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Experiences of Parents Interacting in an Urban Preschool Outreach Program

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Liberty University, 2012

BS, Livingstone College, 1989

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Parental engagement supports children academically. However, African American parents engage at lower levels than other parents. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the experiences of urban preschool parents in a blended parental engagement program. A combination of critical race theory, experiential learning, social learning theory, and andragogy served as the conceptual framework. Data were collected through semi structured face-to-face interviews with eight African American parents, observational field notes, and an archival review of preschool documents in a Southeast U.S. state's innovative parental engagement program that incorporates technology. Findings from inductive thematic analysis indicated three major themes. The first theme was the school-wide parental engagement program. The program used technologies such as Class Dojo with school wide activities to engage all parents. The second theme was the parental engagement program within the classroom activities. These collaborative activities included a Parent Engagement Activity day that allowed the parents into the classroom. Finally, the parental perceptions were influenced positively by the daily face-to-face contact with the school's staff, the inclusion of multiple technologies to communicate and the respectful and positive nature of these ongoing communications. Findings revealed that intentional communication through innovative means built trusting relationships, which stimulated and promoted ongoing parental engagement. Results may be used to support the development of parental engagement programs in other urban schools.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This has been the most challenging task in my life. Throughout this journey, I have experienced many losses, some great and some small. I felt like giving up many times, but you placed people in my path who lifted me with their words of encouragement and hope. For this, I am grateful and will use this knowledge as a conduit of change and hope for the voiceless and the most vulnerable. This is my purpose and I accept it graciously. I would also like to dedicate this study to Elizabeth Baines, my grandmother. My heart aches that you are not here to celebrate with me, but I know you are always present. You challenged me to be more because of the limited opportunities you were afforded. Praise God, I never gave up. So, I celebrate with the man you knew would cherish me and support me, David Corey.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Parents are the primary educators of their children and have the most formative influence on their child's development (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006). Parental engagement in a formal learning environment is one of the most effective methods that parents can use to support and encourage their child's learning, development, and well-being (Bridgeland, Bruce & Hariharan, 2013; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egelaned, 2004). However, parents from lower socioeconomic statuses are often excluded from significant engagement discussions due to cultural and socioeconomic differences (Milner, 2013; Rothstein, 2010). According to Smalley and Reyes-Blanes (2001), lack of parental engagement is a challenge to educators.

Research has shown that parents' engagement in a formal learning environment is an asset to student success, regardless of socioeconomic status (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Englund et al., 2004). However, the abilities and qualities associated with engagement, most often recognized as vital to the economic and democratic attainment in a global society, cannot exist if the educational establishment fails its children. If the educational establishment sees all children as vital to a nation's success, it must value their parents. In this chapter, I review the background, problem, purpose, conceptual framework, and limitations of the study.

Background

Parental engagement is critical to academic and social success as students matriculate in the formal learning environment (Ferlazzo, 2011). Bridgeland et al. (2013) noted that parental engagement has been statistically shown to positively affect student outcomes regardless of a family's socioeconomic status. According to Jeynes (2012), parental involvement programs are

consistently related to high educational outcomes and scholastic achievement, making it the single most significant factor in student success

Parental engagement happens when parents feel valued, competent, and empowered (Bauman & Wasserman, 2010; Epstein, 1987; Mendez & Westerberg, 2012). However, barriers to parental engagement continue to plague many urban preschools as parental roles are diminished or limited, and schools take on a more authoritative role in families' lives (Milner, 2013). Barriers such as geographic disruptions, hunger and malnutrition, stress, and poor health are consequences of social ills that complicate parental engagement and student success (Rothstein, 2010). Ledesma and Calderón (2015) found that curriculum and pedagogy, teaching and learning, schooling, and policy/finance are common themes at the K-12 grade levels embedded in systemic racism and white supremacy.

Research confirmed that when urban parents are more involved in their children's education, regardless of income or background, children are more likely to earn higher grades, develop better social skills, and become productive citizens (Bridgeland et al., 2013). As a result, scholars have continued to express an interest in understanding the subject of parental engagement because researchers have consistently recognized a direct correlation to positive student academic results (Malone, 2015). Although the research affirmed this correlation, it also indicated a gap in the understanding of engagement in a blended parental engagement program among urban parents and their children's education. Equipping urban parents with tools to advocate for their children, families, and communities creates the potential for social change.

Problem Statement

During the first 5 years of a child's development, parents create connectivity to the child's world. These early years contribute to developing children's social and emotional well-being (Bowman & Moore, 2006). Cognitively the brain is most impressionable during this time and is susceptible to influences as the association with others becomes prominent (Olson & Dweck, 2009). These associations can impact the child's worldview and the life course (Williford, Whittaker, Vitiello, & Downer, 2013). As children transition from the informal to the formal learning environment, the connection between home and school becomes vital to learning.

Engaging parents in the formal learning environment benefits not only the child but also the family. Parental engagement is a way to nurture an expectation of learning in the home and foster continuous lifelong learning. Students come to understand learning not just as a means to an end but as a process of evolving. Research has indicated that parental engagement is critical to students' academic and social success at all levels of the educational spectrum (Ferlazzo, 2011).

However, parents from lower socioeconomic statuses are often not engaged in this effort due to barriers such as geographic disruptions, hunger and malnutrition, stress, depression, and poor health (Rothstein, 2010). Additionally, poverty, symbolic violence, neodeficit discourse, and racial inequality contribute to these barriers. These social ills complicate parental engagement and student success. Lack of knowledge about parental involvement in engagement programs in preschool education programs has created a gap in the research on the topic of urban parents engaging productively in their child's education. The current study was designed to

understand parental engagement in preschool education programs from the perspective of the urban parent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the experiences of urban parents of preschoolers who were engaged in a parental engagement program in an urban school district. This study was designed to understand urban parents' experiences in a blended parental engagement program designed to foster parental engagement and parental leadership. Data were collected through semi structured interviews with preschool parents, archival parent interest surveys, and evaluations disseminated by the preschool program. I explored how an innovative curriculum that blends online and face-to-face interactions fostered leadership, advocacy, and increased parental engagement in the urban preschool program.

Research Questions

This generic study's main research question was the following: How does experiencing the implementation of an innovative educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence parental engagement levels in a preschool setting? The secondary questions were as follows:

1. How does the parental engagement educational program influence the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education?
2. How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program?

Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework included critical race theory (CRT), experiential learning, social learning theory, and andragogy. CRT was interwoven with experiential learning

as the educational context, andragogy was used to define adult parents' learning, and social learning theory was used to understand the parents' experiences and perceptions resulting from their interactions in the educational program. CRT suggests the importance of deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Race has been shown to significantly impact parental perceptions and interaction levels within formal educational structures (Milner, 2013). CRT enabled me to understand the historical context of how race impacts parental perceptions.

Experiential learning is based on the convergence of experience, quality of learning, and profound reflection that develops advanced learning in adults (Fowler, 2008). Experiential learning is a highly impactful educational practice that has been shown through research to increase student retention and engagement (Kuh, 2008). Experiential learning is a principal method in adult education's theoretical tradition across Europe, North America, and Australia (Miettinen, 2000). Rich in innovation, experiential learning fosters cognitive creativity and an ideology needed to deal with adult education's many complexities.

Power and Holland (2018) suggested that adult students' previous experiences make their learning individual and provide a rich learning environment for the learner and their peers. Students of all ages enter the formal learning environment with different skill sets based on previous experiences. Their experiences frame the context in which knowledge is filtered and retained. Experiential learning gives attention to different learning styles influenced by distinctive character traits and cultural aspects (Murgu, Kurman, & Hasan, 2018). Decker and Townes (2017) demonstrated how the influence of experiential learning can promote and

cultivate the development and collaboration of staff in a working environment. Experiential learning practice connects learning to real-life learning with reflection and discussion of application (Clark & Torreta, 2018). In the current study, experiential learning theory was used to understand the methods used to enhance adult learning of urban parents engaging with their child's preschool program.

Social learning theory, first proposed by Bandura (1977a), suggests that people learn from observation, replication, and demonstration. In the current study, social learning theory was used to understand the parents' self-regulation and self-efficacy by addressing the acquisition of internalized ideologies that influence behaviors, effort, and execution of tasks. Social learning theory was used to understand how parental engagement motivated parents to action and how this action motivated parental engagement.

The final aspect of the theoretical framework was andragogy. Andragogy is a theory developed by Knapp in the 1800s and expanded by Knowles in the next century (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1972). Andragogy, unlike pedagogy, is associated with adults, builds on six assumptions, and supports experience as a critical difference in adults' learning. Children acquire learning through organized subjects as expected by society, while adults acquire knowledge based on need and association to their betterment (Smith, 2002). Adults control their learning experiences, which are constructs of previous learning (Hardy, 2017). One primary objective of education is to provide individuals with information and competencies essential for adapting to constant change and continuous learning (Zmeyov, 1998). Andragogy was used in the current study to understand the adult learner's experience with the curriculum.

Nature of the Study

A generic qualitative design was chosen for this study. A generic study is a narrative based on something distinctive, unique, or significant (Baškarada, 2014). The narrative may include information about an individual or group of persons, institutions, methods, programs, localities, or happenings. The generic qualitative study provides a comprehensive glance into the outcome's narrative by illustrating influential factors (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006). Qualitative studies make allowances for confirmatory and explanatory results (Hyde, 2000; Yin, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative studies are appropriate for extensive and detailed descriptions of multifaceted social phenomena (Gerring, 2004).

The rationale for the generic design in this study was specific to the narrative. According to Yin (2009), qualitative designs should be considered when (a) how and why questions are the focal points of the study, (b) the behaviors of those in the study cannot be manipulated, (c) contextual conditions are covered due to their relevance to the phenomenon of the study, or (d) the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clear. I sought to understand preschool parents' experiences in an urban school district participating in a parental engagement program. This method enabled me to study the phenomenon in context over a specific period of time to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of parents of preschoolers who were engaged in a parental engagement program in an urban school district. The main research question for this generic qualitative study was the following: How does experiencing the implementation of an innovative educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence levels of parental engagement in a preschool setting? Data were collected

through semi structured interviews with preschool parents, observation of a parent meeting, and analysis of archival and curriculum documents. Thematic inductive analysis was conducted to identify the major themes from the data.

Operational Definitions

The following terms were defined as follows in this study:

Blended learning: A combination of traditional face-to-face learning and online learning with adult learners facilitated by way of a parent curriculum.

Critical race theory (CRT): A lens to view race and racism in the educational system to understand parental engagement.

Insidious paralysis: The relinquishment of parental power to school entities to solve problems that plague their children's schools.

Neodeficit discourse: The argument that parents from a nondominant culture lack the necessary skills and knowledge to assist their children with academic success.

Parental engagement: Activities that parents do to help their children succeed in school and life.

Reciprocal determinism: How external influences and a person's behavior impact each other.

Self-regulation: The ability to observe and regulate one's behavior, feelings, or judgments, shifting them according to the demands of the situation.

Symbolic capital: The misrecognition of power used to shift the conversation and focus on improving educational outcomes in blaming parents for inadequate engagement.

Symbolic violence: Economic constraints and political power that prevent parents from becoming formally involved by implying that parents are not concerned with their children's education.

Assumptions

Creswell (2013) asserted that whether individuals are cognizant of their philosophical biases and assumptions or not, they are always present. Many assumptions are formed as a result of education or experience. Creswell further asserted that difficulties may arise when a decision must be made regarding integrating these assumptions into the research. Qualitative methodology contains four philosophical assumptions: ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. According to Creswell, the ontological assumption states that reality is based on power and identity. The epistemological assumption reflects the fact that reality can be changed through research. The axiological assumption states that the diversity of values is emphasized with various communities. The final assumption, methodological, implores one to begin with power and identity struggles, authenticate them, and call for action and change. In the current study, I assumed participants would provide substantive and precise accounts of their experiences. I also assumed the research period was appropriate to gather the data needed to answer the research questions. Finally, I assumed parents would honestly share any potential bias in response to the interview questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The research topic of understanding parents' experiences in an innovative urban preschool parental engagement program was chosen based on a growing emphasis on parental engagement in schools across the United States. As school districts create parental engagement

programs and mandate greater parent participation, it becomes crucial to understand participation levels and how parental experiences influence ongoing engagement. School districts have sponsored initiatives such as parent academies, parent ambassadors, and parent universities to promote and attract parent involvement. Parent participation determines the success of these programs. Mandates alone will not guarantee involvement, engagement, or sustainability. Therefore, exploring parental engagement at the earliest stages of the youngest learners may provide a clearer understanding of what is needed for sustainable parental engagement.

This study's population was urban parents of preschool children who had engaged in a parental engagement program. The study was conducted to understand how urban parents have experienced their interactions in the parental engagement program. This study included preschool parents in an urban school district actively participating in a parental engagement program. Understanding parents' perceptions and experiences may provide insight into how parental engagement programs support families' involvement in urban schools. With the number of students in urban schools increasing in the United States, understanding how to support these learners and their families through school systems may influence future engagement opportunities.

Limitations

Limitations in qualitative research are the possible constraints beyond of the researcher's control that have the potential to affect the outcome (Seidman, 2006). Each research type has specific limitations to its methodology. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to provide a clear understanding of preschool parents' experiences and how these experiences influenced levels of involvement.

Regardless of the time and effort taken to ensure the perfect study, there were factors beyond my control that could have affected the outcome. Limitations may have included misinterpretations of participant statements, participant withdrawal from the study, or misleading information related to the interviewee's experience. I developed an extensive audit trail to provide credibility to my role in collecting and analyzing the data.

Due to the study's nature, participants were intentionally selected within the target population who had direct knowledge and experience related to the study topic . Limitations imposed by the interviewee were not unexpected. For instance, if the interviewee chose not to fully disclose their experiences during the discussion, it was understood that pertinent information could be excluded. Pertinent questions, misinterpretation of responses, cultural bias, and stereotypes posed limits to the research. Additionally, as a parent advocate, I was aware of the functions of the program and remained mindful of personal bias that could have influenced my interpretation of parents' responses. I mitigated these limitations by engaging in member checking to ensure that the participants' experiences were accurately reported.

Significance

This generic qualitative study addressed the experiences and perceptions of urban preschool parents and educators participating in a preschool parental involvement program. Jeynes (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 51 studies that addressed the relationship between four types of parental involvement programs and positive academic achievement. This and other studies affirmed the relationship between parental engagement and the academic achievement of children. However, these studies did not address parents' experiences in a parental engagement program in an urban preschool setting. Through exploration and identification of major themes

relevant to this experience, this study may provide information to parents, urban preschools, schools, and community learning centers about how to inspire and integrate parental engagement through technology and literacy that supports early learning and motivates lifelong learning. A qualitative study on preschool parents' experiences participating in a parental engagement educational program with a practical application of value, competency, and empowerment may lead to research on parental engagement as a productive way to develop a community of learning in urban schools.

Summary

Parental engagement has been shown to influence learning positively regardless of a family's socioeconomic status. Studies focusing on parental engagement have supported its importance and have addressed barriers that limit engagement (Brock & Edmunds, 2010). In the current study, I sought to understand the experiences of parents of preschoolers who were participating in a parental engagement program. By investigating and identifying relevant themes experienced by the participants, I sought to describe ways to integrate and support parental engagement in educational settings. Chapter one included the study's intent, operational definitions, theoretical approaches, scope and delimitations, assumptions, and significance. In Chapter two, I review the literature that supported the research and the theoretical foundation for the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the experiences of parents of preschoolers who were engaged in a parental engagement program in an urban school district. This study was designed to understand the nature of an urban parents' engagement program designed to be constructive, collaborative, and inclusive to encourage parental engagement and leadership. The study addressed how the parental engagement program included an innovative curriculum that blended online and face-to-face interactions to foster parental leadership, advocacy, and engagement in the urban preschool program. In this chapter, I review the conceptual framework used to guide the study. I also identify and review research on the topics relevant to this study.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search included information found in peer-reviewed journals, dissertations, books, and studies related to parental engagement. Principal sources of information were examined to obtain the most up-to-date information in parental engagement research. Consideration was given to sources that addressed parents' perception of engagement, the importance of parental engagement, different views of parental engagement, educational issues related to parental engagement, and studies on successful parental engagement programs.

The terms used in the search included *parent engagement, parent engagement programs, barriers to parent engagement, parent engagement* and *critical race theory, preschool parent engagement, parent involvement,* and *successful parent engagement strategies*. The databases used were ProQuest, Google Scholar, ERIC, and EBSCO to obtain pertinent information related

to parental engagement. Several university libraries were used to access information. The search for research on parental engagement was limited to studies published with the last 5 years.

Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework included CRT, experiential learning, social learning theory, and andragogy.

Critical Race Theory

Bell and Freeman (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1998) developed CRT, which was used as the basis for understanding the impact of culture and race as it related to the research problem. CRT suggests the importance of deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT proposes that due to the normalcy of racism, it is challenging to address or eradicate. Secondly, because racism advances the interest of one prominent race, either financially or by privilege, there is little incentive to stop it (Sleeter, 2017). Furthermore, race is a social construct used to manipulate and separate individuals when convenient to the prominent race. As a result, this social construct makes it difficult for oppressed races to coexist when the narrative favors the prominent race, regardless of systemic inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

These systemic inequalities are found not only in the community but also in the educational environment. According to Ladson-Billings (1998), CRT school curricula are viewed as culturally specific artifacts designed to bring awareness to White supremacist agendas. Studies have shown that, when compared to students from the prominent race, test scores of children of color tend to be lower (Farkas, 2004; Fryer & Levitt, 2004, 2006). Deficient performance on

assessments compared to students of the prominent race tend to be used as a manipulation tool to exploit students by broadening the racial divide.

Eventually, these students become adults, have children, and are thrust into a racially oppressed educational system again. The cycle of inequality in education continues, and the consequences become evident as the former students often find themselves without sufficient employment and housing (Milner, 2013). According to Ladson-Billings (1998), although African Americans may not personally suffer racism, most suffer the consequences of systemic and structural racism.

Race impacts parental perceptions and their interaction level within formal educational structures (Milner, 2013). Racism can be experienced at any place or time. This is often recognized through racial microaggressions; systemic, everyday racism is used to keep those at the racial margins in their place (Huber & Solorzano, 2015). Microaggressions are verbal and nonverbal attacks often aimed toward people of color in subtle, automatic, or unconscious forms (Huber & Cueva, 2012; Huber & Solorzano, 2015; Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Ledesma & Solorzano, 2013; Pierce, 1970).

Milner (2013) suggested that parents from lower socioeconomic status often are not given opportunities to strengthen critical thinking skills. Parents do not question authority but view the educator as the authority or expert and relinquish their parental responsibility. This may not be the only reason parents distance themselves from the educational environment. However, this issue raises the question of how racism fosters the lack of or perceived lack of parental engagement in schools that serve lower socioeconomic communities.

Racism is conscious and unconscious (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT exposes the pervasiveness and continuance of racism within society and brings awareness to how it is replicated in education and the formal learning environment (Capper, 2015). I used CRT to design my interview questions for the participants to define their preexisting beliefs about how culture, power, and race have influenced their interactions with educators. Experiential learning theory, andragogy, and social learning theory were used in conjunction with CRT to frame this study.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning emerges from the convergence of experience, quality, and profound reflection (Fowler, 2008). Kuh (2008) identified experiential learning practices as high-impact educational practices that have been shown to increase student retention and engagement. Miettinen (2000) described experiential learning as an established traditional approach to adult education theory. Kolb (1984) credited Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget as the founders of this approach. Although Bruner is not credited as a founder of experiential learning, his theory on constructivism is strongly connected to adult learning (Gerstein, 2014). The educational program that was the context for the current study engages parents in interactive, collaborative learning experiences. I used experiential learning theory to develop interview questions and review the program's educational goals.

