system and EL families within this rural community. L2 gave a different perspective saying, "I have had second graders come to the library to tour it and find out what's available for them here so I'm hoping to build on that." Both librarians were interested in further collaboration based on their experiences with the school and summer programs in their rural communities. Neither explained how this mutual effort would specifically happen or what it would look like in practice.

Librarian question four: *Parents of EL families that were previously interviewed have identified barriers to using the county public library (including: language barriers, transportation, work and family schedules, limited library hours, unfamiliar with the library system, unwelcoming or unsafe space). What possible solutions would you recommend to overcome these barriers? What resources would be needed to make your suggestions happen?* The categories of meaning from this question are barriers, solutions, and resources.

L1 addressed the language barrier, with this possible solution:

I think bilingual staff is a bridge between those two groups, between public library systems and all of our resources and things and English language learners. Staff who can speak and communicate, can translate and can teach and they can bridge that gap between those two groups. I think as well as offering library publicity and library information in a variety of languages, so not just having the English you know welcome flyers in English but having it in Spanish or whatever language.

The feasibility of these solutions for the rural community is questionable due to limited resources and funding for county-based public libraries in Minnesota.

L2 addressed the transportation barrier, saying:

The transportation piece I know here if you don't live within walking distance, there's not a whole lot of families that do, that's a problem. I don't know what this library can do cuz I think we're really limited on funding or providing transportation, but perhaps the county could come up with some kind of solution, maybe once a week at least enable people to come in and use our resources and take advantage of our programming.

Once again, the solution is plausible, yet funding is limited in the rural community. Both librarians were understanding of the importance of the parent-identified barriers, though challenged by the reality of limited resources.

Librarian question five: *How could public elementary schools and county public libraries benefit from collaborating on behalf of EL families in our community?* The category of meaning from this question is the benefit of collaboration.

L1 gave this hopeful response:

Collaborating with the schools would be key, having public librarians work with the staff who works with the English Learners and just building relationships there, getting to know the kids a little bit, inviting English language learners to come to the public library and facilitating those relationships I think would be a wonderful way in getting those individuals into our library introducing them to this is how this works, we are safe space, and I think they would get more value out of it that way through the collaboration than them just walking through the doors and having to learn this big system.

L2 viewed this another way, stating:

Some of these lower-income families might not have a whole lot of reading material at home, and unfortunately, they can't go in the school media center during the summer. I think you could benefit them a lot to have that collaboration between the public schools and public libraries.

Each librarian had a different perspective on the benefits of collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries to improve EL family literacy within their respective rural county public library system and how that would be accomplished.

Librarian question six: *Is there anything else you would like me to know?*

L1 reiterated the unique situation in rural libraries:

Rural libraries are at a significant disadvantage because we don't have as many resources at our disposal, staff at least with the way that this library system is set up because staff wear so many hats is really challenging to meet the needs of this community.

L2 gave this hopeful answer: "I'm excited to you know start establishing a closer relationship with the school district. Look forward to being able to continue that." Both librarians took the opportunity to add to the interview with their final thoughts.

In addition to the categories of meanings from rural county public librarian questions, there were several themes specific to the librarian responses. One theme that emerged was the broad scope of the role of the branch librarian for their unique community needs. The rural librarian is responsible for the programming, materials, resources, and staff for all ages and patron needs, including the specific needs of EL families. Identifying the role of stakeholders in this rural setting is necessary to inform the primary research question.

Another theme that appeared in response to the parent-identified barriers was a new awareness of the needs of underserved communities and a renewed sense of responsibility to that small yet important part of their rural community. Giving specific attention to the EL residents in a rural community informed the primary research question that names EL families for this study.

A third theme that emerged was the desire for more collaboration with public elementary school teachers on behalf of ELs in the rural school district. This informed the

research questions that focus on the rural community setting. These librarians have chosen to work in rural communities and are genuinely interested in providing the best possible library resources and services to their patrons.

Summary

This study followed the qualitative research design of grounded theory methodology, which required the researcher to collect authentic interview data from a variety of perspectives to compare and analyze the data until categories of information presented themes. The primary research question is: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* Each of these questions directed the research data collection and coding methodology that were central to the data analysis process.

Chapter 4 described the data collection methods, which included interviews with parents of EL families, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians. Following each interview, transcripts were created by me from the recorded Google Meetings. The data analysis process involved coding participant responses for keywords from the interview questions. Through interpreting categories of meaning, I discovered overall themes for each of the stakeholder groups, which were then summarized.

Chapter 5 addresses the major learnings from this research and provides connections from Chapter 2, the literature review; it will also present implications of the study, limitations of the research, recommendations for future study, and plans for communicating and using the results.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter 5 describes the researcher's major learnings for this primary research question: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* An analysis of the authentic data collected from interviews with each of the stakeholder groups of the parents of EL families, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians, explains how the resulting themes and interrelationships inform the primary and secondary research questions. Empirical studies and other relevant citations in the literature review were consulted as references for interpreting the data. As the researcher, I present the underlying implications of the study, as well as acknowledge several limitations of the research. Lastly, I make recommendations for future study and provide plans for communicating and using the results.