Andragogy

Constructivism embodies the ideology that learning is an active occurrence that allows the learner to develop innovative ideas based on current and former knowledge. Constructivism suggests that knowledge is produced, and meanings formed because of experience. Unlike

children's learning, adult learning differs with respect to importance (Knowles, et al., 1972). Andragogy, which is often used to explain adult learning, includes six assumptions relating to how adults process knowledge (Chametzky, 2016).

The first assumption is adults need to know the material's value and its benefits before committing to the learning. The second assumption is that the adult learner's self-concept is self-directing and autonomous (Bruner, 1961; Erikson, 1964; White, 1959). The third assumption is the wealth of prior knowledge and experience that adults bring to the learning environment. The fourth assumption is that adults become ready to learn when it becomes necessary to deal with situations impacting their lives. The fifth assumption is that learning is subject centered. Adults are motivated to learn when they perceive the knowledge will help them perform tasks or solve problems. The final assumption is that adults are driven by intrinsic factors such as self-esteem and goal achievement (Knowles, et al., 1972). Andragogy and experiential learning theory were used to understand the experiences of urban parents engaging with their child's preschool outreach educational program by defining the characteristics of the educational program.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's (1977a) social learning theory focuses on self-regulation and self-efficacy by addressing ideologies that influence behaviors, effort, and task. The four guiding principles of social learning (attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation) guided the design of my interview questions. When learners are self-assured and confident and their engagement is valued (defined as higher self-efficacy levels), there is a greater desire to persevere despite challenges or impeding barriers (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Individuals' confidence is developed through a strong sense of self-belief and self-regulation (Bandura, 1977b; Hoover-Dempsey et

al., 2005). In turn, confidence produces the competence individuals need to achieve given tasks (Bandura, 1977a). The concept of reciprocal determinism associated with social learning asserts that people influence environmental factors and environmental factors influence human behavior (Bandura & Locke, 2003). In my study, the parents' concepts of their ability to engage productively in their child's preschool had relevance to understanding their experiences and perceptions resulting from their parental engagement program.

Summary

CRT, experiential learning, social learning theory, and andragogy are four theories that constituted this study's conceptual framework. Although each theory could stand alone as the conceptual framework, the combined frameworks created a stronger guide to address race, adult learning, and self-efficacy. The frameworks used in this study addressed each area of the research with an awareness of the impact race had on learning, perceptions, and systemic inequalities. CRT suggests that racism is normalized as it advances the interest of one race over another. The consequences of inequality in education lend to the continuation of systemic oppression in the educational setting. Using CRT as a guide to develop interview questions, I was more conscious of power, position, and how race impacts perception.

Experiential learning, andragogy, and social learning theories guided the development of interview questions and interaction with the participants. Andragogy provided the six assumptions related to how adult learners process information. Learning based on experiences or shared experiences is useful when the adult learner is attentive, retains the information, can share the information, and is motivated toward engagement (Chametzky, 2016). Using the four

frameworks as a single lens in this study enabled me to analyze the data to understand urban parents' experiences engaging in an innovative parental engagement program.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

The main topics related to urban parents' experiences in a parental engagement program were parental engagement programs, cultural issues related to diversity, parents' perceptions of parental engagement programs, and effective parent engagement programs with a focus on understanding effective parental engagement programs for preschool children.

Parental Engagement Programs

Research related to parental engagement in schools addressed various topics. Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, and Marvin (2011) described parental engagement in education as behaviors that are interactive, purposeful, and directed. Dishion and Kavanagh (2003) referred to parental engagement as parental support within a school context that advances student achievement and reduces problematic behaviors. Parental engagement is one of the most significant agency or organizational assets often ignored or underutilized in the educational setting.

Research has shown a strong correlation between the engagement of parents in the education setting and student success. Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2015) found that early educational experiences inform parental engagement. Findings also revealed resilience among these families despite adverse obstacles and societal challenges. Regardless of the challenges or parental disengagement during their formative years, participants were actively engaged in their children's education. However, parents with a history of positive formative parental engagement used those experiences to expand their current involvement level.

Park, Stone, and Holloway (2017) found explicit indications of student achievement and invigorating learning environments in schools where significant numbers of parents engaged in school activities and had developed an expansive peer network. Park et al. also found that parents who participated in school-based parent organizations, such as the PTA, fundraising activities, and volunteering, had a higher percentage of students excelling in math and reading at the state and national levels. As the parents became more engaged in student learning, student achievement increased.

Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, and Brand-Gruwel's (2018) analyzed 75 studies published between 2003 and 2017 to investigate the correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. Boonk et al. (2018) found that 22 of the 75 studies highlighted this correlation at the early childhood level. Most of the studies indicated positive associations and affirmed an association between involvement and achievement.

Kunjufu (2012) identified parental engagement in more specific ways. For instance, parental engagement is monitoring a child's educational plan, observing what takes place in the learning environment, maintaining structure and balance in the home, taking a holistic approach to child-rearing, expressing high expectations for learning, and deciding the best learning environment for their child. Other aspects included parent-teacher home visits, consistent communication with school administrators and staff, organizing and facilitating school activities, and serving on advisory boards.

Epstein's Framework for Traditional Outreach Programs

Epstein (1995) developed a framework that identifies the characteristics of traditional parental engagement programs. Epstein's framework focused on traditional outreach programs

and often is used as an example of what constitutes parent engagement. In 1995, Joyce Epstein designed the framework to assist schools with developing family partnerships. According to Johnson (2015), Dr. Epstein's research centers on analyzing school systems, school environments, and community collaborations to establish solid partnerships to support all children in formal and informal learning environments.

The framework's six key points have been used in numerous articles relating to parent involvement. Dr. Epstein's initial research suggested using the framework with schools, kindergarten through high school, focused on fostering and expanding parent involvement. Johnson (2015) further asserts that Dr. Epstein presumed children who felt valued and challenged academically would, in all likelihood, become better students. Pavlakis (2018) used Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence and the six types of involvement to acquire organizational expertise from the model and evaluate it contextually from a homelessness and high mobility vantage point.

Robinson (2017) used Epstein's perspectives on parent engagement as the central theoretical framework for a study involving collaborative partnerships, poverty, minorities, and educational leaders. According to Robinson (2017), Epstein's typology illustrates successful parental engagement models, effective school and home collaborations, and effective parental partnerships in educational settings. Robinson (2017) found ambitious parent and educator organizations have the potential, when collaborating, to identify areas in need of improvement through joint planning and implementation of evaluative program measures.

Additionally, relationships developed through these shared partnerships with school leaders provide a voice to traditionally marginalized stakeholders by affording opportunities to

engage in conversations that approach alternative advocacy routes for their children. Johnson (2015) ultimately finds that Epstein's presumption of children feeling valued and academically challenged, leading to success, does fall under an ecological paradigm. It removes race from the equation and places more emphasis on parental responsibility to engagement than the school's responsibility to engage the parent.

Although Epstein's model is used widely, Harry, Kalyanpur, and Day (1999) asserted the framework's earlier use as a culture-ignorant model. According to the researchers, the framework model lacks a cultural lens by which intersections of race, ability, disability, income, and education can be examined. Bower and Griffin (2011) acknowledge the Epstein model works to inspire parents' voices in the formal learning environment and their contributions to the home. However, Bower and Griffin (2011) assert the model fails to address a primary form of community collaboration among African Americans, their church.

Bower and Griffin (2011) further assert a significant number of studies using the Epstein Model do not consider dissimilarities in race and ethnicity but suggest a general approach to parental involvement. Parental involvement strategies should consider race and ethnicity because research has established differences in parental involvement among different races. Barbarin, McCandies, Coleman, and Hill (2005) found that African American families spend more time in home-based activities with their children than Euro American parents. However, due to the complexity of measuring this type of engagement, African American parents are often not validated for these differences (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Greene (2015) reasons Epstein's model supposes equal standings among schools and families and neglects to recognize the roles ideology and supremacy play in policymaking and

rules. According to Greene (2015), parent involvement alone is not sufficient for educational success, but access to social, cultural, economic, and policy capital can enable families to gain an advantage for their children. This study's focus is to understand these aspects of an urban outreach program through the lens of critical race theory to fill the gap in these studies of parental outreach programs.

The Epstein model (Greene, 2015) was designed to assist schools, parents, and communities with strategies to support parent involvement at all educational levels. The model suggests an equal partnership between all stakeholders and provides a basis to implement and facilitate engagement. The model is comprehensive and used as a framework in multiple parent involvement studies (Dery-Chaffin, 2020; Gahwaji, 2019; Thomas, DeBacker, Peeters, & Lombaerts, 2019), However, without considering equity, culture, and racial differences, the model is not sufficient to understand diversity and culture in U.S. schools. This study will address these issues by using the lens of CRT and parent interviews to define the real-world issues inherent in parental engagement programs for their preschool children.

Issues in Parent Engagement Programs

Research has identified issues that decrease parent engagement in traditional parent outreach programs. Inoa (2017) identified barriers such as parents having multiple jobs, demanding work schedules, living in double-income households where both the mother and the father work, and a lack of English proficiency. Williams and Sanchez (2013) identified time poverty, minimal access to programs, financial resources, and awareness as four critical factors limiting parental involvement. Parsons, Walsemann, Jones, Knopf, and Blake (2018) suggest practices often used by school administrators to increase parent involvement are constructed on

the dominant culture's ideals and values. These practices often negate the numerous ways parents of color engage in their children's education.

Milner (2013) found parent apprehension, as parents often experienced mixed messages with school systems. School leaders and officials encourage parents to participate. However, engagement is often a perceived partnership or dictated view; reinforcing power inequities between parents and schools created by dominant institutional authorities (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017). This discounts different forms of engagement and creates an inaccurate view of parent engagement in predominately African American families.

Research by Milner (2013) concluded that parent engagement extends beyond the traditional views of engagement. Parent and family engagement may entail home-based activities, student progress monitoring, communication via text messaging, phone or emails to teachers and administrators, parent-teacher collaborations, fund-raising activities, field trips, extracurricular activities, staffing concession stands, classroom volunteering, and working with advisory boards and councils. However, deficit views of African American parents from lower socioeconomic status and their capability to support their children educationally have led to misconceptions of roles and responsibilities of families and schools related to the acquisition of knowledge and growth (Harry & Klingner, 2005; Kunjufu, 2012). As a result, often, African American families feel their efforts to engage educationally within the context of the standard view of engagement are ignored by schools and institutions (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016).

Although there are distinct differences in how parents of color engage with schools, schools recognize the importance of parent participation. Parents are so crucial that legislation like the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 included parent and community

partnerships as central to the equation of academic success. It goes so far as to change the language of "parental involvement" with "parent and family engagement." The change was a means to include provisions for programs and practices that specifically address innovative parent engagement strategies that serve families categorized as disadvantaged (Fenton, Ocasio-Stoutenburg, & Harry, 2017). However, according to Milner (2013), engagement is often a perceived partnership between schools and parents or one-sided, employing expectations of how engagement should be viewed. Ambiguity based on these perceptions often leads to mixed messages and the appropriate response from schools that constitutes authentic engagement for urban parents. This study addressed these issues by defining the experiences of parents in an innovative urban parental engagement program.

Cultural Issues Related to Parent Engagement

The many definitions and views of parent engagement were essential, especially when understanding it from a cultural view. Often used is a Eurocentric ideology as the basis for what constitutes acceptable engagement. Conversations involving the achievement gap between African American students and others are often inaccurately associated with parent engagement. Latunde and Clark-Louque (2016) found that African American parents of lower socioeconomic status were viewed as apathetic when it came to their children's education. Unfortunately, race often plays an integral part in how engagement strategies are viewed and facilitated (Diamond, Wang, & Gomez, 2006).

Research by González and Jackson (2013) suggests that parent engagement increases when engagement is culturally relevant. Culture determines what values and traditions individuals embrace, their mindsets, and their mannerisms (Johnson, 2015). Culture is broad and

inclusive. It is not limited to race, ethnicity, or language. Porter and Samovar (1994) define culture as an inclusion of a collective union of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion, and roles attained by a group of people during generations through individual and group striving.

Given that culture shapes an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and actions, some parents may experience challenges to engagement within educational systems. People from diverse cultural groups think, feel, and act differently (Bhattacharya, 2010). When engagement is only viewed through a single cultural lens, diversity is absent from the conversation.

A study conducted by LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) concluded that cultural concerns between educators and parents often resulted from comprehension deficiencies of diverse cultures. Because culture influences an individual's viewpoints, opinions, and behaviors, some parents find it challenging to engage in various activities within educational systems (Malone, 2015). Teachers, educators, and staff must understand cultures specific to the parents and students they serve. Without a clear understanding of culture, perceptions can lead to misunderstandings.

Historically, ethnic minority subgroups view parent engagement differently than their European-American counterparts. These differences are often viewed negatively, suggesting that parents from these subgroups somehow are not as engaged as their counterparts (Chang, Park, Singh, & Sung, 2009). Some research implies a great deal of parent engagement by African American parents and other ethnic minorities may be subtler than found in European American and Asian American families (Jeynes, 2006, 2010, 2015). However, without a real understanding

of these differences, perceptions regarding how these parents value education become distorted and inaccurate.

Culture was identified by Malone (2015) as a potential barrier to parent engagement. Research conducted by Cadre Organization (2017) of the Los Angeles United School district identified hundreds of parents who felt powerless, disregarded, and discriminated against due to language, culture, life experiences, and racial stereotypes. As they advocated for their children, parents shared that anti-Black racism was a prominent factor in the inequitable treatment of their children.

This unfortunate attitude had carried over into the parent engagement sphere. However, if parents were more engaged, many of the issues affecting their children would be nonexistent. Former Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan is quoted as saying that parents' misperceptions of themselves as involved in their children's education lead to an "insidious paralysis in civic life," as they wait for others to solve the problems that plague their children's schools (Duncan, 2010). If this statement held, one could say that Burch's (2001) explanation on the attitudes and behaviors of citizens from economically challenged (overwhelming people of color) are taught to be governed may be one source of demeaning interchanges and hostile perceptions persons in the field of education have towards to these parents.

Parent Perceptions

Perception, as defined by the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary (2018), is a thought, belief, or opinion, often held by many people and based on appearances. This is extremely important as it relates to parent engagement. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), a parent's role is constructed from beliefs conceived primarily through

observation and personal intergenerational modeling and experiences; thus, often leading to intentional or unintentional parental engagement practices.

Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez (2015) found that pre-existing urban parents' pre-existing concepts in educational settings directly correlated to their early educational experiences. Baquedano- López, Alexander, and Hernandez (2013) suggest parental participation in schools is acutely formed by perceptions of parents' social class and by functions expected of them by school leaders, instructors, and systems of government that finance parent engagement programs (Auerbach, 2002; Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Vincent, 2001). When parents feel competent and valued by educators, school leaders, and school personnel, parent engagement increases (Bauman & Wasserman, 2010); parents who perceive the school environment as not welcoming or their presence as a threat are less likely to be engaged.

McGue, Rustichini, and Iacono (2017) suggest that familiar transmission or intergenerational modeling and educational achievement experiences influence social inequality. Kim (2014) suggests that children from high socio-economic status increase due to value placement on academics and high parental expectations. McGue et al. (2017) found parents from high socio-economic statuses create cultures that build their children's social capital (Portes, 1998) and construct social networks where academic achievement is demonstrated and esteemed (Kim, 2014).

Research by Harding, Morris, and Hughes (2015) found highly educated mothers were more likely than lesser educated mothers to connect to social networks involving knowledge, skills, and resources significant to their children's academic success. In contrast, mothers with lower education established social networks with extended family members in similar situations.

These practices lend to intergenerational modeling and experiences of parent engagement practices.

Research by Walker et al. (2005) found that parents' demands influence parental role construction. Busy work schedules, negative encounters with school stresses, and school expectations (Jeynes, 2011) can influence parents' efficacy for engagement. Without a clear understanding of roles, some parents will relinquish their children's education to teachers (Lareau & Shumar, 1996).

Educators and others in the formal learning environment are not always cognizant of how their demeanor, whether verbal or nonverbal, appears to families from lower socioeconomic statuses. For example, LaRocque et al. (2011) found that African-American parents, who had not experienced a great deal of success or encountered inequitable treatment, while students, may foster lingering mistrust of the school system, and may feel as parents that they lack the wherewithal to provide adequate educational support to their children. Parents, without a clear understanding of their role in their child's education, may experience confusion and hesitancy to join in future parent involvement efforts (Price-Mitchell, 2009; Bandura, 1977a; Lawson, 2003).

Parent perspectives concerning engagement tend to be broader than those assigned to them by school officials, teachers, and staff (Ladner, 2006). Furthermore, the way parents view their role in engagement may be misunderstood by the educational community, thus impacting their efforts to inspire parental engagement. Understanding how urban parents perceive their role and their roles in educating their children provides a needed link between the school and the urban parents. This study aimed to understand how urban parents experience school engagement programs and fill the research gap in this area.

Urban Parent Engagement Programs

Parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds experience significant challenges related to engaging in the education of their children. A frequent fallacy in educational circles suggests that parents from low socioeconomic statuses do not value education because they are often not present at school functions or events (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Barriers that make direct involvement problematic include time, transportation, lack of financial resources, and lack of awareness of school activities (Williams & Sánchez, 2013). Recognizing the many barriers to parent engagement, educational entities have formulated strategies to support parent engagement through parents' learning initiatives. Parent universities, centers, grants, and technology are innovative strategies to promote parent engagement and lifelong learning.

Gilford Parent Academy is an example of an innovative engagement program for parents. It began as part of a collaborative strategic plan established in 2011 (Mendez & Swick, 2018). The academy's mission is to provide information and training to parents and family members caring for children and youth residing in the county. Spearheading the academy is a team made of parents, educators, and community members who partner with employers to identify topics of interest through various workshops. These workshops are conducted during the lunch hour ranging from thirty to ninety minutes (p. 257).

The academy hires parents as liaisons to host workshops or demonstrate online resources to parents. Information is disseminated through the school's website, flyers, bulletins, electronic devices, social media, and word of mouth. Mendez and Swick (2018) attribute the program's success to the academy's ability to increase its reach to families, strong leadership, parent liaisons, and the program's focus on students' well-being and academic success. A significant

aspect of the program is the coordination with Guilford County Schools and their inclusion of the academy in their 2015-2018 strategic plan.

Reynolds, Hayakawa, Ou, Mondi, Englund, Candee, and Smerillo (2017) conducted a study on the Midwest Child-Parent Center Preschool to Third Grade Program as an approach for scaling and sustaining an evidence-based preventive intervention. Their research found six vital elements to the center's program, collaborative leadership, compelling learning experiences, aligned curriculum and practices, continuity and stability, parent involvement and engagement, and professional development (Reynolds et al., 2017, p. 1455). Each partner associated with the center made critical investments necessary for effective implementation, such as time, financial capital, and physical space.

Each site provides supportive services and comprehensive education to parents. The center concept develops school readiness skills, increases early school achievement, and promotes parent involvement. Specific to parent engagement is the menu-based program that concentrates on family needs while reinforcing the school-family partnership, sustainment of parent involvement in children's education, and enhanced support for educational attainment, career opportunities, and personal development (Reynolds et al., 2017 p.1459).