Reflections on Major Learnings

Themes and Interrelationships

As the researcher, I interviewed a total of seven participants over a two-week period during the summer of 2022, including two bilingual parents of ELs, three rural public school educators, and two rural county public librarians from one rural community

and school district in Central Minnesota. Each stakeholder responded directly and honestly to open-ended questions from their unique perspectives and experiences in one rural community. Once all interviews for each stakeholder group were completed, transcribed, coded, and categorized for meanings, as discussed in Chapter 4, several overarching themes emerged beyond the literal interpretations of the interview data. As the researcher, and an employee of the rural school district setting within the study, as well as a resident of the same rural community, familiarity and understanding of the history, languages, culture, and people of the area was advantageous when interpreting the implied and inferential data collected from the research. The interrelated themes identified across the stakeholder groups included the importance of relationships, the shared responsibility of ensuring children receive a quality educational experience, and a willingness to work together as a community to overcome literacy barriers for EL families in the rural community.

The first theme, the importance of relationships, was apparent in each of the interviews, and woven throughout the responses from each participant group. Mutual respect is evident among the parents, educators, and librarians of the rural community, which is essential to building trust between them. Parents recalled their positive experiences with libraries as children, saying “we used to go to the library a lot” and “that's all we did was we spent from the crack of dawn like the opening hours to the closing hours inside of the library” and remembering “having a librarian come to class to our school.” In their interviews, educators stated that EL parents trust them, describing them as “invested in, wanting the best, gracious, good listeners, wanting to know, valuing

public education, and respecting and trusting teachers.” Educators acknowledged that “having a familiar face” such as an EL teacher and face-to-face interactions” with the parents of EL students would further facilitate the shared goal of creating “a learning experience together” with families, schools, and libraries in the rural communities. One educator wanted to “build a stronger relationship during the school year with the library and school.” Librarians also mentioned “relationships with teachers” and “working together in the past” as well as looking to the future by “striving to make that relationship better” in addition to noting that it is “critical, very important to see a relationship with a local school.” Parents, educators, and librarians all agree that constructive relationships between the respective stakeholder groups, as well as within each group, are crucial to the success of all three. The theme of relationships correlates with the objective of the primary research question and presents opportunities for collaboration between rural community stakeholders.

The second theme identified within the participant responses is the shared responsibility to provide culturally appropriate literacy learning for EL families. While each stakeholder interviewee expressed their best intentions of providing children with quality literacy learning, the data indicates they have differing perspectives on how to accomplish this goal. Parents are the first educators in a child’s life and arguably the most influential because they know their child best. The parent study participants requested more bilingual and culturally integrated resources for their children and specifically used phrases such as “bilingual stories and activities, cultural traditions to increase parent involvement, and immersion class” as recommendations to schools to improve literacy

for their children. In the classroom, educators have the privilege and responsibility of providing children with literacy learning opportunities. One educator recommended “modifying lessons or providing learning aids to connect to students’ prior knowledge and content knowledge” or providing specific interventions “for ELs to meet their literacy needs with phonics, content, and academic language.” Another educator suggested having “books more accessible for school-age children, and reading and hearing stories” both in school and at the library, also stating “libraries need to order more books in different languages, and signs need to be translated” for EL families. All educator participants mentioned that schools offered very limited bilingual resources and that “the school library has some resources” though not enough. Librarians have the additional responsibility to provide materials, resources, and programs suitable to the needs of the patrons in their specific community. One librarian acknowledged that there were “not a lot of (bilingual) resources at their location” and recommended that “Spanish speakers looking for materials in Spanish” use the library database to search for resources. Librarians strongly encouraged educators to promote EL family participation in summer literacy programs, saying, “especially during the summer to get books to kids to read at home” and to “work with community education to have summer reading program flyers sent to elementary classrooms.” Parents, educators, and librarians share responsibility for providing culturally appropriate EL literacy learning opportunities within their rural community.

The third interrelated theme observed in all participant responses was the willingness to work together to overcome barriers and improve literacy learning

opportunities for EL students. Parent interviews provided the most insight into the research questions by clearly identifying the barriers they have encountered with rural county public libraries, such as the “language barrier because the library staff don’t speak the same language as the patrons” and more specifically “no Spanish speakers to help parents” as well as noticing there was “no diversity of library staff.” Parents were honest about being “unfamiliar of where libraries are located” and the “lack of transportation to the libraries” due to “no bus lines,” adding that “Uber and Lyft were too expensive” with libraries “miles from home” and calling out “limited library hours for parent work schedules” in the rural area. Parent participants acknowledged that “families need help to navigate the library system” because they “don’t know how to look for a book or activities” and admit it is “hard to understand the alphabet system.”

Lastly, but certainly not least from the parents’ perspective, was the barrier of “feeling unwelcome or unsafe in certain communities.” Educator and librarian participants found this barrier to the EL families to be the most surprising and one they most wanted to address and change. Parent participants provided their personal viewpoints as qualitative solutions to each of the barriers. To address the language barrier, parents suggested that libraries “hire more library staff of color who speak the same language” or to offer on-site “a computer to switch languages or a translator through the phone.” To assist EL families with navigating the library system, parents suggested the county public library “offer tours or classes about libraries” so families could learn how the library is organized, alphabetized, and how the Dewey Decimal System works. To overcome the barrier of feeling unwelcome and unsafe in the library,

parents stated that libraries need to “create a welcoming and safe space“ which could also include “offering a wide array of hours.” Parents expressed a desire to allow their children more time at the library, remarking, “my kids loved the library when we used to go” and “we used to go to the library a lot” or “I wish we used more libraries like how I did growing up” as well as “hopefully we can make it to the library.” One parent repeated determinedly, “Don’t let it stop you from going to the library.”

Educator and librarian participants both acknowledged the need for and interest in being part of the solutions to overcome barriers, but they had differing views about who would implement the solutions and how they would be funded in rural areas. Educators made comments about how “it’s tricky because the district is spread over three counties” and “the library is its own entity.” They suggested possibly “writing a grant for bussing” or hiring “more translators, interpreters, bilingual speakers” to help EL families. From the librarians' perspective, “rural librarians wear so many different hats” and have to “do everything” in rural locations, and also acknowledged the issue of “limited funding” and “not as many resources.”

There is a strong interest in building upon the overarching themes across all stakeholder groups, which are the importance of relationships, providing the best education for the children, and the willingness to work together; and there is definitely potential for increased collaboration among the community stakeholders to facilitate the improvement of literacy for EL families in rural areas.

Multiple Solutions to Overcome Parent-Identified Barriers

Rural public elementary school educators and rural county public librarians provided different solutions to the parent-identified barriers. Educators suggested the following school-oriented ideas, such as “schools could have a drop-off for library books that would be convenient for families,” and schools could sponsor “field trips to the library so children can experience it and invite parents” or “one county library staff could come to school to pair up with one school staff for a presentation based on specific needs.” They also suggested library-related efforts, such as coordinating “a welcome night at the library” with the school’s EL teacher or organizing bookmobiles to “bring the library to the families,” as well as “more advertising of what the library has to offer and activities” to further engage county residents. Speaking from their public-school perspective, educators shared impressions of library resources and staffing, saying “libraries need training to learn how to work with lots of different people” and proposed posting “multilingual signage that people are here to help” to make bilingual families feel as welcome and safe at the library as they do at school. Many of the educator-proposed solutions to EL literacy barriers demonstrate a positive transfer of knowledge from the context of the rural public school system to the rural county public library system.

Librarians gave library-directed solutions to the parent-identified literacy barriers, such as “bilingual staff can teach users about the library system, and offer library publicity in a variety of languages” as a way to advocate for “developing cultural competency with the library staff.” One librarian acknowledged “needing a commitment from this library system to start providing more funding and resources for the changing

community” and anticipated that other barriers would need to be addressed at the county level since local governments are responsible for funding and administering public library services in Minnesota. They went on to suggest that a “county solution for weekly rides for programming” could be the answer to transportation issues in rural areas. As a whole, librarians emphasized their commitment to “better outreach to EL families in the community” and making the library more “friendly and welcoming to all.” Librarians and educators have different opinions regarding realistic and workable solutions to address parent-identified barriers, yet they both agree collaboration between county public library systems and public elementary schools would benefit EL families for community-oriented solutions.

Collaboration Potential

Based on the interview data, educators and librarians recognize the mutual benefit of collaborating throughout the school year to improve student literacy opportunities, beyond the summer library reading programs. However, both stakeholder groups responded honestly to interview questions about the nature of the current relationship between the rural public elementary schools and county public libraries with answers such as “cannot see a relationship,” “tricky,” “don’t hear about libraries being involved,” “a loose connection,” and “during the pandemic, I couldn’t go into the school building.” For the schools and libraries in one rural community, this context provides the practical starting point for their potential collaboration. Educators reiterated the correlation to the primary research question, saying that “collaboration would strengthen our EL family connections to library and school,” and “having a safe and interactive public library

builds a stronger sense of community,” as well as “face-to-face interactions are needed to build a bridge” between elementary schools and libraries. Librarians agreed that EL families would “benefit a lot to have that collaboration between public schools and libraries.” and that both could “get more value out of collaboration, networking and resource sharing, relationship building, and could greatly benefit from working together.” Opportunities for potential collaboration might include librarian visits to schools, EL family visits to libraries, EL teachers and librarians alternating co-teaching sessions between school and library locations, as well as community events promoting family literacy initiatives within the rural public school district, the rural county public library system, and surrounding small towns.

Connections to Literature Review

In Chapter 2 the literature review quoted, paraphrased, and cited many relevant resources prior to conducting the research. As the researcher, I reviewed the qualitative findings from the data collected and related this research to the existing literature to show evidence that addresses the primary and secondary research questions. The following paragraphs highlight some of these prior studies and findings that either confirm or contradict this research study.