Research by Brock and Edmunds (2010) had identified issues inherent in urban parent engagement programs. Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) conducted an extensive literature review of successful parent engagement programs. Evidence was presented in three categories: (a) school-home links, (b) support and training for parents, and (c) family and community-based interventions. One of the results identified as a characteristic of a successful parent engagement

program is the measures taken to overcome potential participants' barriers to accessing the intervention.

Van Mourik, Crone, De Wolff, and Reis (2017) conducted a meta-analysis that focused on parent training programs for ethnic minority families. They found many parent training programs adapted program content to make it culturally appropriate for their targeted audience. Adaptions were in language, people, and material specific to cultural customs and contextual influences.

As a result, programs culturally relevant were more successful in improving parenting behaviors than those without cultural relevance. Their study also found that programs established in multi-ethnic disadvantaged neighborhoods must be sensitive to the targeted audience's diversity to ensure successful parent engagement. Furthermore, Mejia et al. (2016) propose that parent engagement programs have built-in flexibility that allows both parents and professionals to adjust program components unique to their values norms of the families served. Research by Cadre Organization (2017) has shown that urban parental perceptions of their child's school and teacher expectations change how they engage.

In their research article titled Beyond the Bake Sale, a community-based relational approach to parent engagement in schools, Warren, Hong, Rubin, and Uy (2009) captured the essential elements of parent engagement programs across the United States. According to the research results, the community-based approaches addressed relationship building, parent leadership development, cultural awareness, and shared power between parents and educators. Each of the parent engagement programs chosen was identified as having well-established collaborations and had been in existence for several years.

A study was conducted at Patrick O'Hearn Elementary in Boston, MA, by Mapp (2003) to understand factors contributing to developing a successful parent engagement program. Mapp chose Patrick O'Hearn Elementary school for two crucial reasons: an active family engagement program and a diverse racially, ethnic, and societal population. Their study proposed that parent engagement is motivated by a school culture that values and works determinedly to inspire respectful and reciprocal relationships with parents. Their findings also point out that school leaders' accountability, support, and intentional involvement were essential to build and maintain a culture within the school setting that welcomes full participation from parents.

The five major themes which emerged from the study were:

1. Theme one: Parents had an ardent desire for their children to do well in school and help their children excel academically.
2. Theme two: Parents had a clear understanding of how engagement aided in their children's educational development.
3. Theme three: Parents were engaged in their children's education in the school setting and home setting.
4. Theme four: Social factors stemming from the personal experiences and histories of parents significantly influenced their participation.
5. Theme five: There is a correlation between parent/school relationships and its impact on parent engagement.

Warren Study

A longitudinal study conducted by Warren et al. (2009) studied three urban parent engagement programs to understand the issues inherent in these programs. Warren et al. (2009)

used a generic qualitative study to conduct their research. Data collection was collected in two rounds. The first round, conducted in 2004, was designed to identify each model's key features through documentation during each case's development. The second round of collection was completed in 2005 to examine the processes of parent engagement. In each case, the theoretical framework was used to navigate the critical process of understanding how to build relationships between parents and schools and establish trust and cooperation to benefit the children. Twenty participants from each location were used in the sample.

The programs studied were in Newark, NJ, Los Angeles, CA, and Chicago, Il. Each city has individuals from diverse backgrounds, high crime rates, poverty, and other social ills that pose a challenge to parent engagement. Each school represents at least one essential element of a successful parent engagement program. These elements are found in the three models identified and used to highlight their successes.

The researchers chose Quitman Community School in Newark, NJ, as their service model for parental outreach. Within this model, partnerships were coordinated with service-delivery organizations and public schools to provide a range of comprehensive services to the community. Often these services include but are not limited to extended day programs, evening classes, and wellness services for students and their families.

Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago, Il, was chosen as the organizing model in the study. The organizing model emphasizes collaboration with community organizations who seek to influence social and political change within the school setting through relationship building, leadership development, and public action (Warren et al., 2009).

The last model in the study, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy in Los Angeles, CA, was chosen as the development model. Within the development model, community development corporations team up with educators to foster community-based schools' development and implementation. Research on these urban parent outreach programs is discussed below, including results relevant to my study.

Service Model

The Quitman Street Community School was chosen by the researchers in this longitudinal study as the service model. The Quitman Street Community School is in an extreme poverty area. According to the researchers, the school's African American student population represents the poorest of the poor, with over 90 % of its students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals (Warren et al., 2009). Jobs and adequate housing were minimal. Many children were reared by grandparents, relatives or resided in the foster care system. Gentrification has dislocated many families, and immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia have taken up residence (Warren et al., 2009. p. 2217).

In 1996, Quitman School partnered with Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey (CACNJ) and adopted a full-service community school model. The agency, CACNJ, had been in the neighborhood for over 100 years. With the model's adoption, the school provides physicals, dental, and mental health services to the students and their families. Besides, the school provides extended daycare, tutoring, and enrichment classes. Quitman uses a comprehensive approach to education. There is a cultural understanding that factors such as the environment, physical, and psychological affect a student's ability to learn. The school affords students opportunities to learn and provides employment and housing services to their families.

Because many of the parents were hesitant to become involved and had little trust in the initial project, Quitman's staff understood the only way the initiative would succeed would be through relationship building. School programs are family-focused and based on the needs of the parents. The program organizes workshops and support groups to sustain and to engage parents.

For years these parents had negative experiences in the school. They expressed a continued cycle of the same problems they experienced as students repeating with their children (Warren et al., 2009). Awareness of this issue led these programs to become family-focused and parent-centered. Once the parents realized the program was not going anywhere and could be trusted as partners to help educate their children, their perceptions and engagement levels changed (Warren et al., 2009). This program stood out because it viewed parent engagement as an interdependent relationship with parents.

Organizing Model

The third urban parental engagement program researched was the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (Warren et al., 2009). The Association is in Chicago, Il, and can boast as one of the city's oldest community organizations. The association works collaboratively with seven elementary and one middle school, focusing on developing parent leadership. The researchers chose the Association because of its strong community organization. Two key factors that have led to the program's success are the parent mentor program and leadership focus development.

The program adopted a parent curriculum that encompassed a leader's quality, building one-on-one relationships, improved communication with teachers, and building self-esteem. The curriculum's motivation centered on the belief that parents with good self-esteem help develop

their families' self-esteem within their families. The Parent Mentor program is the first level of engagement that parents are invited to participate. During this engagement level, mentors set personal goals that can be completed within 6-12 months (Warren et al., 2009).

Mentors participate in community campaigns such as promoting health and housing issues. Once parents complete engagement at this level, they move to the Literacy Ambassador program. While at this level, parents begin to further their skills as leaders. They continue to set goals on a higher level. Individuals who may need additional schooling can take GED classes or other classes to enhance their skills.

The next level of parent engagement researched was Nueva Generation, which prepares parents to become certified bilingual teachers. Parents enroll in a tuition-free program, which leads to parents becoming a significant part of the learning community. Another program offered to parents is an opportunity to become a Literacy Ambassador. The Literacy Ambassador places together, parents and educators together to visit the homes of other parents.

The program found that when parents, teachers, administrators, and others work together, long-lasting relationships were established (Warren et al., 2009). The Association intentionally designed complementary programs that kept parents engaged. According to the researchers, parents often exclaimed about the wonders of the programs. The Association continued to add to the program as the needs of the parents shifted. The Association provided a program structure and content that fostered the parent's capacity to participate and lead at various levels. The development of a core group of parents was instrumental in establishing a solid foundation centered around parent leadership within the Association.

Development Models

The researchers (Warren et al., 2009) identified the Camino Nuevo Charter Academy in Los Angeles, CA, as the development model addressed in the study. The academy results from Pueblo Nuevo Development Corporation's desire to develop a community-based learning institution that would engage parents and staff and bring about social change and neighborhood development. Before implementing the academy, 16,000 students were bussed to other schools outside of their MacArthur neighborhood. This posed a fundamental problem for many parents who did not have the means or transportation mode to access and participate in school activities.

Additionally, many of the schools where the students were bussed did not speak Spanish, making it more difficult for non-English parents to communicate with school staff. During the fall of 2000, Camino Nuevo introduced two elementary school campuses to the community. Several years later, the academy had expanded to serve students at the preschool, middle, and high school levels. The academy served over 1,200 students across its seven campuses. More than ninety-seven percent of their students received free or reduced meals, and sixty-five percent are English language learners.

Camino Nuevo's ideology regarding parent engagement comes from a place that ensures parents feel welcome and respected. During the school's implementation, Camino Nuevo made sure that at least half of the hired educational staff were bilingual. Additionally, the school made sure programs were culturally relevant and respectful to the community in which it serves. School administrators showed their commitment and availability to parents by trying to attend all school workshops and events. One principal started a monthly coffee with the principal to allow

parents to share information and discuss concerns. The event was eventually taken over by the parents and facilitated monthly.

Camino Nuevo is a charter school and can require parents to participate in ways most public schools cannot. For instance, parents of students from Camino are required to volunteer at least 15 hours a year. Parents sign a contract and decide how they would like to volunteer in the school, from aiding the classroom teacher to monitoring the hallways. Parents who have a restrictive schedule due to work or other commitments can volunteer by preparing classroom materials in their homes. Another way all parents can participate is by attending workshops. Workshops are based on the needs of the parents (Warren et al., 2009).

Camino Nuevo required parents to volunteer and provided opportunities for parents to take on paid positions as paraprofessionals at the academy. These positions have offered parents an opportunity to be with their children and support the school at the same time. Because of the programs and activities put in place by Camino Nuevo to support parent engagement within four years, the academy saw its workshop participation increase from 10 to 100 parents. Camino Nuevo did not stop with the volunteer activities, paid paraprofessional positions, or workshops but went a step further by cultivating an authentic parent leadership program. Parents were part of school-site councils that engage in policymaking schoolwide. Camino Nuevo ensured parent engagement was nurtured at the academy and flourished in the community by building on the parents' strengths and offering continued support.

The research reviewed in this section is based on the success of the urban parent engagement programs by building positive relationships. By building relationships through engagement levels, each program has found a way to attract parents and make a lasting impact

on family, school, and community. Parent engagement is not viewed in the context of individuality but in the context of community. The researchers (Warren et al., 2009) acknowledged that every parent that entered the program would not likely become a school leader. However, with the supports and programs put in place, all parents would have an opportunity to be effectively engaged. This study delineated the salient aspects of an innovative urban parental engagement program by using the CRT lens to define the influence of culture on developing relationships between the school, educators, and parents. As a result, this study fills a gap in understanding the parents' perspectives on engagement programs' type and quality of engagement.

Parent Engagement Programs for Preschool Children

There are thousands of preschool programs across the United States, found in rural, suburban, and urban locals. Three preschool programs chosen for this study were the Montessori school, Parent Coop for Early Learning, and Head Start. Each of these programs adds a different dimension to the view of successful parent engagement. The Montessori school has been educating children for more than a century (Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006). While Head Start has been educating and serving parents for more than half a century and has served over 32 million children since 1965 (History of Head Start, 2018). Surprisingly, Parent Coop for Early Learning has been in existence for just over a century (Baty, 2005). What makes each of these programs unique is the significance of the success of their program's parent engagement.

Montessori Preschool. Public Montessori schools are the largest alternative pedagogy in the United States public school system serving 125,000 students (Debs & Brown, 2017). Montessori education is frequently associated with some of the best private institutions.

However, over 500 public Montessori schools have a 50-year history in the public sector (NCMPS, 2014b). Montessori schools have traditionally served Caucasians and children of well-educated parents (Lillard, 2012); however, Montessori schools have become increasingly diverse. In a survey of 300 of the 500 public Montessori schools during the 2012-2013 school year, 54% of the students were of color (Debs & Brown, 2017).

During the 2012-2013 school year, the number of African American students attending public Montessori schools was 11% higher than the national rate for public schools (Deb, 2016). A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (Duncan & Santy, 2015) showed that African American and Latino children attend preschool at lower rates than Caucasian peers. However, Ansari and Winsler (2014) found modest developmental gains for African American students and substantial gains for Latino students attending a Montessori pre-k program in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Montessori is an early childhood program known to endorse school readiness, academic development, and non-cognitive skills (Debs & Brown, 2017). Its standards contain many elements of a high-quality learning program (Wechsler, Kirp, Ali, Gardner, Maier, Melnick & Shields, 2016). Unfortunately, according to the U. S. Department of Education (Duncan & Santy, 2015), African American preschoolers are most likely to attend low-quality preschools. Gaining access to public Montessori preschool classes can significantly improve early learning for African American preschoolers and other children of various races (Debs & Brown, 2017).

According to the Association Montessori International, parents play an essential part in Montessori education. Each part is distinctive, vital, and interconnected. It is often compared to an equilateral triangle. Although each part is different, each is interdependent. Educators provide

social stimulation in a formal learning environment, while parents provide their first community experience.

The Montessori method is centered on the principles of human development. These principals are vital to teachers and parents. For teachers to successfully create and facilitate an environment of learning, a thorough understanding of human development is necessary. Teachers were not the only ones required to possess this knowledge. Through the Montessori method's tenets, parents were encouraged to familiarize themselves with this knowledge, which ensured cooperative learning in both the home and school environment.

If parents were not familiar with the tenets, it became difficult to create an environment in the home that supported their education and development. Another way the Montessori programs promote parent engagement is through home visits. According to Patton (2015), home visits are an excellent way for teachers to establish an initial connection to the child and their family. It puts the child at ease, strengthens the home and school partnership, and fosters open dialog (Irving, 2017).

The Children's House at the Infinity Children's School in Hong Kong implemented a policy to ensure parents were educated in the Montessori philosophy by mandating that parents attend eight hours of parent education classes before enrolling their children in the program (Irving, 2017). According to Lau and Yau (2015), a successful parent education program offers a balance of theory and practice, providing parents with tools that promote the application and support the home's parent-child relationship.

Additionally, the school had created an environment that supports parent classes to observe and learn from instructors on how to model teacher/student interaction in the home

(Irving, 2017). Parent classes to promote learning does not end with the eight-hour classes but continues at minimum for a year after enrollment. The American Montessori does not mandate parent education but suggests that parent education programs should promote an understanding of Montessori principles and curriculum and secure parent commitment to the program.

Although parents participated in several ways, such as volunteering, field trip accompaniments, and school events, significant emphasis was placed on the parent education component related to understanding the program's tenets, which determine the school's success. The child, parent, and teacher were found as principal elements interconnected by a relationship that transcended their social-economic backgrounds to create, explore, express, and become partners in education. The heightened awareness of parents' tenets through joint collaboratives yielded opportunities for each to work in unison to support students in educational spaces.

Head Start. Head Start is the largest early childhood education program in the United States (Kline & Walters, 2016). It began as an eight-week summer program in 1965 as one of President Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty initiatives, and the following year evolved into a full-year comprehensive program. The program serves children living below the federal poverty guidelines. However, grantees can accept up to 10 percent of their enrollment from parents with incomes exceeding the federal poverty guidelines. Additionally, grantees are required to match at least 20 percent of their awards from other sources (Kline & Walters, 2016).

According to a study by Reid and Kagan (2015), Head Start was designed to serve economically challenged students living in poverty, foster care, temporary housing, and with disabilities. Washington and Bailey (1987) suggested the uniqueness of Head Start was the ability to intersect a daycare concept with medical treatment while emphasizing the student's

psychological development to ensure school readiness and the introduction of a social services and parent education component.

Another aspect of its uniqueness was its quest to give low-income families a voice through parent involvement (Hinitz, 2014). Programs would form Parent Policy Councils, which would give parents executive responsibilities. Through a collaborative approach, these councils would plan the center environment, curriculum, and employment as classroom assistants. Furthermore, the councils would assist in the hiring and termination of staff while acquiring empowerment tactics to become catalysts for community change (pg.95).

In 1975, Head Start introduced performance standards to include parent involvement. These standards governed the types of services each program would provide. The standards were the primary mechanism for monitoring quality. Performance Standards, section 70.2, mandated that parents of children served in the program constitute a majority on the policy council board. Head Start policy councils' makeup reflects 51% of parent members and 49% of community members. The standards also illustrated the board's functions related to engaging parents in the decision-making aspects in various operational areas. According to Ellsworth and Ames (1998), the performance standards differentiated Head Start from other social service programs and public schools by offering explicit, active responsibilities for parents in the curriculum, finance, human resources, and program policy.

The most recent performance standards were introduced in 2016. The phrase family engagement has replaced parent involvement. The revised standards reemphasized the role of the parent and Head Start's responsibility to ensure parents are intentionally engaged. Performance Standard 1302.50 defines family engagement, how it is recognized, what constitutes it, and its

implementation guidelines. For instance, each program must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development. This standard also mandates parents' recognition as the student's primary teacher, parental relationship development, parental collaboration, and cultural sensitivity relevance.

Performance Standard 1302.51 is another standard addressing parent engagement. This standard mandates programs that promote shared responsibility with parents for their child's early learning and development, along with implemented strategies designed to cultivate confidence and competencies in promoting children's learning and development. Adherence to this standard requires programs to offer activities that support parent-child relationships, attendance, culturally appropriate resources, and opportunities to participate in a research-based parenting curriculum.

The last standard relating to Family engagement is 1302.52. This standard mandates implementing a family partnership process that includes a family partnership agreement and activities to support the family. Programs must implement intake and family assessment procedures to identify family strengths and needs and individualized family partnership services.

In 2011, The Office of Head Start developed the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). The framework outlines seven outcomes that necessitate the observance of efforts to engage parents: (a) family well-being, (b) positive parent-child relationships, (c) families as lifelong educators, (d) families as learners, (e) family engagement in transitions, (f) family connections to peers and community, and (g) families as advocates and leaders. The PFCE Framework builds on

many years of parent involvement in Head Start (pg.6). According to the researchers of the Framework, programs using the framework in a systemic and integrated manner are more likely to achieve family engagement success (pg. 21)

The use of the performance standards, the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework, and commitment to parents makes the Head Start program stand out in promoting parent engagement. Oneway Head Start recognizes outstanding programs is through its Quality Initiative or QI program. Programs are recognized for excellence at the national level. To be eligible to apply, programs must have an active National Head Start Association membership, be in full compliance with the performance standards and other regulations and not be subject to competition.

A panel of experts reviews applications over several months; once a program receives this award, the responsibility to remain in compliance is essential. Programs must inform the National Head Start Association (NHSA) immediately should an incidence such as non-compliance, deficiency, audit finding, or any legal action affecting their excellence status. NHSA may suspend or permanently revoke this distinction when the designated program no longer meets quality standards at this level. The award term is five years, and programs can submit a letter to apply for the distinction before the designation end date.

Parents in Community Action of Minneapolis, MN, which operates an Early Head Start and Head Start program, has been a recipient of the Quality Initiative Performance Excellence and Quality Recognition Program for nearly twenty years. Parents in Community Action is a private, nonprofit program founded in 1969 by a group of parents. The program first received the award in 1999 and has since maintained this award. The program is known for its in-house

parent training programs, pioneering male involvement work, and inter-agency collaboration. The parent training programs include infant/toddler development, preschool child development, clerical training, transportation training, and food service training. In addition to the training programs, parents are invited to learn and participate in program governance opportunities. Program governance includes the oversite of areas within the agency such as finance, human resources, program planning, policy development, and community government.

Each center within the program elects center-based parent officers who choose delegates to represent them on PICA's policy council. The policy council is made up of parent representatives from each of the sites and community partners. As mandated by the Head Start Performance Standards, at least 51% of policy council representatives must be parents. The policy council is responsible for reviewing and approving funding applications, budgets, personnel actions, and any policy changes impacting PICA's Head Start program.