Literature Related to Libraries

Sociologist Klinenberg (2018) maintained that public libraries are evolving civic institutions that serve as cornerstones of urban or rural communities alike. His research on libraries in New York City showed that generations of Americans have experienced books, media, and relationships through their local library. However, the responses of the

parent stakeholders in this study have indicated that the library is not an essential part of their rural community's social infrastructure for books, media, and relationships. EL parents and educators do not rely on the county public library as a social space to interact with their community. This may be due in part to the past two years under a global pandemic, as well as the increased use of technology, particularly the internet and digital resources, as a primary source of media and relationships for many people.

Sondra Cuban (2007) identified numerous accessibility barriers to immigrants using the library, including institutional barriers (procedural), personal and social barriers (cultural interactions), environmental barriers (transportation) and perceptual barriers (not knowing the library could be helpful), as well as hours of operation. The research data from this study confirms the continued existence of certain accessibility barriers in rural Minnesota. The parents of EL families reported several of these same barriers in their community, including transportation issues, inflexible hours of operation for working parents, unfamiliarity of the library system, as well as feeling unwelcome or unsafe in library settings.

Cuban and Cuban (2007) acknowledged the digital divide in some areas of the United States and recommended transformative collaboration as a collective change-oriented approach to meeting the local needs of a community. They presented CBR, a fundamental component of transformative collaboration, as a method of collecting authentic data directly from community members, which has proven to be particularly beneficial in rural areas. As the researcher, I used the CBR framework to collect interview data from the primary stakeholder groups of parents, educators, and

librarians, and from this model of research, community-identified needs emerged to inform potential collaboration opportunities for effecting community-engaged change.

As an author of librarian administration books, Prentice (2011) observed that library staff must be flexible in order to meet the changing needs and requests from the community. The interviews with parents of ELs and rural county public librarians confirmed this, acknowledging the unique needs of bilingual patrons in the changing demographics of rural areas even before the pandemic. Librarians recognized the need for more cultural competency training, more bilingual staff, more multilingual digital resources, as well as new programming to meet the needs of increasingly diverse communities outside of urban areas.

A 2008 ALA study, based on the U.S. Census 2000 data of linguistically isolated communities, determined that the two most common barriers to library participation by non-English speakers were reading and library habits and knowledge of library services. The interviews with bilingual parents identified these same barriers, among other factors, as reasons their families did not use the library. Based on population and language identification data from the most recent 2020 U.S. Census, the rural community setting of this research meets the criteria for linguistically isolated.

A 2019 ALA study recommended a community-centered approach to new Americans, advising that facilitating collaboration among community organizations requires time and resources to build relationships and maintain current progress. The New American Library Project is an initiative of the ALA working to develop a collection of resources and cultural training for public libraries to meet the needs of their

community. The librarian interview participants admitted they need more resources and cultural training to properly serve the growing bilingual population in their rural area, given the limited funding and resources for rural county public libraries in Minnesota. These ALA resources could be part of the solution for the libraries in this rural community.

A 2021 study conducted by SPPL and Wilder Foundation used the CFI survey and interviews with Karen, Latinx, and Somali library patrons to inform recommendations for activities with community members and library staff, as well as to improve their community service model. The six success factors for collaboration include environment (geographic location and social context), membership characteristics (skills, opinions, culture), process and structure (ownership and decision-making), communication (sending and receiving information), purpose (vision and tasks), and resources (financial and human input). Interpreting the findings of the educator and librarian interviews, specifically the categories of relationships and collaboration, in the context of the six success factors will serve to measure the depth of collaboration between schools and libraries in the rural community. As the researcher, I will use the publication *Collaboration: What makes it work* (Mattessich & Johnson, 2018) as a resource with stakeholders for future collaboration. It will provide a checklist for progress of the collaborative initiative, as well as valuable insights by practitioners to apply to the decision making process.

Second Language Acquisition

Linguist and researcher Krashen (2011) proposed Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) to encourage children and adults to read whatever interests them to achieve advanced second language proficiency. Krashen recognized that the number of resources available in home languages might be a barrier in some areas. The research data confirmed this barrier was a factor in the rural Minnesota community setting, supported by EL parent statements regarding the lack of library materials in their home languages. Educators and librarians also acknowledged the limited bilingual resources available in the rural elementary school media centers and at the rural county public libraries.

Fillmore (1991) studied immigrant and American Indian families to compare the family language patterns of their preschool children. Her findings suggested that losing a primary language, especially if it is the only language spoken by parents, can negatively affect children and their families. Both parents expressed an interest in valuing and developing their home language through school- and library-sponsored bilingual programs. However, each parent made a different decision regarding the use of the home language for their children. With preschool classes available at school and preschool reading programs available at the library, there may be options within the community for EL families to preserve their home languages through either stakeholder institution.

Dove and Honigsfeld (2014) conducted a case study in a suburban New York elementary school with a predominantly Latino population. The researchers found positive outcomes with increased collaboration between ESL and classroom teachers and a greater sense of responsibility and accountability for all students. This research did not

directly address the co-teaching or collaboration model; however, the potential is there for EL teachers and librarians in a rural community to collaborate on behalf of EL families. Furthermore, with the success of student-focused collaboration strategies in public elementary schools, there is the possibility of implementing these educator strategies within libraries across rural communities.

Researchers Dixon and Wu (2014) reviewed nearly 100 empirical research articles involving immigrant children with language and literacy practices for L1, L2, or both. Their findings explored the benefits of book reading at home and the importance of developing family literacy programs to bridge the gap between home and school. In response to interview questions, both parents recalled spending time at the library as children, and in their previous urban neighborhoods with family and friends. They advocated for more bilingual opportunities at school so their children could make similar connections to their library and neighborhood communities.

Duursma, et al. (2007) investigated Spanish and English vocabulary for nearly 100 fifth-grade Latino ELLs in three urban locations. They found that becoming or staying proficient in English did not require parents to use English at home, although maintaining Spanish proficiency required both instructional support at school and social support at home. Parent research participants requested more bilingual learning opportunities for their children in school and at the library to support their home language. The specific bilingual opportunities may differ between schools and libraries, especially in rural areas with limited resources and funding.

Collaboration

As an author of collaborative leadership books, Rubin (2009) maintained that relationships are at the core of collaboration, and building relationships between schools and public community institutions is crucial for both. Relationships between essential stakeholders are the foundation of collaboration. The interview data from this study confirms this mutually beneficial connection, which was a theme for each stakeholder group of parents, educators, and librarians, and an overarching theme across the three groups. Their responses showed an interest and willingness to build, strengthen, seek out, and engage in these relationships.

Brown (2005) conducted a study of 18 North Carolina libraries with respondents from urban, suburban, and rural populations that showed a positive perception of or more favorable impressions towards projects requiring interagency collaboration. Brown acknowledged that all community members, including those in rural or remote regions, are to benefit from collaboration efforts between educators, librarians, and other social services. This research was conducted in rural Minnesota through interviews with parents of ELs, educators, and librarians who provided responses to questions about collaboration and barriers to establishing these mutually beneficial community relationships. The data from the interviews suggests there is potential to add incredible value to this rural community through collaboration among the stakeholders and various agencies.

Researcher De Souza (2010) found that the local public library and the school library played a positive role in the lives of low socioeconomic ELs of Mexican descent in Southern California. The library provided relevant resources and connections for EL

families when it was adequately staffed and well-stocked with reading materials, homework help, and encouragement in a welcoming, non-threatening environment. However, the research data from this study contradicts the De Souza study, as parent interview responses identified some of these same benefits as barriers to accessibility, such as an unwelcoming or unsafe environment and lack of bilingual staff and resources. For future collaboration, the library setting that De Souza described is the ideal one to work toward.

Community Building

Author Block (2009) maintained community building through transforming the isolation within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole, and by shifting our conversations from the problems of community to the possibility of community. Parent participants in the research interviews identified many problems or barriers in the rural community. To address these barriers, educators and librarians provide possible solutions to overcome them in their community. In addition, the honest responses from educators and librarians regarding relationships and collaboration to improve EL families literacy are part of community building for this rural community.

Researchers Mills, Campana, and Martin (2019) conducted case studies to address community building. They maintained that outreach is vital to ensure children have access to resources and to eliminate barriers based on socioeconomic status, language, and culture. They offered a research-based outreach framework consisting of four stages specific to libraries: engage communities through conversations, cultivate partnerships with community organizations, provide programs as needed, and assess through patron

participation for outreach. The educator and librarian interview participants indicated that more library-initiated outreach to rural community residents would improve library usage and activity participation, especially for EL families. The four stages of outreach could be a practical approach to promoting collaboration and community building in rural areas.

Implications of the Study

As a rural public elementary school EL teacher and a summer volunteer at a rural county public library, I have unique opportunities to work with EL families in multiple settings. This study investigated the parent-identified accessibility barriers to library services in rural communities and considered viable solutions to improve literacy learning for EL families through collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries. As the researcher, I have had the opportunity to further explore this topic through authentic interviews with parents of EL families, public elementary school educators, and county public librarians in one rural community in Central Minnesota. With the information collected, I intend to present the data to colleagues in rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries to encourage future collaboration between them on behalf of EL families to improve literacy options in English and their home languages. The following are recommendations from the research.

Implications for Rural Public Elementary Schools

The data collected from parent interview participants highlights the need for culturally responsive representation within the school's student population. These parents requested more bilingual student resources in the schools for their children in Hmong and

Spanish; furthermore, classroom resources and other materials should reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the social groups living in each community. They also recommended that elementary schools incorporate dual language immersion programs during the early formative years of literacy learning. At the very least, EL students at rural public elementary schools are entitled to appropriate English language development services to ensure their meaningful and equal participation in education programs, which includes validating EL culture and home language and acknowledging bilingual students' cognitive and linguistic advantages..