Once the children of the parents transition out of the program, PICA continues to engage them. For instance, the PICA Board of Directors comprises community members in which at least 50% are former Head Start parents. Current and former parents are invited to participate and serve on three advisory committees: Health and Disability Services, Social Services, and Education. However, one of the most empowering committees offered by PICA is their VIP, Valuing the Involvement of Parents Committee. This committee was designed to allow parents to learn about various types and levels of government by equipping them with essential skills to become informed and involved (Pica Head Start, nd).

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County Inc. Migrant & Seasonal Head Start is another recipient of the Quality Initiative Performance Excellence award. The

Community Action Partnership offers the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, Early Head Start, and Head Start for low-income families in San Luis Obispo and Northern San Diego Counties. The agency began providing Head Start services in 1966. In 1981, the agency began serving migrant farm working families. The program offers a blend of center-based preschool and family childcare options that accommodate the migrant families' working and living environments. Two thousand five hundred children and their families are served annually from nine surrounding counties. Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo has been recognized for its innovative models in childcare, parent, and community engagement. A unique attribute is a professional development to parents, community partners and staff, and technology-based training.

Children First is another example of a Head Start program that holds the Program of Excellence distinction. Out of 1,800, The National Head Start Association has awarded nine Head Start programs the "Program of Excellence." Children First has continually demonstrated fiscal accountability and best outcomes for at-risk children, pregnant women, families, and their communities. Children First has received this honor four consecutive times. According to their recent community assessment, the program serves more than 600 children at 13 different Sarasota County locations. More than 95% of families served by the program live below the federal poverty level.

Children First offers traditional Head Start services but in an innovative way. For instance, all Head Start programs offer early childhood education, nutrition, health screenings, and social-emotional support. However, Children First uses a more innovative approach to these services by incorporating initiatives such as: Nurturing Dads Initiative, Families First Institute,

Mental Wellness Support Program, Raise Your Hand Campaign, and Take Stock in Children. These initiatives, along with a strong board and community partners, make Children First a model program.

One initiative that encompasses the seven outcomes of the Head Start Family and Community Engagement Framework is Take Stock in Children. In 2013 Children First and Emma E. Booker Elementary School formed a partnership to develop a Take Stock in Children initiative at the primary school level. Take Stock in Children is a Florida initiative in over 800 Florida schools. The target student population for this initiative is 6th through 9th graders. Every student is assigned a professional college success coach who provides college coaching, college readiness workshops, and interventions. Once students complete the program, they are eligible for a Florida Prepaid Scholarship.

Like the Take Stock in Children Initiative, the collaboration between Children First and Booker Elementary School provide preschool children, and their families continued support through 3rd grade. Each family is assigned a Take Stock in Children First Family Advocate who facilitates case-management, home visits, quarterly family engagement events, and referrals to social service providers. The overall goal is to strengthen the family's commitment to life-long learning.

Each of the three programs has received the Quality of Excellence Award due to their outstanding commitment to high-quality early childhood education. High-quality early childhood education affords children a strong foundation that places children on a college or career path (Wechsler, Melnick, Maier & Bishop, 2016). According to Elango, García, Heckman, and Hojman (2015), investments in high-quality early childhood education programs generate

approximately seven dollars for every invested dollar. Children from low socio-economic statuses benefit the most from these high quality preschool programs (Yoshikawa et al. & Zaslow, 2013).

In addition to their commitment to early childhood education, their commitment to parent/family engagement in all aspects of the program is an example of intergenerational learning, lifelong learning, and community engagement. There are 10 standards used to identify a high quality early childhood program. Again, one significant standard that each of these programs exhibits is their commitment to parent/family engagement.

According to the standard, high quality early childhood programs engage families in meaningful ways (education affords children a strong foundation that places children on a college or career path (Wechsler et al., 2016). High quality early childhood programs promote all families' acceptance by incorporating parents as leaders and celebrating cultural diversity through authentic partnerships. When positive parent/family engagement connections are established, motivation for academic achievement increases, grade retention is lowered, and socio-emotional skills increase, regardless of socioeconomic background (Hart, & Aumann, 2013).

Parent Cooperatives for Early Learning. Cooperative preschools are schools owned and operated by parents and staffed by professional teachers. In 1916, the first parent cooperative school was formed in the United States, at the University of Chicago, under Mrs. Frank Lilllie's leadership. The initial purpose was to provide childcare supervision to children whose mothers wanted to do their part in supporting the war efforts. As the program grew over the years, Parent

Cooperative Preschools International was established to promote and enhance cooperative preschools and childcare.

Ms. Rebecca Allen was instrumental in the formation of the organization. She served for more than forty years in various capacities of the organization. According to preschoolscoop (2017), Ms. Allen, during the 1960s, was instrumental in the development of the Head Start Program. She was the initiator of the Head Start Program, parent involvement area, stressing the importance of including parents in decision making and hiring them as staff.

Parent engagement is promoted throughout Cooperative Preschools. Engagement in a Cooperative Preschool affords parents opportunities to participate in all aspects of their child's early learning. Intentional parental effort and engagement make the cooperative learning environment unique as it provides children with a high-quality education and recognizes parents as their child's most influential teacher. Parents take part in parent training and policymaking. Additionally, in many programs, parents work as janitors, cafeteria staff, teacher assistants, and leadership positions.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) indorses high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research (naeyc.org, nd). The Montessori School, Head Start Program, and Parent Co-ops for Early Learning programs are three early learning programs endorsed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Each program has more than 50 years of early childhood education experience.

The Montessori School began as an initiative to address the most vulnerable educational needs and is known as an institute that promotes school readiness, academic development, and

non-cognitive skills (Debs & Brown, 2017). Head Start was part of the war on poverty initiative during the 1960s to meet the educational and social needs of America's most vulnerable and continues to serve families today. Finally, Preschool Coop began as an initiative to help service conscience parents with childcare needs during the First World War. Although each program is different, each program is committed to providing high-quality early childhood education. One significant difference between the Head Start program and the other programs is funding. Head Start is federally funded. At the same time, the Montessori and Parent Co-ops for Early learning are funded through student tuition and donations.

Technology in Parental Engagement Programs

According to York, Loeb, and Doss (2018), eighty-eight percent of American adults have cell phones. African Americans and Hispanics in parenting programs use text messages more frequently than European Americans (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). During the 2013-2014 school year, York et al. (2018) conducted a randomized controlled trial of READY4K! in the San Francisco Unified School District. Five hundred and nineteen parents and guardians agreed to participate in the study, and half of them were chosen to participate in the study. The researchers found that nearly all parents participating in the study opened text messages sent to them. The purpose of the text messages was to engage parents using technology to support child literacy development. The conclusion to the study found READY4K! is an alternative method of a parenting intervention in an engagement program.

Parent engagement programs extend from the formal learning environment and into the community. Education is everywhere and involves everyone. Successful programs such as Guilford Parent Academy began as a community collaborative with a strategic plan (Mendez &

Swick, 2018). The group identified and partnered with stakeholders with a vested interest in education beyond the school. Other programs such as the READY4K! program recognized that time barriers are significant to engagement, and technology's use proved to be an innovative method to inform and engage parents. The purpose of this study includes understanding how technology, such as an online website included in the parental engagement program, is experienced by urban parents. This study will develop new understandings about how technology can offset the issues that reduce an urban parent engagement program's effectiveness.

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review supports the importance of how parent engagement is seen through a parental and educator lens. The definitions of parent engagement found through the literature review are numerous (Dishion & Kavanagh, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015; Kunjufu, 2012; Milner, 2013; Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, & Marvin, 2011), and what shapes the ideology of engagement are the expectations and experiences of educators, politicians, and parents. Malone (2015) emphasizes the challenges educators and parents have due to a limited understanding of what constitutes parent engagement.

Although Epstein's framework is frequently used as a guide for defining parent engagement, Harry, Kalyanpur, and Day (1999) challenged the model as being culturally ignorant. The model lacked a cultural lens that addressed race, ability, disability, income, and education. Parents have a much broader view of what constitutes engagement than school officials (Ladner, 2006), leading to unrealistic or unmet expectations.

According to the literature in this review, there are many barriers to parent engagement. However, regardless of the many challenges parents may face, relationship building, leadership development, cultural awareness, and shared power were themes throughout the literature that influence ways of invoking trust and commitment from parents. Effective programs focus not only on their students' education but also on recognizing the student is part of a community of learners that includes their family.

There are numerous research studies relating to parent engagement; however, there is limited information identifying successful parent engagement programs from an urban parent perspective. This study explored what contributes to the level and degree of participation in an effective parent engagement program. The correlation of the literature review and research methods is further substantiated in chapter three. I could not identify studies that looked at culture and its influence on urban parental engagement from the parent's perspective.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the experiences of parents of preschoolers who are engaged in a parental engagement program in an urban school district. This chapter includes the research design and rationale, the researcher's role, and a description of the methodology and methods.

Research Design and Rationale

The main research question for this generic qualitative study was, How does experiencing the implementation of an innovative educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence parental engagement levels in a preschool setting? The secondary research questions for this generic qualitative study were the following:

1. How does the parental engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education?
2. How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program?

Although researchers have identified the importance of parental engagement in urban schools' success (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Jeynes, 2012), there is a lower level of urban parents' engagement in their child's school. I used a generic qualitative approach to explore, describe, and explain parents' experiences (see Zucker, 2009) through the lens of critical race theory (see Bell, 1980). According to Zucker (2009), generic research is appropriate when a researcher explores, describes, interprets, and explains experiences. Strauss and Corbin (1994) stated, "it is not the researcher's perception or perspective that matters, but rather how research participants view events or happenings" (p. 47). Strauss and Corbin described the qualitative

method as addressing individual lives, lived experiences, emotions, feelings, attitudes, and cultural events. I used a generic qualitative design to answer the research questions.

Other qualitative methodologies would not have been appropriate for this study. Case studies are used to examine a single unit or a larger class of similar units at a specific time or over an established period (Gerring, 2004). Case studies allow the researcher to answer how and why questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The objective of my study was to understand the individual's point of view. Data were collected through guided semi-structured interviews of preschool parents and educators in the outreach program designed to engage parents in their child's education. The focus was on understanding these experiences from the parents' perspective instead of the case study objective of understanding the outreach program's case.

In a phenomenological study, the goal is to understand how the participants see their world. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific and identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the individuals (Lester, 1999). Information and perceptions are gathered through interviews, discussions, and observation of the participants. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the individual's perspective and is based on the personal knowledge and subjectivity of one's perspective and interpretation of an experience (Lester, 1999). According to Husserl (1970), phenomenological research is used to describe instead of explaining and begins from a perspective free from preconceptions. The researcher reduces the collected data and describes several informants' shared experiences to one central meaning or the essence of the experience (McCaslin & Scott, 2003).

Ethnography is used to understand how people live their lives (Anderson, 2009). Ethnography is the study of people's lives within their communities. Ethnographers seek to gain

an emic perspective or the native's perspective of a specific culture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Ethnographers immerse themselves in the culture or organization, becoming a part of the culture to learn about it from the inside out (Ybema & Kamsteeg, 2009). This type of study requires a significant amount of time to complete. According to Fetterman (2009), ethnographic research analysis occurs throughout the study and is closely related to interpretation. Ethnographers engage in participant observation to acquire the cultural expertise of the research subject or subjects. This expertise develops over time, resulting from social interactions within the field and systematic analysis of study elements. Participant observation, along with other data collection such as interviews and artifacts, strengthens the study. Researchers document, analyze, and interpret data following interactions with the subjects (Crespin, Miller & Batteau, 2005).

Ethnographic research requires highly trained researchers to avoid potential pitfalls, such as incomplete details and unbiased data collection or analysis. According to Creswell (2013), ethnography is appropriate if a description of how a cultural group works, including its beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues facing the group, such as power, resistance, and dominance, is necessary. The current study addressed preschool parents' experiences in an urban school district; therefore, ethnography was not appropriate.

Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967, as cited in Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007), is a method that allows researchers to move from data to theory. These theories are distinctive to the framework established. Grounded theory involves decreasing the researcher's groups of meaning with the data during the research process (Bowen, 2008). Grounded theory analysis is used to create theories rooted in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) and have relevance to the area of study (Charmaz, 1996). A central principle of grounded theory is to

allow the key issues to develop rather than force them into predetermined categories (Charmaz, 1996). In grounded theory, the researcher meticulously observes what is taking place, chronicles detailed notes, and seeks answers relating to what is happening and why. According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2007), the researcher is careful not to introduce personal assumptions and expectations into the analysis. The researcher uses their skills to represent, systematically and understandably, a clear picture of their chosen study. Grounded theory was not chosen for the current study because my goal was not to establish new theories but to understand the research subjects' experiences.

The use of generic qualitative methodology allowed me to explore subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on the experiences of the research subjects (see , Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). A generic qualitative methodology was also appropriate because I had prior experience working with similar subjects in urban school districts, and generic qualitative studies develop from the researcher's expertise (see Percy et al., 2015). As a result, the generic qualitative approach was the best choice to answer this study's research questions.

Role of the Researcher

Participants who identify as African American or Black for the study were recruited from the ABC school district's preschool school program. I had worked directly with preschool parents in the capacity of Parent Advocate in a different school district. These experiences influenced my views on parental engagement. Therefore, my role as the researcher was in the capacity of observer. I kept a reflexive journal to identify and reduce my bias throughout the study. Keeping a journal was essential during and throughout the implementation of my study. Throughout the study, biases were managed by recording all feelings or thoughts that may have

affected the research and outcomes. I also requested parent interest surveys and evaluations disseminated by the ABC Preschool Center from previous years to explore parental engagement.

Methodology

I received institutional review board (IRB) approval number 10-24-19-0378325. This study was a generic qualitative study. Data were collected through guided semi structured interviews with preschool parents. I recruited eight parents engaged in a parental engagement program in an urban school. I sought to understand preschool parents' experiences in an urban school district's parental engagement program. The participants chosen for this study were urban parents of preschoolers who participated in a parental engagement program.

The context for the study was an urban school district in the Southeast United States. This district had implemented a new Parent Engagement Program (a pseudonym) through technology designed to engage urban parents by developing a flexible schedule for interactions, using social media and the internet to interact with parents daily, and providing leadership opportunities in the program. This school was identified in the study as ABC School. I submitted the first three chapters of the study to the school district to obtain a letter of cooperation. I then obtained final approval from Walden University's IRB.

Participant Selection Logic

According to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), saturation typically happens around 12 participants in homogeneous groups. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) suggested that 20 participants or fewer in a qualitative study allow the researcher to develop and sustain a close relationship, which allows for open and frank conversations. I assumed that 8-10 participants would be sufficient to attain data saturation.

Recruitment of African American or Black preschool parents in this program was conducted through face-to-face presentations and the distribution of recruitment brochures at the program's monthly parenting meetings and the parent center located in the school. The inclusion criteria for participants included the following:

1. The parent is above the age of 18.
2. The participant self-identifies as African American or Black.
3. The parent is actively participating in the Parent Engagement Program in their school district as defined by multiple attendances at meetings.
4. The parent has a preschool-age child age 3-5.
5. The parent's primary language is English. The percentage of parents who spoke languages other than English was less than 10% of the school's total population. Because 91% of the school's students came from families whose primary language was English, only these families were included in the study.

Parents not meeting the above criteria were excluded from the study. The exclusion criteria included the following:

1. The Parent is younger than 18 years old.
2. The Parent does not identify as African American or Black.
3. The parent has not engaged in multiple meetings in the Parent Engagement Program.
4. The parent does not have a preschool-age child attending the school.
5. The parent does not speak English as their primary language.

I waited for potential participants to contact me by phone or email. I identified participants through purposive sampling. I emailed informed consent forms to participants. The

participants replied to the email with the words “I consent.” Sampling occurred through phone or email responses to the volunteers’ initial contact with me. Those who did not meet the inclusion criteria were thanked for volunteering to participate in the study. Volunteers who met the inclusion criteria were mailed a consent form for their review. They replied to this email with the words “I consent” to demonstrate consent. For individuals who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the study, I arranged times and dates to conduct the interviews in a private room at a local library or by phone based on the participant’s preference. Data saturation is attained once there are sufficient data to replicate the study (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013), when the ability to obtain new information has been exhausted (Guest et al., 2006), and when additional analysis no longer reveals new codes (Guest et al., 2006). Although the study's target number was 8-10, I recruited participants until data saturation was attained.

Instrumentation

I did two interviews with each participant. I also observed a parent outreach meeting and collected curriculum materials for the parent outreach program. The interviews were conducted via phone. Participants choosing to interview via phone were instructed to reply to my email with “I consent” on the informed consent form. Face-to-face interviews did not occur. However, if a participant had requested a face-to-face interview, it would have taken place in a public space such as a local library. The initial interview took 45-60 minutes. The follow-up interview took 15-30 minutes.

The interview questions were designed in consideration of the research questions and conceptual framework. The first set of questions was designed to explore the parents’ feelings of efficacy and culture related to parental engagement in their program. The second set of questions

was designed to explore their experiential and cultural experiences as they engaged in the program. The final set of questions was designed to explore their perceptions of the program from their cultural, community, and organizational perspectives using CRT and andragogy lenses (see Appendix).

I sent each participant the transcript of the interview through email for member checking. I requested time for a 15-30-minute second follow-up interview. The purpose of the Follow-Up Interview was to understand how the parent engagement educational program impacts the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education and how parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program? The second interview asked parents to consider both additional ideas resulting from the first interview and share ideas from their experiences with other parents.

To respond to the research question, How does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education? I collected curriculum artifacts for the adult outreach program, including (1) copy of their curriculum documents and (2) schedule for implementation. I reviewed the curriculum documents using a thematic inductive analysis to define the main goals and relate them to the parents' interview themes. I reviewed the schedule for implementing the parent outreach program to understand how the program was implemented. I related the schedule to the themes from the curriculum and the parents' responses. I analyzed these documents using a thematic inductive analysis to relate the themes to themes identified in the interview.

I observed a meeting of the Parent Outreach Program in response to research question number one; how does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents'

involvement in their preschool child's education? I spent several hours observing parental interactions during the Parent Engagement Activity event. I noted their responses on my tablet in the Observational Field Note Guide. I analyzed these notes to identify themes and relate these themes to the parent interview themes.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I collected four forms of data. I conducted two interviews with the participants in response to research question two. I collected curriculum artifacts and observed them during a parent outreach meeting in response to research question one.

The Initial Interview was by phone. The interview took 45 minutes to 1 hour. For the Initial Interview, I had two protocols, one for face-to-face and one for phone interviews. If a face-to-face interview was chosen, on the scheduled interview date, I would have arrived at the interview location at least 15 minutes early to ensure that all equipment was working appropriately. Once the participant arrived, I would have greeted them and accompanied them to a comfortable and confidential location. I would have reviewed and explained in detail all aspects of the informed consent and requested the participant sign and date the informed consent before continuing. I would have informed the participant that they could stop the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. At that time, I would have begun recording the interview.

Each interview, either phone or face-to-face, began with a researcher's statement consisting of the date and time, an introduction from the researcher, the study's purpose, and the alphanumeric pseudonym for each participant. I gathered background information on the participant and asked them open-ended questions from the interview guide. There were nine questions asked of each participant, followed by a brief period of clarification questions (as

needed). After the participant answered each question, the researcher informed the participant the audio recorder would end. Participants were then informed they could contact the researcher with any questions or concerns about the study. Interviews had taken place over two months due to recruitment delays and holiday scheduling conflicts. Once interviews were transcribed, the participants were sent a copy of their interview to review and invited to participate in a follow-up interview to ensure accuracy and add additional data if needed. After the follow-up interview, participants were thanked for their participation.

I scheduled a single observation session of a parent meeting through the cooperating school. During the observation, I used an electronic device to input field notes. I requested curriculum documents related to the Parent Engagement Program from the coordinator of the program. I also requested goal statements for the program, information on the meetings, purpose, and a year-long schedule for the program.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Yin (2009), data analysis entails "examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study" (p.109). Analyzing generic study data can be tricky; however, identifying the appropriate analysis unit alleviates any confusion that could invalidate the study in its entirety (Gerring, 2004).

In response to the research question, How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program? I conducted two participant interviews. Researchers may choose computer-based tools to aid with coding and sorting vast quantities of transcripts, gathered through interviews, or acquired as documentary evidence (Yin, 2009). The functionality

of the tools used to assist the researcher with data analysis is not automatic but analyst-driven and does not exclude the need for expertise relating to the subject matter (Walsham, 2006). I used Dedoose to support the structuring of the data set. Dedoose is a login protected online data structuring site that provides qualitative researchers tools to identify codes, link codes, and search the data text to identify patterns. The inductive thematic analysis procedure for the review of the interviews consist of the nine steps, which are summarized below (Clarke et al., 2015):

1. Familiarization: Once the data had been assembled via electronic audio device and field notes, the researcher reviewed recordings multiple times to ensure familiarity with the data retrieved. After the data had been transcribed, I checked the transcribed data and original audio for accuracy and as another means to become familiar with the data.
2. Creation of word tables: Labels were created using relevant words derived from a list of ideas developed from the research question. I used Dedoose to structure the coding structure based on a paragraph as a unit of analysis.
3. Examination of word tables: The researcher examined the codes to discover patterns that occur within each case. A distinctive classification outline was formed for each case.
4. Write individual reports: Information from the word tables and classification outline was used to construct detailed descriptions of each case before moving forward.
5. Create additional word tables: As soon as each report had been created, the researcher put together additional tables utilizing data from each participant to generate an overall illustration of the information.

6. Examining other word tables, I evaluated each word table and arranged them in a classification outline based on each occurrence of data related to each label or base word.
7. I evaluated the data to identify significant differences between the data.
8. I made assertions about parents' experiences based on meaningful patterns and contentions in the collected data.
9. Write the report- I took the study results and findings and brought it to closure during this phase (Yin, 2009). A linear-analytic compositional structure was used to compose and finalize the report.

In response to research question one, how does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education? I collected curriculum documents related to the parent engagement program. I reviewed the curriculum documents in Dedoose. I identified initial codes and compressed these initial codes into categories. Next, I developed themes in the curriculum documents using inductive thematic analysis.

In response to the next research question, how does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education? I observed parents during a Parent Engagement Activity day. After my observation, I uploaded my notes into Dedoose. I used thematic inductive analysis to review these notes. To avoid discrepant cases, I reviewed my analysis and defined the differing aspects of the case.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility is a feature of congruency. It addresses the authenticity of the research findings. Shenton (2004) suggests several provisions such as triangulation, tactics to help ensure honesty in informants, iterative questioning, and frequent debriefing sessions, as methods for safeguarding trustworthiness in qualitative research projects used to augment the researcher's capacity for attaining credibility within their research. In the study, the researcher was adherent to Shenton (2004) recommendations, with the inclusion of iterative questioning. Concerns that arose were addressed using the questioning method to increase the legitimacy of the participant's responses.

The criterion sampling method was used in this study to generate criteria-based research questions. Part of the criteria specified participants must be current preschool parents who, along with their children, participate in the school's parent engagement program. Ensuring individuals met the criteria, recruitment materials were placed in areas associated with the preschool programs' current participants. This guaranteed information was gathered from the targeted population.

Shenton (2004) also voiced the significance of experience and the researcher's credentials, as it relates to the understanding of credibility, emphasized by Patton's (2015) information. Before this study, to ensure proper preparedness, I completed several advanced research and interviewing courses. I also have more than twenty-five years of intake and case-management experience that involved many interviews. Just as creditability is essential to the research, so too is transferability.

Transferability is the ability to generalize the findings from the research into other settings. Shenton (2004) acknowledged several that must be considered before any effort for transference. Matters such as the kinds of data procedures utilized, the period when data was assembled, participant restrictions relating to contributed data, the variability of educators who participated, and the participant pool's size involved in the study. Within the current study, the researcher created a comprehensive criterion to ensure clarity of participant eligibility. Additionally, the researcher addressed any eligibility concerns by acknowledging limitations within the study established by the factors mentioned above.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that there is no credibility without dependability. Dependability is essential to research as it establishes that the research is consistent and can be repeated. Shenton (2004) suggests achieving this concept requires viewing it from three aspects: research design and its implementation, operational detail of evidence gathered, and an introspective examination of the project.

Within this study, detailed step-by-step guidelines, the research design, and its implementation were established to ensure a solid research plan that could be replicated. To address the concept of operational detail of evidence gathered, actions conducted in the field, and notetaking were used. For an introspective examination of the project, I kept communication lines open with my mentor and other committee members. I made notes on conversations using an electronic folder. The succeeding concept is confirmability.

Confirmability in qualitative research is an aspect of addressing research bias (Shenton, 2004). For this study, I kept a reflective journal as I design and implement the study. This journaling process provided me with insight into my bias related to the study, my interactions

with participants through interviews, observations, and data structuring and data analysis processes.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional permissions were adhered to as required by the university and the school district. The school district required a review of the first three chapters of the proposal before the research study's approval. Once the school district had reviewed the proposal, a letter of cooperation from the school district was submitted to Walden University IRB for final approval.

Recruitment materials for the study provided precise information leaving no room for ambiguity. Although everyone recruited and met the criteria was expected to complete the study, it was understood that this might not have been possible due to various circumstances. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher debriefed all participants, regardless of whether or not they completed the study.

Data was collected through guided semi-structured interview of preschool parents and an observation of a monthly Parent Engagement Activity events in the Parent Engagement Program. I followed the steps below to protect the identity and secure the data set.

1. I de-identified the data set by creating a Master List with participant alphanumeric pseudonyms, e.g., P1, P2, and the participant's name. The Master List was stored separately from the data set and destroyed after five years by shredding. After each participant was given a pseudonym, the data was de-identified.
2. I protected confidentiality by not stating the organization's name, state, or other identifying information. I did not use the school district's name or the educational program throughout the study and writing my report. The school district is a

Southeast U.S. urban school district. The school was referred to as ABC School. The educational program was given a pseudonym, the Parent Engagement Program.

3. Interviews were recorded digitally.
4. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber who signed a Confidentiality Agreement.
5. All digital data, including the digital audio tapes, the transcribed interviews, my field notes, were stored in a login protected computer in my home office.
6. I used Dedoose to analyze the interviews on a secure online site. Transcribed interviews were uploaded into Dedoose, a login protected website, for data structuring and initial analysis.
7. After analysis, I downloaded all data from my computer onto a USB drive.
8. I requested Dedoose delete my project from their website.
9. The USB drive was locked in a cabinet in my home office.
10. After a minimum of 5 years required by Walden University, I will destroy the USB drive.

Summary

This generic qualitative study attempts to acquire a deeper understanding of preschool parents' experiences in an urban school outreach program. I recruited eight to ten parents and conducted observations to collect data. Once the data was collected and analyzed, conclusions were extracted and examined. Chapter four includes a presentation of results and conclusions from the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the experiences of urban parents of preschoolers who are engaged in a parental engagement program in an urban school district. This chapter presents the setting, data collection, and data analysis of the study. This study's main research question was the following: How does experiencing the implementation of an innovative educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence levels of parental engagement in a preschool setting? From this question, two additional questions were developed:

1. How does the parental engagement educational program influence the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education?
2. How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program?

CRT was used to examine the data in relation to race. Experiential learning theory was used to examine the data in an educational context. Andragogy was used to examine the data in a learning context, and social learning theory was used to understand participants' experiences and perceptions resulting from their interactions with the program.

Setting

The research occurred in an urban school district preschool center in the Southeast United States. This preschool center, identified in this study as the ABC School, implemented a program to develop the whole child through technology with family, school, and community support. The program supports urban parents' engagement using flexible schedules for interactions; Class Dojo, an academic app to promote daily interaction with parents; and leadership opportunities within the program.

ABC School is situated within a block of a housing development. The school has a computer lab available to the school's families and the community. The school has 11 classes. Applications for admission are taken at any time during the school year. However, children are not enrolled after February for the current school year. The school uses assessment data posted throughout the building to promote its high quality program. These postings show significant gains in learning from the initial assessment given in the first quarter to the final assessment given in the fourth quarter. Students in this school have consistently exceeded the local benchmarks by 20%. Although ABC School is a Title I school, there is one class in which family income is above the federal poverty guidelines.

The cafeteria design is family-friendly. Tables are circular, allowing teachers to engage all students during mealtime. Cafeteria staff serves children from a counter in the shape of a school bus. Students are assigned unique identification codes for their meals. Students convey this information to the cafeteria staff after choosing their food items. The numbers are used to keep a record of meals received by the students. Parents are encouraged to join their children during mealtime as often as feasible. A designated area, called the Parent's Corner, allows parents to have lunch with their children. This area is also a means of educating parents about nutrition and incorporate fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options.

Each student is given two technology devices: one to use in the classroom and the other to use at home. Parents are required to come to the school to pick up the devices. Since the implementation of technological devices, only three were lost or not returned. Parents receive training during the first Parent Engagement Experience Day with the instructional specialist to

ensure they are equipped with the skills necessary to assist their children in navigating the device to complete homework assignments.

Several staff and teachers live in the surrounding community and have worked at ABC School for more than ten years. Interviewees who were former students at ABC School as preschoolers or whose adult children are former students voiced admiration for their former teachers' longevity. Teachers add to the learning culture by incorporating enrichment classes, such as Culinary Arts, STEM, Foreign Language, Music Appreciation, Yoga, and Math. Students participate in these classes for 75 minutes weekly for five weeks on a rotating basis. Teachers create their lessons and curricula for the enrichment classes to support a holistic approach to learning.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer and are afforded many opportunities. A Parent Involvement Survey is given at the beginning of the school year. The survey asks parents the best days and times to attend workshops. It also addresses the types of workshops that might be of interest to them, such as parent self-esteem, helping your child succeed, learning how to use computer programs provided by the school district, understanding standardized tests, and navigating the school district's website.

The survey is also used to determine whether parents are willing to volunteer in the program and what skills they may want to share with other parents and students. Every parent wishing to volunteer is required to submit a volunteer application and pass a background check, except for parents actively serving in the military. Background checks are good for two years. The school recognizes at least 20 parent volunteers each year.

Parents chosen to participate in the current study met the following requirements: (a) over the age of 18, (b) self-identified as African American or Black, (c) actively participating in ABC School's Parent Engagement Program as defined by multiple attendances at parent engagement meetings, (d) parent of a child age 3-5, and (e) English is their primary language. Due to the small number of required participants, parents not meeting the above criteria but who had expressed a strong desire to participate were allowed to share their thoughts with me. Although the data were not used in this study, the responses showed different parental perceptions and experiences at the center among racial groups.

The ABC School does not use a standard parent curriculum. However, the program uses the Creative Curriculum, which has a parent component, to align with the curriculum case studies to support students through parent interaction. The family engagement specialist provides training and opportunities for parents to engage with their children during monthly Parent Engagement Activity days. During this monthly event, parents participate in workshops or training, followed by a scheduled classroom learning activity with their children. Parents are also afforded opportunities to take advantage of the parent technology lab, which offers a series of workshops and training to bridge the technology divide.

Demographics

Students from the ABC School are 91.9% African American, 4.3% Multiracial, 2.5% Hispanic, and 1.2% White. The school is classified as a Title I school. Enrollment capacity is 198, and at the time of the study, enrollment was 193. Approximately 90% of the children are accompanied to and from school by their parents. Due to the school's community eligibility

provision status, all students at the school, regardless of income, are eligible for free breakfast and lunch. Approximately 75% of the parents of students attending the school are employed.

Participant 1 (P1) is an African American male currently pursuing an MSW. He is married with a 4-year-old student at the study site. Participant 2 (P2) is an African American female who holds an associate's degree in science and is a licensed practical nurse. P2 is a single mother of two children, a teen and a preschooler. P2's preschooler is in their second year at ABC School.

Participant 3 (P3) is a Black female with a Ph.D. in psychology. She is originally from the eastern Caribbean and moved to the United States to attend college many years ago. She is married and has two children: the youngest attends preschool. Participant 4 (P4) holds a master's degree in education. She is married and the mother of two children, a toddler, and a preschooler. P4's academic position places her at an advantage as she has used her degree in a professional setting with children and has been on the receiving side as a parent.

Participant 5 (P5) is a married Afro-American female currently pursuing her master's degree. Participant 6 (P6) is an African American female veteran with a master's degree in social work. P6 is married and has one child. Participant 7 (P7) is a single female parent of one. Although she is multiracial, she identifies with one race. When P7 entered the program, she lived with another family due to limited financial resources. Since participating in the program, P7 has secured affordable housing. Participant 8 (P8) is an African American guardian with an associate's degree in radiology. P8 has been associated with the program several times with her children and grandchildren. Table 1 includes the participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Education	Age of child	Years in school
P1	M	Bachelor's	4	1
P2	F	Associate's	4	2
P3	F	Doctorate	4	1
P4	F	Master's	4	2
P5	F	Master's	4	4
P6	F	Master's	4	1
P7	F	HS diploma	4	2
P8	F	Associate's	4	4

Data Collection

For this study, I interviewed 10 participants who had children enrolled in a preschool program in an urban school district. However, I used information from only eight of the participants. I received IRB approval and contacted the school principal via email to schedule a meeting to discuss recruitment. The school principal responded and sent a copy of the email to the interim principal. The next day I contacted the interim principal and arranged a meeting later in the afternoon. During the meeting, the family engagement specialist was invited to join the conversation. Once the meeting concluded, the recruitment flyer was emailed to the family engagement specialist to post in the school and disseminate to the parents. In turn, the family engagement specialist extended an invitation to me to speak during the upcoming parent engagement meeting.

Two weeks later, I visited ABC School for the Parent Engagement Activity Day event to view the curriculum documents and other artifacts pertinent to the study. The artifacts observed included Family Engagement Monthly Reports, Parent Engagement Activity Day agendas,

parent survey tool, the school pledge, social-emotional strategies to deal with classroom behaviors, school test scores, and the preschool application. After touring the school, I met with the parent engagement and instructional specialists to discuss the monthly Parent Engagement Activity Day structure and how it engages parents.

One week following the initial site visit, the flyers were sent home with the students. Two days later, I received the first response via email. I reached out to the potential participant and asked a couple of general questions. Once all questions were asked and answered, an informed consent form was emailed to the potential participant. The participant completed the consent and emailed it back to me. Once I received the email, I set up an interview time with the participant. After the interview, I thanked the participant for their time and informed them that a copy would be sent for their viewing to approve, comment, or add additional information once the transcript was complete.

During phone interviews, I made sure each participant was comfortable. I started the conversation with light questions to get to know them and calm any nerves before moving forward to the interview questions. All participants had an opportunity to discontinue the interview at any time if desired. Throughout the interviews, each participant had sufficient time to answer questions. Once the interviews were completed, participants had an opportunity to ask any questions. The semi structured interviews lasted between 25 and 55 minutes; they were audio-recorded digitally and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document for data analysis.

Once the interviews were completed and audio recordings were transcribed, participants had an opportunity to review the transcripts and share additional ideas not previously shared in the initial interview. Each invitational email promised an allotted time of 15-30 minutes. Two of

the 10 participants responded to the email. After reading the transcript, the first participant to respond confirmed the interview transcript's accuracy and chose not to add any additional information. The second participant also confirmed the interview's accuracy and agreed to a follow-up interview but did not contribute any new information.

Data Analysis

This generic qualitative study's methodology was based on Yin's (2009) guidelines for data analysis. I evaluated the data to identify significant differences. I made assertions about parents' experiences based on meaningful patterns and contentions in the collected data. Once the data were collected, a linear-analytic compositional structure was used to compose the report.

Each participant was sent a copy of the initial interview transcript to review for clarity or to add data not previously mentioned. Participants were invited to participate in a second interview and add additional information. Two of the eight participants responded to the request. P1 reviewed the transcript and concluded that the information presented during the initial interview was enough. P3 agreed to do a second interview. However, P3 did not add any new information in the interview. No one else responded to the request for the second interview.

Each transcript was digitally recorded and transcribed by a fellow peer with an extensive transcription background. Once the transcriptions were completed and returned, the data was then reviewed and compared to the digital recordings to ensure accuracy. Copies of transcripts were then forwarded to all interviewees for additional review to check the documents' accuracy. Once validated, data was uploaded into Dedoose. Dedoose is a software program used to code and analyze data extracted from the interviews.

I uploaded all transcripts into Dedoose. I began coding with P1. I went through the document and highlighted the text that was a unit of meaning, usually a paragraph. Next, I right-clicked on the highlighted text and gave the text an identifier, the initial code. I did this until the entire document was coded. I then went back into the document and revised or added additional codes to the document.

Next, I began coding P2's interview. I went through each paragraph creating new code and using the previous codes when applicable. As with the previous interview, I highlighted the units of meaning, right-clicking over the area, and giving the text an identifier. I did this until the completion of the document. In all, there were twenty codes extracted from the interview.

Upon completion of the previous interview, I began coding with P3. I went through the document highlighting units of meaning, looking for patterns, and identifying new codes. Once all units were coded, I revisited the document in search of additional codes. Once the document was coded, I began coding the next document. Within this document, 20 codes were identified as meaningful to the research.

The next interview I began to code was P4. As with the previous documents, I meticulously reviewed the document for units of meaning. Once discovered, I highlighted the units, right-clicked over the area, and assigned it to an established code. This was done until the entire document was completed. Within this document, ten codes were identified as meaningful to the research. This interview did not yield any new codes.

P5 was coded next. Again, I meticulously reviewed the document for units of meaning. I highlighted units and assigned them to the appropriate code. I continued until the entire document was coded. Due to the low number, I revisited the document and scanned the

document for additional units. No additional units were discovered. Within this document, fifteen codes were identified as meaningful to the research.

After completing P5, I began to code P6. The document was methodically reviewed, and once units of meaning were identified, I right-clicked on the highlighted text and either gave the text an identifier or assigned it to an established code. This continued until the entire document was coded. Unlike some of the previous documents, this document was rich in units. Within this document, twenty-nine units were coded and identified as meaningful to the research.

The next document coded was P7. As with the previous documents, units were identified, highlighted, and assigned a code or assigned to an identified code. This continued until the entire document was coded. Once completed, the document was scanned a second time to identify potential codes not previously discovered. Within this document, nineteen units were coded and deemed meaningful to the research.

I coded P8's interview and did not create any new codes. I used all the previous codes. This meant that I had identified all the codes and met data saturation. Within P8's document, 14 units were identified and assigned to established codes.

After all the transcribed interviews were coded, I began the process of combining the initial codes. I created a second group of root codes and moved the initial codes into the root codes. These categories included school communication, volunteering, parent engagement day, cultural challenges, high-quality program, benefits to parents, and teachers' perspectives.