The data collected from educator interview participants confirmed the need for parent communication in their home languages, including the use of interpreters, liaisons, and multilingual options for email and printed communications to improve relationships and avoid misunderstandings between EL parents and elementary school educators. Additionally, educators recognized the value of continued professional development in the areas of equity, cultural competence, and English language development for all school staff to improve literacy instruction and culturally responsive curriculum.

For EL teachers in particular, including myself as the researcher, this study has implications that influence literacy instruction. The research supports the need for more home-language and bilingual resources for classroom use. Some materials may be available online in several languages, and others may be obtainable through the MDE English learner education services. As different immigrant families and refugee groups relocate to rural areas, funding for new materials to support home language development will need to adjust accordingly to ensure educational equity and access for EL students.

Implications for Rural County Public Libraries

The data collected from librarian interview participants highlights the need for county public libraries to invest more resources in home language development to support the specific EL populations of each rural community. Suggestions for resources and services include placing multilingual signage throughout libraries and offering technology to help non-English speaking families find materials in their home language. Rural county public libraries should hire more multilingual, culturally diverse staff that are representative of their communities' demographics and provide multilingual flyers and website information to promote library usage and encourage activity participation. There is a definite need for more frequent and bilingual outreach from libraries to EL families throughout the community.

Implications for Future Collaboration

The data collected from educator and librarian interview participants highlights the need to improve collaboration on behalf of EL families to enhance literacy learning. Collaboration is the foundation of community summer reading programs, and educators and librarians agree that EL families in rural communities would benefit from further collaborative efforts between libraries and schools throughout the school year. Interview responses from both stakeholder groups identified EL teachers as familiar adults and possible liaisons between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries. Collaboration could begin with the EL teacher and one library employee working together throughout the school year, at either the public library or school or both locations. EL families would be involved in lesson planning and library visits, just as they

are at schools, where they already feel comfortable and welcome. Library resources, such as databases and supplemental materials, would complement the school media center and classroom libraries with bilingual resources for improved EL literacy learning. Both educators and librarians were willing and interested in participating in more active collaboration.

Limitations of the Study

The small sample size of interview participants is a notable limitation of this research. There were a total of seven interview participants: two parents of ELs, three educators, and two librarians. In the original research design, as laid out in Chapter 3, I planned to interview three participants for each of the stakeholder groups, for a total of nine interviews. However, because the researcher selected participants based on availability over a one-month period during the summer rather than a longer timeframe, fewer interviewees responded to the email invitation to participate in the study. There were some challenges in data analysis for this study due to limitations of two interviews for the parent and librarian stakeholder groups, rather than the optimal three interviews for this study. More interviews, especially for parent stakeholders representing more language groups, may have provided more data to categorize for meaning and themes.

Another limitation was cultural factors, specifically for the bilingual parents stakeholder group. Cross-cultural interviewing presents challenges related to interpreting gestures, facial expressions, body language, and voice intonations, even for English-proficient speakers who have grown up in American culture. As the researcher, I was respectful of these possible cultural differences and purposefully did not interrupt or

comment during the interviews in an effort to allow the parents to speak freely. In addition, parents requested virtual interviews, which may have also limited me in noticing subtle differences. While virtual interviews were convenient for this study conducted during a global pandemic, the digital medium may have altered responses from participants compared to in-person interviews.

A further limitation included minimal relevant empirical studies, specifically for rural communities with growing EL populations. As the researcher, I noted this limitation in the literature review chapter prior to the collection of data. The lack of prior studies related to the research questions made the literature review following the analysis of research results and interpretation of the data collected far more challenging. Some empirical studies from an urban or suburban setting were used to provide baseline research for this study, with considerations made for the rural context of this research.

I acknowledge my own bias as a limitation of this study. As the researcher, my education and experiences, middle-class socioeconomic status, and European caucasian heritage may have influenced the research process. More notably, as an EL teacher in the rural public school district and a volunteer in the rural county public libraries, while not in a decision-making role in relation to interview participants, the professional and personal biases of the researcher are a potential limitation of this research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study produced valuable insights into the research questions and inspired additional questions for future research. One area of focus for further research would be to expand upon the initial research with more stakeholder interviews.

Additional interviews would deepen future research with a sample size up to ten per group, increasing the amount of data collected and providing broader perspectives to analyze for interpretation of meaning and themes. Conducting in-person interviews, rather than virtual interviews, may allow for better understanding of participant responses and body language, and provide more opportunities for follow-up questions. In addition, a longer time frame for more interviews may allow for more participation in the study, perhaps a four-to six-month period instead of a month-long interview period.

Another avenue for further research would be to parallel the SPPL's 2021 using the Wilder CFI to compare and contrast the urban library services with rural library services, focusing on EL families in both locations. Since SPPL implemented the CFI in this context, the CFI could also be used to assess future collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries, which the researcher would initiate. This research study adapted some interview questions from the CFI, and the six factors of successful collaboration could be applied to the interpretation of new data collected.