Next, I moved all the second level codes, the categories into three major root codes and created my main themes. The themed codes were How do parents become engaged in school activities? Do the parents feel their involvement helps their children? And How do the parents

perceive their role in the school – as beneficial to the children and the school, and what are their expectations – problems, barriers, and challenges-what are the issues they face. There were one hundred and fifty-two initial codes. I reduced them to 3 categories and then three themes. Figures 1, 2, & 3 represents the data structuring process.

I used content analysis to code the artifacts from the research. The artifacts included Parent Engagement Activity agendas, Parent Survey, School Pledge, Parent Involvement Surveys, Social/Emotional directive, Preschool Application, Family Engagement Monthly Reports, and Creative Curriculum overview. I reviewed the documents to identify the topics and related these to the themes from my data structuring. I combined the initial codes and patterns into themes in Dedoose.

The three themes resulting from this study are (a) School-Wide Activities, (b) Classroom Activities, and (c) Parent Perceptions. These themes are the result of an initial coding that included 63 codes of 153 codes. After multiple reductions, the initial codes were reduced to three overall themes. The theme School-Wide Activities included 53 codes. The theme, Classroom Activities, included thirty-four codes. The theme of Parent Perceptions included forty-nine codes.

School-Wide Activities

The theme of School-Wide Activities resulting from my analysis was how the parents described ways the school engaged parents. The premise focused on parental experiences related to the connectedness of their experiences outside of classroom issues. Evidence for theme one, How do parents become engaged in school activities, supported RQ1, RQ2, based on the responses to Parent Interview Questions one, two, three, four, and seven.

The first theme, school-wide activities, resulted from interview questions one, two, three, four, and seven. This theme included online technology use, Class Dojo, as an online interactive tool the school used to engage parents and their children in school-wide activities. Other codes include a discussion of school PTA and parent volunteering. Below in Figure one are the codes in Dedoose that deliminate this theme. These codes were grouped based on the parent's discussion of the school-wide parent engagement program. The categories identified below include parent volunteering as part of the parent engagement program, program communications described by the parents, including Class Dojo and parent-to-parent communications.

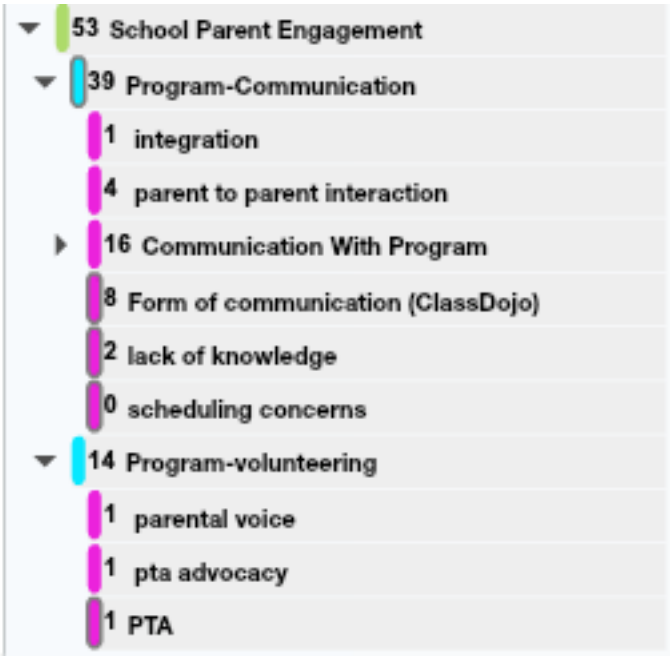

Figure 1. School-wide activities

A common aspect of this school-wide parent engagement program was the parents' support for the use of Class Dojo. Class Dojo is an application used by the parents in the study to stay connected with school staff during and beyond the school day. As mentioned by P3 below,

the application allowed her to communicate with her child's teacher in multiple ways throughout the day. P3 states,

> I felt good about the staff and faculty at the school just because I can call them at any time with any questions. The teacher is also very accessible through an app that she uses called class dojo. I can send her an email through that or through just her public-school email address, and she answers promptly. And so that kind of action, communication has definitely helped with us adjusting to the school.

Classroom Activities

The next theme was the result of structuring all the codes related to how the parents described their interactions with classroom teachers and the day-to-day experiences of their child. The theme Classroom Activities was in response to the research question; how does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education? Evidence for theme two support RQ1 and RQ2, based on the responses from parent interview questions two, three, four, five, and seven.

This second theme focused on Parent Engagement Activity Day, a day parents participate in shared classroom learning. This was abbreviated as PED in Figure 2. These interactions within the classroom and with the classroom teacher were coded as balanced technology and child focus, observations during PED, PED, and teacher interactions with the adults and the students. Below in Figure 2 are the parent observation day when parents come into the classroom to engage with their child and participate in learning activities. The parents appreciated this aspect of the school's parent engagement program. P8 explains,

You get to watch what the children have learned, and they are so excited to share it with you. They are so, look what I did, look what I made, let me show you this. It is wonderful to see children that excited about learning.

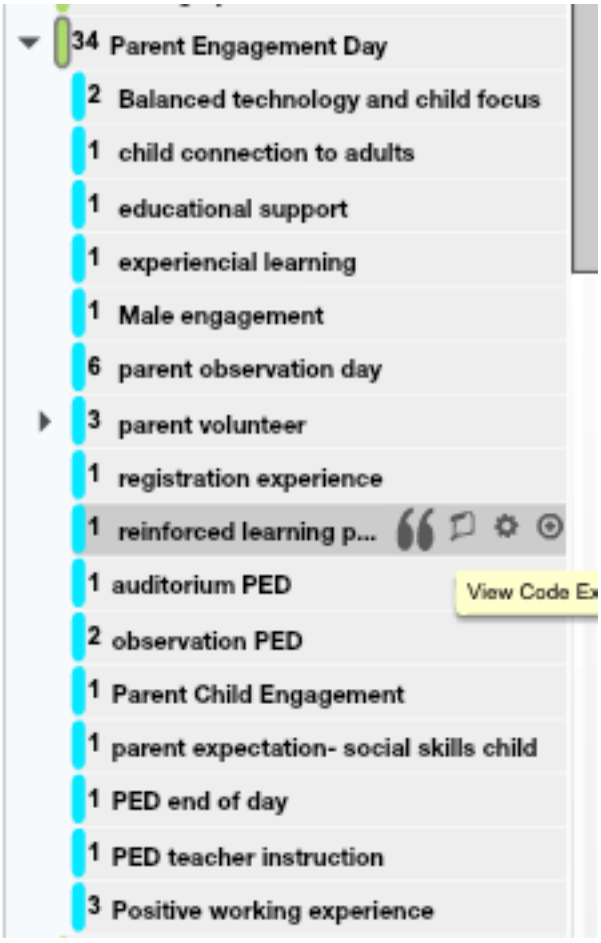

Figure 2. Classroom Activities

Parent Perceptions

The last theme, Parent Perceptions, was relevant to the research question; How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program? These codes were aligned

with how the parents perceived the outreach program and were responses to interview questions, six, seven, eight, and nine.

I grouped the codes that were a response to Parent perceptions. The codes included the topics: caring staff, benefits of the program, parent expectations of the program, high-quality program, and parent perspective of teachers. Figure 3 below contains the categories for perceptions these parents held of the parent engagement program included cultural challenges, the parents' expectations of the program, including the benefit to their child, their perspectives of the teachers and staff, and the preschool program's statements of quality.

The parents described positive personal experiences engaging with the school's educational program. Including the parents' perceptions of the program's high quality, the benefits to parents of their child's attendance at the school, and their positive perception of their interactions with the teachers. P3 found the experiential learning, using manipulatives to teach math, was positive stating,

> I like the way that they use everyday things to help them prepare. For example, my daughter brought home dominoes, the game, and the other day. I just thought it's a game. They sent home a game. She started to show me how the teacher had explained it to them. I don't know if you've ever played dominoes, but you match the numbers on the side. She wasn't doing that; she was actually matching the total numbers. So, it would be like five. Then four buttons plus another that had one and another card that had the five on it. She was counting everything up. I thought that was particularly sophisticated for that age.

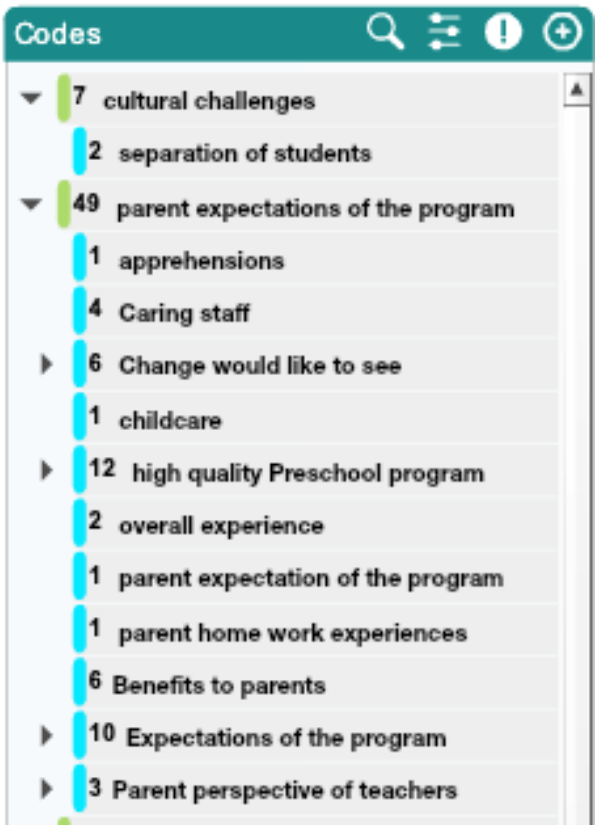

Figure 3. Parent perceptions of the outreach program

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is essential for maintaining internal validity. I used iterative questioning (Shenton, 2004) to ensure credibility. I used multiple forms of data for triangulation. I conducted interviews until I reached data saturation and used reflexivity by keeping and maintaining a reflective journal through the research process.

Transferability

Transferability is the capacity to take a broad view of the research findings and transfer them into other contexts (Shenton, 2004). A comprehensive criterion was created to ensure

clarity of participant eligibility. All participants participating in the research were parents of preschoolers attending ABC school but residing outside of the neighboring community. ABC school is a Title I preschool serving close to 200 three and four-year-old students. The school is located in area housing families living below the federal income poverty level.

Although the school is located in a lower-income community, the ABC school study participants were from communities with middle to upper-middle incomes. The majority of the students of the study participants were enrolled in classes similar to their socio-economic backgrounds, which lead several parents to question the possible segregation of the students based on income. However, variation in the sample's demographics in the participants' educational background can aid in transferability.

Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility does not exist without dependability. Dependability establishes the consistency of the research and ensures it can be repeated. This study created detailed step-by-step guidelines for the research design, its implementation and established a solid research plan for replication. Furthermore, the use of notetaking was used to document data gathered and actions taken in the field. I also participated in weekly meetings with my mentor, which allowed for the introspective examination of data. Lastly, conversations with participants and other pertinent data were recorded via an electronic device and saved to an electronic folder.

Confirmability

For this study to address any possible bias in the research, a reflective journal was kept. A journal was on hand from the initial interaction with the research location staff to the final

conversation with participants. This journaling process provided me with insight into my bias related to the study, my interactions with participants through interviews and observations during the process. Additionally, I discussed my interviews and my data analysis procedures with my mentor to ensure that my previous preschool experiences did not bias my analysis.

Results

This study resulted in three themes derived from the research questions: How does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education? And (b) How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program? The three themes were School-Wide Activities, Classroom Activities, and Parent Perceptions. In this section, I will describe the results of my analysis of these themes.

School-Wide Activities

The parents described two forms of communication, Class Dojo application, and Kiss and Drop Off, as ways they could engage with the school staff at school and home. Parent Engagement Activity day and volunteering as ways they participate in school-wide parent engagement activities. The following subtopics of theme one were (a) the Class Dojo application is seen as a productive means of interaction between home and school, (b) Kiss and Dropoff produces positive interactions with administrators, staff, and other parents; and (c) volunteer opportunities encouraged engagement.

Class Dojo. The single largest communication element identified by the data was Class Dojo. Class Dojo is a free academic application used to engage parents. The application allows parents entry through technology into the classroom. Teachers' use of the application allows them to schedule meetings with parents and share information such as photos, videos, grades,

attendance, events, and announcements. P1 shared, "There is always an open line of communication between myself, my wife, and the school. Information is shared immediately between school staff and parents without delay." According to P2, the use of Class Dojo was a means to communicate with her child's teacher throughout the day regarding her well-being.

> P2 shared, "Usually I use the class dojo, I use that to communicate with his teacher. For some reason, this year, he has really bad separation anxiety, so you know he don't want to go to school, and he cries. So, it's important for me to know how he's doing throughout the day, so I communicate just to see how he's doing."

P7 talked about the struggles she experienced with communicating with the school during the first year until she was introduced to the Dojo app. For P7, this app allows her to stay in contact with the teacher throughout the day. It is her favorite thing for reminders taking place in the school.

Kiss and Drop Off. The second prominent communication method identified by the data occurs during the morning drop off at the school. The preschool engagement program includes a defined process for interacting with the parents as they drop off their child. During the morning drop off, parents walk their children into the building entrance and are greeted by the school administrator, Parent Engagement Specialist, and staff.

The exchange was a way parents felt connected to the school. P1 described the encounter as "very structured, and they do a really good job of executing that daily." P3 exclaimed,

> I like that the principal and some of the front office staff, for example, this morning, there were four people in the front corridor greeting people. "Good morning. How is everyone

> doing this morning?" Greeting everyone as they drop off their child before they walk down the hallway to their classroom.

The third element relating to the theme was the positive experiences of the parents. Parents, such as P8, reported, "The staff was so friendly and helpful." P6 exclaimed, "I mean, they are nice to us." Moreover, P3 stated, "The teachers, the staff, they've been doing this for many years, and it shows. They love what they do." Nearly all of the participants had a positive experience relating to communicative connectedness with the school. According to P1, day-to-day experiences are always very professional.

> During the check-in and dismissal procedures, daily procedures, I am able to meet with all the staff, and I think that is something that is really critical for the success of the program is being able to have a visual of the professionals that are working in the school. Daily, I see the professionals, the principal, the nurse is often present, the school social worker, the school psychologist. They are present at the beginning and ending of every school day. It just lets you know that they are very invested in the success of the children, and they share that if we ever need them that we can contact them anytime should we have any issues.

Volunteering. Parent volunteering is one of the most effective forms of engaging parents and families in the formal learning environment. Parents were encouraged to volunteer from their initial encounter with school administrators, staff, and other parents. Three specific volunteering methods were identified by parent participants in the study, PTA participation, volunteering in-class activity, or both. Volunteering has long been known as parent engagement. However, the concept of what classifies as volunteering varies among different groups of parents.

P8 has been part of the PTA on and off for many years. P8's first experience with the PTA had taken place several years ago with a child now in middle school. This time her experiences are a result of parenting her grandchildren. P8 is a volunteer who works beside school staff, greeting parents during the morning kiss and drop off. She states, "I'd help them get the kids down the hall. Like if they were a little late, and I was there."

Although P7 states, "I have not volunteered there." She has donated items to help out with holiday events. Other parents may not volunteer regularly; however, some allocate a specific time or times during the year to engage in volunteer activities. For instance, P5 volunteers during the yearly field day. Other parents, such as P4, share, "I've went in and worked in their holiday shop."

Whether parents were volunteering in the classroom, assisting in the morning exercises, participating in school-sponsored activities, or donating items to the school, parents found time to give their time, talents, and abilities. Volunteering was another way of staying connected to school staff, students, and the school.

P8 has held a parent leadership position and volunteered in the school setting, assisting teachers in the classroom. Because of the technological advancements of the school, P8 expressed extreme gratefulness for her involvement with its implementation. P8 discussed the joy she felt watching three and four-year-olds use technology with such ease in the classroom setting.

> I didn't know what to expect. Um, I just thought pre-k goes in, and they learn alphabets and colors. Have naptime, and play a lot. And boy, was I wrong. Um, what I received and what my child received went a little beyond my expectations. They are technology

> certified school; these children learn how to program which is awesome. They learn how to work with an electronic device. You know kids are very smart and resilient. Cause if they can work a phone, they can work an electronic device. To learn their code, passwords, and memorize it, to go in and play interactive games on their electronic devices, also with a learning tool for the kids. Um, I think it's a great program.

P8 coming into the program, was not sure what to expect. However, the school has exceeded her expectations. She believed all preschool centers should have access to the same advanced technology. She enjoyed the Parent Engagement Activity event each month. It is a time when students, parents, and teachers are immersed together in the learning process.

P2 identified how she would change the Parent Outreach Program. P2 would like the program staff to utilize a proactive approach rather than reactive to student progress. She does not want to wait until a progress report comes out to find out how her child is doing, but she wants more frequent interaction.

> As far as his teachers, I don't feel that they have communicated much this year. You have to pry to find out how your child is doing. Unless they send a little report, but I like to be proactive rather than reactive, so I like to know consistently. I don't want to wait until a progress report comes out for you to tell me how my child is doing. I want to know his strong areas and the areas that I need to work on him with before it's too late.

She asserts the Parent Engagement Activity events are great for engagement activities with her child, PTA meetings are inviting, but she would welcome a forum to express her thoughts about school engagement.

P3 is a clinical psychologist, and she described the information received during the Parent Engagement Activity Sessions is new and helpful.

> I've attended all of them so far. I find them helpful. I like to be informed about what my children are doing. So, I schedule time to go to each of them. I'm always pleased with what they present. The first part of the meeting is a group where the principal or assistant principal gives us information. And the second part is awesome because I get a chance to go into the classroom and observe. It's not a true observation because they know that parents are there. Really they are showing us what they are doing and what they are learning. They are very proud to show their parents what they are learning, and so, I enjoy going monthly to check in and see where she is and how she is getting along.

As part of the parent engagement program, each student was assigned two electronic devices. One was to be used at home and the other in school. Parents such as P3 testified to the depth of learning their children experience daily, using mathematical formulas to code devices. However, not all parents were on board with the use of technology. P2 states, "They have the technology, but for me, I feel like it should be more hands-on stuff versus the use of electronic devices to learn."

Throughout, theme one suggests that interconnectedness between the school and parents produced a community of transparency in communications with the parents. Transparency, in this regard, is a means of various communication methods such as technology, morning routines, and volunteer opportunities used to connect with the parents.

Classroom Activities

The second theme was the classroom activities described by the participants as part of the parental engagement program. The following subthemes supported theme 2, Parent Engagement Day, intergenerational learning, and cultural challenges.

Parent Engagement Activity Day. A significant aspect of theme 2 was the Parent Engagement Activity day. Once a month, the school facilitated a day that fostered multigenerational learning as part of the parent engagement program. Parents attending the session were privy to a unique learning experience specifically for them, followed by an experiential learning activity in their child's class. Although more than half of the parents had attended the sessions, some parents could not participate due to work obligations.

However, parents or guardians unable to attend had found other means to fulfill this obligation. P2 explains, "Yeah, usually sometimes I go, and sometimes my grandmother go. We try to rotate once a month because I work." Other parents, such as P7, found the time of the sessions inconvenient. According to P7,

> the time frame is at 10 o'clock in the morning, literally, right after she gets dropped off... I work all the way in another city. I am a single mom. I don't have the luxury to not be at work for two hours of the day.

Parents who attended the sessions, such as P6, stated "I think the parent engagement day is a great experience." P6 exclaimed, "I like to be able to go into the classroom and see what's going on, see what they are teaching, and see what the environment is like."