Plan for Communicating and Using Results

This research will be made available to the public via the Hamline University Digital Commons platform from the Hamline University School of Education for dissertations. Participants in the study will receive an electronic or printed copy of the dissertation in their preferred format. As the researcher, I will use the results to continue conversations about solutions to the parent-identified barriers with stakeholders in the rural school district, starting with EL teachers. I am prepared to present and discuss the

study with rural county public libraries in the rural area following meetings with school personnel. Collaboration between the schools and libraries in one rural community on behalf of the EL families is the goal of this dissertation research.

Summary

Chapter 5 described the major learnings for this primary research question: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities?* The secondary research questions are: *What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?* The results of the study, based on original data collected from interviews with each of the stakeholder groups, including parents of EL families, rural public elementary school educators, and rural county public librarians, explain interrelated themes, multiple solutions to barriers, and collaboration potential between schools and libraries on behalf of EL families in a rural community. As the researcher, I interpreted the research data using empirical studies and relevant information cited from the literature review. I presented the implications for the rural stakeholder institutions and potential collaboration opportunities between the two, and also acknowledged several limitations of the research. Finally, I gave recommendations for future studies, and provided plans for communicating and using the results.

From my earliest memories of reading words in a coloring book with my sister to fond memories of visiting my small town library, my love of literature and enthusiasm for education has been the foundation for me as a lifelong learner. I have learned much more

than I expected from this dissertation research process, especially from the interview participants in the study. I am hopeful for future collaboration between rural public elementary schools and rural county public libraries to bridge literacy learning for EL families in rural communities.

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Appendix A

Timeline of American Education*

1635: Boston Latin School opened as the first Latin grammar school of the colonies in Boston, MA.

1638: Hartford Public High School opened in Hartford, CT.

1837: Horace Mann, Massachusetts Secretary of Education, developed common schools for free universal public education.

1946: In *Mendez v. Westminster and the California Board of Education*, the U.S. District Court of Los Angeles determined that educating children of Mexican descent in separate facilities is unconstitutional and prohibited segregation in California.

1948: The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 26 declared that everyone has a right to education.

1954: The *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling stated that separate educational facilities were unequal.

1964: The Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin and granted minority students equal access to education regardless of English language proficiency.

1965: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) provided federal funding to low-income students, including Title 1 and bilingual education programs.

1974: The *Lao v. Nichols* Supreme Court ruling required states to provide equal opportunities for all students, including students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

1975: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act guaranteed free, appropriate education to each child with a disability in the least restrictive environment.

1982: In *Plyler v. Doe*, the Supreme Court ruled that a state does not have the right to deny free public education to undocumented immigrant children.

1984: The Emergency Immigrant Education Act provided services and offset costs for school districts with unexpectedly large numbers of immigrant students.

1990: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amended the Education for All Handicapped Children Act with additional eligible disabilities.

2001: The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act mandated that student progress be assessed annually to measure subject proficiency, which was based on standards established by each state.

2015: The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB and allowed states more control of educational policies.

2020: Schools in the United States closed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, resulting in online instruction for public school education.

*Adapted from *American educational history: A hypertext timeline*. Sass, E. (2022).

<https://www.eds-resources.com/educationhistorytimeline.html>

Appendix B

Timeline of American Libraries*

1731: The Library Company, a subscription library, opened in Philadelphia.

1743: Darby Free Public Library opened in Darby, PA, and is now considered the nation's oldest library.

1790: Ray Memorial Library opened in Franklin, MA, with no membership subscription required.

1833: Peterborough Town Library opened in Peterborough, NH, as the first free, tax-supported public library.

1854: Boston Public Library opened for Massachusetts residents.

1876: The American Library Association (ALA) was established.

1887: Columbia University School of Library Science was founded by Melvil Dewey.

Early 1900s: Libraries were used as community meeting places, cultural centers, and in collaboration with schools.

1905: The first free public library for African Americans opened in Louisville, KY.

1918: The ALA Committee on Work for the Foreign Born published guidebooks for adapting library collections for European immigrants.

1920: Nearly 1,700 American public libraries were funded by steel industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie Company (aka the Patron Saint of Libraries).

1922: The first horse-drawn book wagon service started in rural Hennepin County, MN.

1950s: Public libraries initiated community outreach with summer reading programs and book clubs.

1956: The Library Services Act used federal funding to promote the development of public libraries in rural areas.

1964: The Library Services and Construction Act provided further federal assistance to U.S libraries.

1996: The Library Services and Technology Act provided library funding to underserved communities.

1979: Friends of Libraries USA (FOLUSA) was founded.

1998: The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation donated \$250 million to state library agencies in disadvantaged areas across the country for technology and internet services.

Early 2000s: Public libraries were used for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and STEAM (STEM plus the arts) activities; ebooks became available.

2020: Public libraries closed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, with services limited to online resources.

*Adapted from *A history of US public libraries*. Brady, H. & Abbott, F. (2015). Digital Public Library of America.