Overall, the positive experience presented itself as another supportive element to the parent engagement day. When discussed in the context of the Parent Engagement Activity Day P3 stated,

> I've attended all of them so far. I find them helpful. I like to be informed about what my children are doing. So, I schedule time to go to each of them. I am always pleased with what they present. The first part of the meeting is a group where the principal or assistant principal gives us information. And the second part is awesome because I get a chance to go into the classroom and observe.

Social independence, a subtheme, was an area parent recognized Parent Engagement Activity Days as a necessary component for their child's social and emotional development. Parents expected their children to grow socially, healthily, adjust to their current environment, and gain the skills to transition to the next level of learning successfully. P7 describes some of the behaviors shown by her daughter that exhibit growth in this area.

> It's about consistency and helping her progress. She starts saying things randomly, and I'm like, where did you learn that and she's like school. I think it is more an independence thing that I really like about it. Like her going in and signing things, and she is responsible for her book bag, her cubby, her blanket, her own area. It's made her more independent in that way.

Home Projects. Other activities fostering social skills in the home were the various projects sent home as a means of continuous learning. According to P5, "It reinforces any learning that I have been trying to teach them." However, parents such as P2 shared a different experience from the initial year to her child's second year.

> They don't have many projects for them to do this year. They have the app, and they send homework, but it's nothing structured for them to do. So, you know we just kinda be all over the place, and I try to pick stuff that I think is appropriate for him based on what he is lacking. Not really much structure to me this year compared to how it was last year. Whether parents are satisfied or unsatisfied with home projects, the experience builds parent and child learning.

Another aspect of the home projects was how participatory and intergenerational learning were transferred between formal and informal capacities. P5 explains,

> They also have projects that they have to complete the assignment that the teacher gives to them. They bring it home, and we sit down, and I explain it to them, they take control, and I guide them in what they need to do with the ball, the cotton ball. Using their own little imagination, they tell you, put it right there. I put it on the paper for them, and they pick out another piece and tell me where they want to place it on their little project. Once it's completed, I give them praise and say that is so very nice. I try to work with them and encourage them and reinforce what the teachers are teaching in the classroom.

Cultural Challenges. Another aspect of the theme involved cultural challenges. Although the school demographics are primarily African American, there are many cultural levels within a culture that impact one's perceptions. The school district has made provisions to allow students from a higher income category to attend ABC school. It was a way of including children from various socio-economic backgrounds in a learning environment specializing in technology as a centralized feature.

Parents participating in the study shared their initial thoughts and experiences about culture and socioeconomic issues. When P3 and her spouse had initially visited the school, they expressed concern about its location. She stated,

> When we went, we noticed the school was in an area that didn't seem like a very diverse area. There were a lot of black people in the area. We started to ask questions about how, if this is such a good school, why isn't it promoted as such? I felt like we weren't getting all the information. There was a crime scene on the corner. There were a lot of flags going off. My husband and I had to have a very serious conversation about what to do next. However, after attending the open house, meeting with the teachers, staff, and principal, their assessment of the school changed. We reviewed a lot of the information that they had on the walls about the achievement of the children, and so we decided to try it. There is something that stigmatizes the school and the way it is presented to parents.

P6 noted,

> Before my child went to that school, even though we weren't in a Black neighborhood, really, all of the kids in the classroom were African American. It was a culture shock for my kid because the kids in the classroom. He didn't know he was going to school in a majority-black neighborhood where they look like him. Later on, they got a few African American boys in his class. But why are they segregating these kids? Is something wrong with the kids who go there? Or they think the other kids can't handle? I just had a lot of questions.

P6 shared, based on her observation, the children bussed into the school appeared segregated from children residing in the neighborhood.

> Kids that are outside of the neighborhood, it is like they are bussing them in and then segregating them from students that are in the neighborhood. I noticed that all the kids that are bussed in are in the same class. So, it's not like I understand you want the other kids in for whatever reason because they asked to be in the program because of whatever they have going on at the school. If they are going to do that, integrating them into the other classes, that way, those other kids could have an experience of diversity in their classroom. But why are they segregating these kids? Is something wrong with the kids who go there? Or they think the other kids can't handle? I just had a lot of questions.

According to P6, these children are grouped together in specific classes. She was told her child does not talk a great deal in school, which implied a speech deficiency. However, P6 stated, "she thinks the child may not be comfortable talking because the kids do not look like him.". P6 shared that, although the school has a significant number of African American students, it was not reflected initially in her child's class. Since this time, more students of color have been assigned to her son's class.

However, for parents without any previous knowledge of the school or those residing outside of the area, the transition posed a few challenges. Parents such as P4 would like to see more mixed-income classes. In contrast, parents such as P6 view mixed-income and diversity synonymously. P6 stated, "I noticed that all the kids that are bussed in are in the same class. If they are going to do that, integrate them into the other classes that way, those other kids could have an experience of diversity in their classroom." Although some parents might have expressed apprehensions about cultural differences, once they became acclimated to the school culture and dynamics, ideologies began to evolve.

Parent Engagement Activity Day is a significant event the school crafted to invite parents to form an educational alliance to extend learning at home. The study participants described this recurring monthly event as a good source of understanding the curriculum, teaching, and teacher interactions in their classrooms.

Although parents participated in monthly meetings and other activities, misunderstandings surrounding cultural differences or the lack of cultural understanding lead to school employees' or administrators' erroneous perceptions of actions. An example of this was uncovered during the interviews when several parents shared their questions relating to the school and possible intention to separate neighborhood children from students living in other areas around the city.

Parent Perceptions

The third theme is structured around the parents' perceptions of the school's parent engagement program. The subthemes for theme three were (a) child learning, (b) a high-quality program, (c) parents' belief their engagement helps their children, and (d) parent expectation of teachers.

Child Learning. As a professional working in higher education, P3 described with excitement her daughter's educational growth in just a few months.

> She loves it. She identifies her letters. She's able to recognize numbers. She is also adding numbers. I find that to be very advanced at the preschool level. They are setting them up with the foundational skills needed for life and for reading. One evaluation that came home indicated my daughter is scoring higher than her age group. A lot of that is

> due to having an older sibling to tell you the truth, but she scored very high. I'm a believer at this point.

High-Quality Program. An added benefit to the quality of the school for parents was its affordability. Parents in the upper-income level and the lower to moderate-income spoke to their children's education quality. P7 stated,

> As a benefit, for one it's great, and she's learning. On top of that, it's free, and it helps me. It is like a real school. She is literally learning things that I feel like she will be learning in kindergarten. I think she is going to be well off as soon as she is in kindergarten.

P3 expressed similar views.

> I've observed them playing together in the classroom. That has allowed me to relax in terms of knowing that she is getting a quality education. As a family that we've accepted that this is a top-notch program. I've paid money for less. I've paid a lot of money for less than what she is currently getting.

Quality education and affordability resonated with parents in this study. The parents described schoolwide notices of student achievement and technology use as examples of quality education. P3 explains, "We reviewed a lot of the information that they had on the walls about the achievement of the children, and so we decided to try it." P8 noted,

> It's a great program. I think all schools, all pre-k children, should be allowed to experience it. They [the students] learn how to work the technology. Not that you know kids are very smart and resilient. Cause if they can work a phone, they can work the

> technology. To learn their code, passwords and memorize it, to go in and play interactive games on the technology.

Although parents mentioned many positives relating to student learning, dissatisfaction with teaching styles prompted one parent to question potential bias in teaching strategies. P6 noted,

> We had a child study meeting. I really did not like that experience. The teacher told me she was doing some testing on my son. She said she knew that he knew the answer to the question. But the context that the question was written; she could not ask him in a different way. So, she said that she had to mark it wrong. She had to mark that he did not know it because she could not ask it in a different way. How does that make you feel as a teacher knowing that a child knows a particular answer, but because you are tied to a standard of learning, you cannot ask him in a different way so that he can get it right?

Although parents and teachers might have different perceptions relating to learning approaches, the ultimate goal is to prepare children for the next level of learning. One critical area is social skills. Social skills, an aspect of kindergarten readiness, allows the school and parents to work in partnership within the parent engagement program to ensure children's preparedness. P1 noted that he does not expect his daughter to say, "Hey dad, this is a social skill that I've learned," but he wants her to be able to identify true friendship. He wants his daughter to know what it is like to have some independence and autonomy.

Parental Beliefs About Engagement. Parental views of benefits varied based on relationships parents had with the school. Many of the parents related how the program benefits them as a direct benefit to their children. For instance, P2 stated, "I take it into my son's aspect,

and then yes, it is beneficial to me because it helps him." Because the parent is helping her son, it benefits her as a parent. P1 stated,

> I would say one of the benefits is the introduction of technology that they have within the school. As well as the class dojo system so that there is always an open line of communication between myself and my wife and the school.

These technology forms allow the parent to stay in touch with the child's teacher and class informed. P3, shared,

> I've worked in higher education for most of my career. That doesn't include the younger folks, so I know how to deal with the 18 to 23-year-old person. And so, I definitely depend on the teacher to implement, or I use whatever she's using as she is working with my daughter. So, I am definitely learning from her as to how to engage and motivate and how to maintain motivation with my 4-year-old.

The study participants described the opportunity to learn effective strategies to support their children enhanced their relationship with those in their child's learning environment. P4 attributed her son's language development, fine motor skills, manners, and adjustments to her engagement with the program.

Perceptions of Teachers. Just as the perspective of benefits varied, so too was the parent perspective of teachers. Many of the parents had high praise for the teachers. P1, a former student now parent, talked about staff' longevity continuity and how teachers cultivate independent learning. P2 expressed her frustration with her son's teacher's inflexibility regarding testing. However, P5 viewed the teacher-student interaction as rewarding. The overall parent perspective of teacher interaction was positive.

The overall structure of the program affords parents several opportunities to interact with the teachers. During the monthly Parent Engagement Activity, teachers facilitated intergenerational learning activities with students and parents. Additionally, parents wanting to increase their time in their child's class or support school staff in extended learning events were afforded opportunities to participate in schoolwide events such as field day and open house events. Through these events, parents forged relationships with other parents that extended beyond the school environment. P3 noted,

> In the last three weeks, we've been to two birthday parties, and those have been helpful. We have two hours, and the kids are playing, and the parents have time to engage with each other. So, that's been helpful for me. I've actually created relationships with about four or five families at this point. I'd say six families at this point. That's going well. We've noticed that we all sort of live in the same area. We are all commuting to the school, which is about 20 minutes from where we live. That's been really helpful to express the student experience.

In addition to parents forming relationships with other parents, their expectations were linked to their perception of teachers and the program. P4's expected her child to transition from the preschool center to kindergarten as a well-rounded student who is socially and emotionally ready. P4 noted,

> I think they've far succeeded my expectations, welcoming us in and doing communication daily that the teacher does. We get reports on how he's doing. All the expectations that I've had, especially being a former teacher. They've definitely exceeded the expectations. They always welcome us in. They have monthly observations. The

> teacher always communicates with me. If I write her an email, she always responds within 24 hours.

P5 expected the program to provide her child with an education that is high quality fair. intentional instruction and compassion. P5 noted,

> My expectations are that my child gets the learning that he or she deserves and that the teacher is being fair and not overbearing to the child but working on that child. Because when they come in, they are frightened. They've never been away from their parents.

Based on the number of years and family members enrolled in the program, P5 has a great deal of confidence in the program. When she faced various educational challenges with her son, teachers rallied around her by providing her with the instruction to strengthen deficient areas. In return, she volunteers to give back to teachers, students, parents, the program's support, compassion, knowledge, and time.

Theme three was a response to the research questions one and two, How does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education, and How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program? These parents perceived the school's parent engagement program as a positive. They found the interactions with school staff and teachers to be productive. The parents described the school's use of technology for ongoing engagement with the parents and their implementation policy relating to home projects as positive. Whether it was a formal experience, such as the Parent Engagement Activity day, birthday celebration for a child, or walking a child into the building every morning, these events suggest parent engagement is more than an event; it is a caring culture impacting school climate and family experiences.

The research from this study showed that the parent engagement educational program significantly impacted preschool parents' involvement. Three major themes emerged from the answers given by participating parents in the study. These themes were identified as School-wide Activities, Classroom Activities, and Parent Perceptions. Descriptors such as informative, supportive, good experiences, and friendliness were recurring parent sentiments. The confidence level parents experienced due to the teacher's knowledge, preschool curriculum, student achievement, and communication were factors related to their involvement. Communication methods such as Class Dojo, email, Parent Engagement Activity Day events, and daily face-to-face contact with school staff emphasized parents' respect, concern, and transparency expected and experienced daily.

Parents had a host of expectations for themselves and their children. These expectations included meeting critical benchmarks, developing a familiarity with social skills, and ensuring their children exceeded learning standards. Due to the school's technology focus, parents expected the school to be proactive in all areas of learning.

Chapter five describes the extent to which the study's findings confirm and disconfirm the body of existing knowledge relating to the research questions. Additionally, chapter five compares the research findings to chapter two and discusses how the study adds to Parent Engagement's current knowledge body.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This generic qualitative study aimed to understand the experiences of urban preschool parents participating in a parental engagement program. The study results included three themes and a critical finding highlighting the importance of relationships and communication to increasing parental engagement. The first theme was the school-wide activities that the school implemented to engage parents. The main activity in this theme was the Class Dojo, which allowed the parents to communicate online with the school staff. A second theme was the classroom activities that were part of the parental engagement program. One activity was the Parent Engagement Day, which involved the parents coming to the school and participating in classroom activities with their child. The third theme was the parents' perceptions of the parental engagement program at the school. The overarching response from the participants was positive for the school, and the efforts to engage them. Additionally, the participants believed that their engagement with their child supported their child's academic development.

Research has shown parent engagement to be beneficial to students as they matriculate through their formative years of learning (Ferlazzo, 2011). Researchers have identified a positive effect on student outcomes regardless of socioeconomic status resulting from parental engagement (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013) and consistently higher educational outcomes and achievement (Jeynes, 2012). However, I observed a gap in the literature regarding urban parents' experiences and perceptions as they participated in an innovative parental engagement program.

Interpretation of Findings

The main research question that guided the study was how experiencing the implementation of an innovative educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence levels of parental engagement in a preschool setting. Three themes that emerged during data analysis were used to answer the two research questions. These themes were parent perceptions, classroom activities, and school-wide activities. Validation of the three themes materialized through triangulation of the data from the examination of school artifacts, parent interviews, and notes from the parent engagement experience day.

School-Wide Activities

The findings indicated that school and parental engagement relate to parental connectedness. Parental connectedness coincides with their direct or indirect experiences with school staff. These experiences involve intentional communication and how well parents are integrated into the school community. How parents become engaged in school-wide activities emerged as a theme based on parent responses to Interview Questions one and two. The literature in Chapter two supports the research findings. Kunjufu (2012) confirmed consistent communication with staff, administration, and parents as a means of parental engagement. Participants in the current study also discussed the importance of their interactive communication with the school.

ABC School applies Epstein's six types of involvement as a planning tool for active and intentional engagement. Epstein's six types of parent involvement model is an influential approach to promoting parental involvement. Two of the six types of involvement in Epstein's model (communication and volunteering) support Theme 1 in the current study. Johnson (2015)

explained that Epstein's research centered on analyzing school systems, school environment, and community collaborations as an approach to establish solid partnerships to support all children in formal and informal learning environments.

ABC School uses a practical approach to ensure intentional communication with parents. Parents mentioned the use of Class Dojo as a prominent source of interactive communication with school staff. The application is free and is easy to use. Milner (2013) concluded that parental engagement extends beyond the traditional views of engagement. The use of technology, such as text messaging, emails, and educational applications, has given educators other ways to stay connected to families. ABC School is a technology-driven school. Every student attending the school has two electronic devices, one for home use and the other for the classroom. Parent-teacher conferences, parent meetings, emails, notifications of events, daily activity updates, parent and child activities, and homework projects are different ways ABC School communicates with its parents using the application.

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 stipulated that parent and community partnerships are central to students' academic success (Fenton et al., 2017). In the current study, the language was changed from parental involvement to parent and family engagement. This change addressed educational entities serving families deemed disadvantaged (Fenton et al., 2017) to develop innovative parental engagement strategies. ABC School uses technology as an innovative strategy to maintain communication with its parents, students, and community.

Another aspect of Theme one was volunteering. Findings from the study suggested three ways parents volunteered their time, resources, or both. Volunteering allowed the parents to stay connected to the school and support the school community. Park, Stone, and Holloway (2017)

found that parents participating in school-based parent organizations had a higher percentage of students excelling in math and reading. Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) recognized school-home links as one of three categories addressing successful parental engagement programs. Parents are not required to volunteer at ABC School but are invited to partner with the school in volunteer efforts. All parents interested in volunteering are required to apply except those actively serving in the military.

The background check lasts for two years. However, ABC School gives parents the option of volunteering; other programs do not. Warren, Hong, Rubin and Uy (2009) investigated three urban parent engagement programs. Parents of students attending Camino Nuevo Charter Academy were required to volunteer at least 15 hours a year. Like ABC School, parents from Camino Nuevo Charter Academy could choose what capacity they intended to volunteer. Camino Nuevo Charter Academy required their parents to volunteer and provided opportunities for parents to take paid positions as paraprofessionals at the academy.

Although current study findings did not indicate whether ABC school provides their parents with similar opportunities to receive compensation, participants from the study spoke of their volunteer efforts as providing them with the opportunity to learn about the operation of the school and child development. Several participants expressed their desire to volunteer their professional knowledge by facilitating workshops and other services during school events. Warren et al. (2009) demonstrated that parent engagement in a community versus individually and the impact engagement through volunteer efforts has on the overall parent school experience.

Classroom Activities

The second theme identified in the current study addressed RQ1: How does the parental engagement educational program impact the parents' involvement in their preschool child's education? A significant aspect of Theme two was the Parent Engagement Activity day. Parent Engagement Activity day takes place monthly at ABC School. Parent Engagement Activity day allows parents to participate in a time of learning with their child.

Parental engagement is facilitated through school-sponsored activities that support intergenerational learning. The Children's House of the Infinity Children's School in Hong Kong introduced a policy mandating parents to attend 8 hours of parent education classes before student enrollment (Irving, 2017). Like The Children's House of the Infinity Children's School, ABC School incorporates monthly parent-child learning events through their Parent Engagement Activity days. Although these are not mandatory, they are valuable to parent and school connectedness. The events are intentional and provide parents with strategies to support kindergarten readiness.

The Office of Head Start used the Family and Community Engagement Framework to guide grantees to support parental engagement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). The seven outcomes necessitate the importance of these efforts. The integration of the framework in a systematic manner supports successful engagement. Mendez and Swick (2018) found the success of the Gilford Academy was its ability to increase its reach to families, strong leadership, parent liaisons, and the program's focus on its students' well-being and academic success. Six key elements were at the center of their success: collaborative leadership, significant learning experiences, aligned curriculum, practices continuity, the stability of parent involvement

and engagement, and professional development (Reynolds et al., 2017). By fostering the monthly parent engagement experience, ABC School promotes parental involvement by inviting the parents to participate in the event and school readiness skills by allowing parents to go into the classroom setting and engage with their children for a collective learning experience. According to Reynolds et al. (2017), these events promote engagement, support school readiness skills, and increase early school achievement among young learners.

Five themes emerged from Mapp's (2003) study of the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary school, which supports the current study's findings. Like Mapp's study, participants from the current study wanted their children to do well in school. They wanted a clear understanding of how their participation would help their children excel in school. Parents wanted opportunities to appropriately engage with their children in formal and informal learning environments. Lastly, parents wanted to know how to develop strong relationships between the school and home.

Culture was another factor supporting Theme two. The research confirmed the relationship between successful parent engagement programs and how parents understand classroom operations (Howard, 2010). The first set of interview questions was designed to explore the parents' feelings of efficacy and culture. The second set was designed to explore their cultural experiences, and the last set was designed to explore their cultural perception of the program. Data from each of the questions supported culture as a significant aspect of Theme 2.

Johnson (2015) suggested that culture determines what values and traditions individuals embrace and affects their mindsets and mannerisms. ABC School is located in an area adjacent to a public housing complex. Approximately 90% of the school children are brought to the school by a parent or guardian. Most of the participants in the study do not reside in the school's

neighborhood. Many of the participants were college graduates who lived in more affluent neighborhoods.

According to Porter and Samovar (1994), culture is a combination of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion, and roles supported by a group of people during generations of individual and group striving. Porter and Samovar (1994) revealed that when communication is ambiguous, individuals begin to fill in the blanks with their limited knowledge based on previous experiences. Culture is messy, complex, changing, and at times contradictory (Howard, 2010). Culture is not tied to race, ethnicity, or place of origin but is formed by many factors (Howard, 2010). Cultural factors can differ among members of the same ethnic group and can be similar among individuals from different ethnic groups. According to Howard (2010), culture is learned norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, and ways of knowing that people use in response to their social environments.

Culture is a way a social group survives and adapts to its environment as a defense mechanism in interpreting its reality (Howard, 2010). Although several parents from the current study were returning parents, most were not. Parents participating in the study who had formed relationships with school personnel either as former students or parents of former students praised the staff for their longevity with ABC School. The turnover rate is low, which leads to continuity and structure. However, newer parents entered the program with safety concerns after seeing a makeshift memorial in front of the school. The concern did not dissipate until the parent had an opportunity to go inside ABC School, talk with the administration and staff, and gain a greater understanding of the school's culture.

Another parent expressed concern about presenting testing materials to her child in a way he could not understand. Although the student spoke English, the assessments were confusing, according to the parent. The parent was concerned that her child did not understand what the teacher was conveying. When the parent asked the teacher why she had not asked her child the question in another way, she was not happy with the response.

Finally, the current study revealed a multilayered culture. Most of the students were transported to school by their parents, while others were bussed. Parents come from various neighborhoods around the city. No two neighborhoods are alike, and families bring their uniqueness to the ABC School. According to participants, the outer appearance of the school is deceiving. However, the interior is captivating with its culture of excellence. According to the participants, the culture of excellence is a benefit; however, when parents are not privy to certain information, assumptions fill in the gaps. For instance, one of the participants questioned why children bussed in from other city areas were separated from the neighborhood students. She stated that she questioned whether something was wrong with the neighborhood children. Although her child was not from the area, she acknowledged many of the neighborhood students had more in common with her child than his classroom peers.

Critical race theory or CRT was used in this study to identify and understand how the impact of culture and race related to potential barriers to parent engagement. Again, culture is messy and complicated (Howard, 2010). The data from participant responses did not imply race presented any barriers to engagement. However, different cultural experiences, language comprehension, and usage when administering assessments, if not clearly explained to parents,

can pose relational barriers between parents and teachers. Assumptions, in the place of understanding, can have detrimental effects on the learning environment.

Parent Perceptions

The third theme identified in this study is the perception parents had of their roles and the effects of their expectations. Evidence for theme three supported RQ1 and RQ2. Child learning, high-quality program, home projects, parental belief their engagement helps their children, and parent expectations of teachers evolved as subthemes supporting this theme. Cadre Organization (2017) suggested that parental perceptions of their child's learning environment and teacher expectations impact how they engage.

In this study, parents expected a topnotch, high quality, affordable, and equitable program, which prepared their children for kindergarten and fostered learning at home. Based on the school culture and its high standards of learning, as evidenced in their curriculum and showcases academic test scores throughout the building, parents expect their children to excel. These findings support research conducted by Mendez and Swick (2018), who found part of the success of the Gilford Parent Academy rested in its focus on its students' well-being and academic success. Other findings supporting this research conducted by Reynolds et al. (2017) found six key elements contributing to the Gilford Parent Academy that resonates with the parents' expectations throughout this study.

In a study conducted by Mapp (2003), five major themes emerged, which correspond to emerging themes. Key themes from their study relevant to parent expectations in this study refer to the parental desire for their child's academic success, understanding a direct correlation between their engagement and child development, and direct link between parent and school

relationships and engagement. Parents want to see their children succeed and expect those entrusted with their children to want the same.

A parental belief that their engagement helps their children emerged as a continuation of theme three. The findings suggested that affordability, high-quality education, volunteer opportunities, and equitable treatment of students were beneficial to both parents and students. The findings in this study confirmed Boonk et al.'s (2018) investigative analysis of the correlation of positive findings between parental involvement and academic achievement. Park et al.(2017) findings further support this study's findings, suggesting invigorating parents' learning environments nurture engagement.

Parent expectations of teachers emerged as a subtheme of parent perceptions—data from the study show relatively positive relationships between parents and teachers. Parents expect regular communication, high expectations from their children's teachers, and opportunities to volunteer in the class. Parents are given opportunities to engage onsite monthly with their children during the Parent Engagement Activity event. According to the parents, the monthly event led to learning for both the parent and child. The extensive literature review by Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) suggests that successful engagement programs support monthly interactions with parents through a culture of learning. Research by Warren et al. (2009) further reinforces teachers and parents working together strengthens parent-child, teacher-parent, and parent-school relationships.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are inevitable, and despite efforts to construct a comprehensive study, there is the possibility outside factors may affect the desired outcomes. Due to this study's nature,

participants' selection included parents of preschoolers attending a preschool center located in proximity to a low-income housing development. However, the participants in the study did not reside in the area but in higher-income neighborhoods. The majority of the participants were college-educated and employed in their chosen profession. This study's CRT Framework reflects the school district's location, socio-economic background, and racial makeup. However, the participants' responses, higher income, and educational levels did not reflect the stereotypical views usually associated with families residing in the inner-city.

Another limitation of the study relates to the dependability of the data and sources. During the interviews, truthfulness was expected; however, there was no guarantee that their responses would genuinely represent their honest opinions. During one of the interviews, a participant apologized after expressing her thoughts regarding a question. She did not want to offend or give the "wrong" answer. She was assured there were no "wrong" answers, the interview was confidential, and no one would have access to her real identity.

Teachers were intentionally excluded from the study. However, due to the school's uniqueness as a technology-rich preschool, including teacher perspectives for engaging parents would have added to the research. Parents discussed their expectations of teachers; however, due to the higher socio-economic status of the participants whose children attend a title one school, it would be interesting to find out their perceptions of parent expectations.

Another limitation of the study involved the use of member-checking. Transcripts sent to participants for clarification and verification purposes were not returned. Less than half of the participants responded. Therefore, I had to review the transcriptions multiple times, along with the recordings, to ensure accuracy. There were no apparent discrepancies in the transcriptions.

Recommendations

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to understand the experiences of parents of preschoolers engaged in a blended parent engagement program in an urban school district. The study results provided insight into the different perceptions of parents of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and engagement. Challenges identified in this study create opportunities further to explore the phenomenon of parent engagement in early learning.

Recommendations resulting from this study are established directly or indirectly from collected data from study participants. Based on these findings, replicating this study in other urban school district preschool parent engagement programs, offering technology to all students is recommended. The replicated study should include educators, administrators, and significant adult figures to support further research and expand this study's outcome. An expansion of the study adds another perspective to the parent voice in parent engagement.

Future researchers should conduct a qualitative study that utilizes a phenomenology or ethnography design to broaden research on parent perspectives on engaging parents. According to McCaslin and Scott (2003), the researcher reduces the collected data into one central meaning in a phenomenological design. An ethnography design permits the researcher to develop relationships, interact, and engage with participants over a specific time to generate much research obtained through observation of behaviors.

Another possible area for future research would include comparing preschool parents' perceptions with different socioeconomic statuses and racial backgrounds using technology to engage parents. Information could be used to support the cultural aspect of engaging preschool parents in school districts. While this study was conducted with parents from an urban preschool

center, future researchers should expand the research to include parents and teachers from clusters of preschool programs in rural and suburban school districts engaging parents in blended parent engagement programs. The results could be used to create and strengthen district parent engagement strategies.

Implications

Using a generic qualitative approach was the best choice for this study. The approach allowed the exploration of the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. The study assumed that the participants presented an honest account of preschool parents' current perceptions in an urban school district. This study suggests that communication is a central element for forming and establishing home and school partnerships. The findings indicate that when communication is free of ambiguity and presented in various ways, engaging parents is less challenging. When given the opportunity, the findings also indicated that parents would avail themselves of authentic partnerships with educators and school staff.

This generic qualitative study's nature foundational core was constructed on several different frameworks: critical race theory, andragogy, social learning theory, and experiential learning. The purpose of the various contexts allowed the study to be viewed from a perspective, lending to its strengths generated by various parts to construct its whole. Critical race theory used in the researcher gave the researcher a historical context of how race impacts perceptions. Critical race theory was used to design the interview questions to define potential preexisting beliefs about the influence of culture, power, and race influences parents' interactions with educators. However, parent perceptions in this study did not identify race as an influencer to engagement.

Instead, parents questioned the placement of neighborhood students and students bussed into the area. Critical race theory proposes that racism is difficult to address because it is ingrained into our society's fabric (Allen, 2017). However, this study did not identify race as a barrier to engagement. This is not to say that race does not impact parent perceptions at this level. Only one parent disclosed an educational experience in which race had a negative impact. Positive past experiences as an ABC student, coupled with negative experiences in an out of zone school, influenced his decision to enroll his daughter in ABC school.

Andragogy, the second layer of the foundational framework used in this study, understand the adult learner's experience with the curriculum. Six principles inspire andragogy. Andragogy asserts the need to know, self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, problem orientation, and intrinsic motivation are the basis for adult learning (Ozuah, 2016). ABC school did not have a specific parent curriculum used with parents. Instead, ABC school created a formal plan, influenced by the creative curriculum, technology, and parent interest.

According to Tough (1979), a teacher's first task is to assist adult learning by understanding why it is necessary to understand it. Adult learners want to know what they will gain due to the time spent learning the information. ABC school recognizes that learning does not begin and end with the student but encompasses the entire family. The school has established several events to ensure the successful implementation of learning at school and at home. One such event is the Parent Engagement Activity Day allows which supports intergenerational learning. Parents come into the center monthly, engage in a formal learning activity, followed by a shared learning experience with their children. ABC school informed parents early on what is needed to support the home school partnership.

According to Ozuah (2016), Adults have a psychological need to be seen as capable of self-direction. ABC school presents opportunities for parents to use the information available to them and obtain them to assist in various volunteer capacities within the center. Within this study, participants shared the transference of information from the engagement activities into real-time engagement with the students. Along with these experiences, ABC school recognizes the experiences many parents bring to the learning environment. Participants within this study mentioned their desire to facilitate workshops for other ABC parents. Some mentioned connecting with other ABC parents during school events or within their communities.

The fourth principle of andragogy suggests that adult learning occurs when learning prepares them to solve a problem or deal effectively with life's situations. ABC school is a technology-savvy school where all children were presented with electronic pads to complete daily assignments at school and homework assignments. ABC equipped its parents with the information needed to support their children. According to P2, the learning she had received from the school provided the educational tools to support her daughter better.

The fifth principle suggests that adult learning takes place when content is relevant to learning. In other words, adults are moved to learn to the extent they perceive learning to help them perform tasks or solve problems they may encounter in life. ABC School provided knowledge parents needed via events, technology, and face to face contact to support the home school partnership. The support given to parents leads to the last principle, intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within, a drive to keep developing, acquiring knowledge, and evolving. ABC school created opportunities through the Parent Engagement Activity event to

nurture and develop adult learning for parents of all socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

Social learning theory was the third construct of the theoretical framework. This framework aimed to understand parental experiences and perceptions resulting from their interactions in the program. Social learning theory was used to support the creation of RQ1 and RQ2 and the exploration of active parental engagement and self-efficacy. The research questions explored the relationship between engagement and the perceptive role parents had regarding their child's education. The study supported the assertion made by Schunk and Pajares (2009) that parental confidence is associated with the value given to their engagement. According to parents in the study, the consistent positive interactions with ABC school personnel significantly influenced their perceptions.

Experiential learning, the last construct of the study's theoretical framework used in this study, provided a greater understanding of selected methods to engaging parents through enhanced learning. The study supports Fowler's (2008) assertion that experiential learning profoundly reflects the development of advanced learning in adults. Additionally, the study supports assertions by Clark and Torreta (2018) experiential learning practice connects acquired knowledge to the application of knowledge in real-time. The Parent Engagement Activity event illustrates how experiential learning fosters consistent intergenerational learning in the school and surrounding community.

Although ABC school had several means of communicating with parents, primarily through various forms of technology, the research found that when parents are given sufficient information to make informed decisions, apprehension to engage fully is lessen. Parents required

comprehensive information thoroughly explained from their initial encounter with school officials and as their child matriculates through the school. The findings found that parents without sufficient information tend to answer their questions with information based on previous experiences. Information communicated from all levels should be checked for understanding. ABC school provided lots of opportunities and services for parents. However, several study participants stated a lack of awareness of these services when inquiring about these services. This is not to say the information was not previously conveyed to parents by ABC school; it suggests that it be checked for understanding.

Insofar as creating opportunities for authentic partnerships within the formal learning environment, using data from parent assessments can provide information relating to parents' skills, talents, resources, supports, and availability. Additionally, this data creates a holistic approach to working with all parents, staff, students, and community stakeholders. Additionally, when parents agree to volunteer in any capacity, it is necessary to follow up appropriately. The study's findings suggest that when parents offer their time and services and follow up is delayed without appropriate communication, engaging parents becomes challenging. Schools can enhance engagement by providing parents with specific information to aid with their involvement.

This study's implication for social change supports the development of integrated technological methods to support parental engagement in early learning. If these methods are applied and integrated into preschool programs, learning becomes intergenerational. This recommendation connects parents to lifelong learning. As their children are introduced to new forms of learning through technology, opportunities are available for parents to learn with them.

Equipping parents shows authentic trust, respect, and mutual understanding of their role in educating their children.

Additionally, findings from the study support the inclusion of a community technology center. Providing a center for families and the surrounding community supports continual learning, thereby equipping the community with tools to build and grow. Further research is needed to explore and compare parent engagement programs rich in technology versus traditional parent engagement forms in preschool learning environments.

Conclusion

Parent engagement is one of the most significant yet often misused opportunities in educational spaces. John Bowlby (1951) suggested a correlation between how one values children and appreciates their parents. This generic qualitative study explored urban preschool parents' experiences participating in a blended parent engagement program designed to foster engagement and leadership.

This study's research question was, how does experiencing the implementation of an innovative educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence levels of parental engagement in a preschool setting? The main research question sought to explain how the innovative program influenced levels of engagement. A series of questions inquired of parents sought to extract a clear understanding of their perceptions and its' impact on their level of engagement. As a result, this study identified how the parents engaged and perceived their engagement in an innovative preschool's parental engagement program.

The study's findings support previous studies (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Englund et al., 2004), showing parents, regardless of socioeconomic background, want the best education for

their children. The findings also suggested that parents associate their children's treatment directly with how the school's offerings benefit them. When children are treated fairly and afforded opportunities to grow educationally in a safe and nurturing environment, parents are more willing to support school staff and events.

Perceptions directly impact expectations and influence the level to which one chooses to engage. Parents previously connected positively to the school via enrollment as children or the enrollment of older children tended to find ways to stay engaged. Whereas parents with no previous connections to school environments needed assurances, their children's placement was appropriate. Intentional communication was identified as a means by which parents experienced such an assurance.

Failure to communicate relevant information, free of ambiguity, deemed necessary by parents creates pockets of mistrust and a diminished view of their value. Communication is broad and encompasses a spectrum of behaviors. In this study, ABC school used various means of communication to connect with parents. The study suggests that intentional communication through innovative means builds trusting and lasting relationships, stimulating and promoting ongoing engagement.

Future use of this study can explore how parent engagement programs at the preschool level, rich in technology, compared with traditional programs. Another suggestion would include a larger sample with a more diverse group of parents. The majority of the participants in this study were college-educated African American married women.

Expanding this research to include a more diverse population may enhance these findings by comparing perspectives with varying education, gender, and political affiliations. A final

suggestion for consideration school officials could implement a yearly parent assessment. The assessment tool would help measure how parents are engaging, engagement levels, and if efforts to engage are meaningful and deliberate.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Initial Interview Protocol

The protocol I will use for a face-to-face interview is:

1. On the scheduled interview date, researcher will arrive to the interview location at least 15 minutes early to ensure that all equipment is working appropriately.
2. Once participant arrives, researcher will greet the participant and assist them to a comfortable and confidential location.
3. Researcher will review and explain in detail all aspects of the informed consent and request that the participant signs and dates the informed consent prior to continuing. Researcher will inform the participant that they can stop the interview at any time if they feel uncomfortable.
4. Researcher will begin recording the interview.
5. Each interview will begin with a statement from the researcher consisting of the date and time, an introduction from the researcher, the purpose of the study and a previously agreed upon identifier for the participant.
6. The researcher will gather background information on the participant.
7. Researcher will ask the participant questions from the pre-composed open-ended guiding interview questions.
8. There will be nine questions asked of each participant followed by a brief period of clarification questions (as needed).
9. After the participant, has answered each question, the researcher will tell the participant and audio recorder that the interview will be ending at that time.

10. Participant will also be informed that they may contact the researcher with any questions or concerns about the proposed study.

11. The researcher will state the participant's identifier, the time and date and will thank the participant for taking the time to participate in the process.

The protocol for the phone interview

1. The researcher emailed the informed consent form to the participant after sampling.
2. The participant replied to the email with the words “I consent” in the body of the email.
3. The researcher scheduled the phone interview by calling the participant.
4. Prior to beginning recording the researcher asked if there were any questions about the informed consent form or the interview process.
5. The researcher explained that the interview could be stopped anytime if the participant felt uncomfortable.
6. After this discussion the researcher began recording and asked the interview questions.
7. The interview lasted between 45-60 minutes in duration.
8. After the interview was over the researcher thanked the participant and asked if there are any questions.

Interview questions

How does experiencing the implementation of an innovation educational program, designed to involve urban preschool parents, influence levels of parental engagement in a preschool setting?

RQ1. How does the parent engagement educational program impact the parents’ involvement in their preschool child’s education?

Personal Beliefs

1. How do you feel about working with this program?
2. What do you believe are some of the benefits you receive as a parent of working with this program?

Social

3. Tell me about some of your experiences with this program?
4. How do you work with the teachers, staff, and administrators?
5. How do you work with the other parents within the program?

RQ2 How do parents perceive their role in a parental engagement educational program?

6. What are your expectations of the program?
7. How does the program overall support your participation? (CRT)
8. What aspects of the program would you change?
9. Is there something that you would like to say that I did not ask about?

Follow-up Interview

I sent each participant the transcript of the interview through email. I requested a time for a 15-30-minute follow-up interview. During this second interview I asked the following questions:

1. What are additional ideas you have about the program that you did not share in the previous interview?
2. Tell me about any chapter suggestions for other parents who are engaging in their child's school?