Appendix C

Email Invitation to Interview Participants

Dear Parent/Educator/Librarian,

I'm currently completing a doctoral degree and dissertation through Hamline University, and would like to ask you to please consider being interviewed for my research. My research questions are: *How can public elementary schools and county public libraries collaborate to improve the literacy of English Learner families in rural communities? What parent-identified barriers impede collaboration between schools and libraries? How can these barriers be overcome?*

You would bring a unique perspective to this research because of your role (as a parent of an EL student, educator, library employee) in a rural community. I would provide the interview questions prior to the interview. We could interview virtually via Google Meet or in person, as you prefer. Interviews will be recorded via Google Meet or digital audio recording, without the use of names, locations, or other identifiers. Your privacy and the confidentiality of your interview data will be securely stored during the research process and all electronic data will be stored in my Hamline cloud storage which is secured by a 2-step verification process. After one year all data will be deleted and destroyed. It would be one interview, no more than 30 minutes long, and I would compensate for your valuable time with a \$25 gift card. Your interview data would be kept confidential and securely stored to ensure your privacy.

Please give this your consideration and email me if you're interested in being interviewed. If you have questions about this, and would like to discuss it by phone, please call me. I will respect whatever decision you make.

Sincerely,

Carmel Murphy

Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Parents of ELs

1. Please tell me about your family and the language(s) you speak at home.
2. How could public schools help bilingual families like yours to improve reading and writing skills in your home language and in English?
3. How often does your family use the county public library? What kinds of materials or activities does your family use most?
4. How could the county public library help bilingual families to use the library more?
5. What challenges or barriers make it difficult for bilingual families to use the local public library?
6. What suggestions do you have to remove or lessen those barriers?
7. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol for Rural Public School Educators

Note: Questions were modified, based on responses from parents of ELs*

1. Please tell me about your role in the public elementary schools.
2. What has been your experience with English Learners (ELs) and bilingual families at your school?
3. To what extent do you use the county public library as an educator?
4. What is the relationship between this public elementary school and the nearest county public library?
5. *Parents of EL families that were previously interviewed have identified barriers to using the county public library (including: x, y, z). What possible solutions would you recommend to overcome these barriers?
 - 5a. What resources would be needed in order to make that happen?
6. How could public elementary schools and county public libraries benefit from collaborating on behalf of EL families in our community?
7. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Appendix F

Interview Protocol for Rural County Public Librarians

Note: Questions were modified, based on responses from parents of ELs*

1. Please tell me about your role in the county public library system.
2. During your employment at this library, what has been your experience with English Learners (ELs) and their bilingual families in this community?
3. What is the relationship between this county public library and the nearest public elementary school?
4. *Parents of EL families that were previously interviewed have identified barriers to using the county public library (including: x, y, z). What possible solutions would you recommend to overcome these barriers?
 - 4a. What resources would be needed to make your suggestions happen?
5. How could public elementary schools and public libraries benefit from collaborating on behalf of EL families in our community?
6. Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Appendix G

The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory Excerpt

Name of Collaboration Project _____

Date _____

Statements about Your Collaborative Group:

Factor	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral, No Opinion	Agree	Strongly Agree
History of collaboration or cooperation in the community	1. Agencies in our community have a history of working together.	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Trying to solve problems through collaboration has been common in this community. It has been done a lot before.	1	2	3	4	5
Collaborative group seen as a legitimate leader in the community	3. Leaders in this community who are not part of our collaborative group seem hopeful about what we can accomplish.	1	2	3	4	5
	4. Others (in this community) who are not a part of this collaboration would generally agree that the organizations involved in this collaborative project are the "right" organizations to make this work.	1	2	3	4	5
Favorable political and social climate	5. The political and social climate seems to be "right" for starting a collaborative project like this one.	1	2	3	4	5
	6. The time is right for this collaborative project.	1	2	3	4	5
Mutual respect, understanding, and trust	7. People involved in our collaboration trust one another.	1	2	3	4	5
	8. I have a lot of respect for the other people involved in this collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5

Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory – third edition
www.wilderresearch.org

Appendix H

Blank Coding Chart for Parent Interview Responses

Question #	Parent 1 (P1)	Parent 2 (P2)
1 Family/language(s)		
2 Schools can improve literacy for ELs		
3 Use of library materials/activities		
4 Library help families use library		
5 Barriers to using library*		
6 Suggestions to remove barriers**		
7 Anything else		

Appendix I

Blank Coding Chart for Educator Interview Responses

Question #	Educator 1 (E1)	Educator 2 (E2)	Educator 3 (E3)
1 Role in school			
2 Experience with ELs/bilingual families			
3 Use of library materials/activities			
4 Relationship between school & library			
5 Solutions and resources of parent-identified barriers**			
6 Benefits of collaboration between schools & libraries			
7 Anything else			

Appendix J

Blank Coding Chart for Librarian Interview Responses

Question #	Librarian 1 (L1)	Librarian 2 (L2)
1 Role in library		
2 Experience with ELs/bilingual families		
3 Relationship between library & school		
4 Solutions and resources to parent-identified barriers**		
5 Benefits of collaboration between schools & libraries		
Anything else		