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The Role of Teacher Perceptions in Parental Involvement

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Crecenra Boyd

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

The Role of Teacher Perceptions in Parental Involvement

by

Crecenra Boyd

M.Ed., University of Houston – Victoria, 2001

B.B.A., Texas Southern University, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology

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Abstract

In the changing field of education, there is awareness of the benefits of parental involvement on student achievement and the impact teachers have on the success of parental involvement programs. However, teachers may rely significantly on their personal experiences as a source of reference for parental involvement and subsequently impact student achievement. There is a gap in the research about the lived experiences of teachers regarding their perspectives and support of parental involvement in the classroom. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teachers' lived experiences and attitudes concerning parental involvement and student achievement. The conceptual framework for the study was supported by Bandura's social cognitive theory and Bandura's self-efficacy theory. A phenomenological research design and purposeful sampling was used to conduct face-to-face, semistructured interviews with 10 participants who were currently employed teachers with at least 5 years of experience and who had an awareness of parental involvement. Data collected from interviews were analyzed using the modified van Kaam method of analysis described by Moustakas. The 3 main themes that emerged from the data were a history of high parental involvement, the fostering of open and positive communication, and teacher-parent relationship building. Understanding how teachers' experiences influence parental involvement could result in a positive social change for education by creating awareness among educators and caregivers and by improving support for students.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wonderful family who encouraged and supported me every step of the way. They never doubted my ability to accomplish my goals.

Thank you God for answering my prayers, hearing my doubts, and holding me steadfast. Through your son, Jesus, all things are possible!

Meghon and Dennis, Mommy did it! Meghon, you were my personal cheerleader!

To my dear parents, Dennis and Lois Flim, you have always been with me. Your love and support has taken me places I could have never dreamed!

To my husband, Donald Boyd, thank you for your love and support.

To my fluffy fur ball, Crackers, who always gave me a dissertation break by letting me know when he needed to go outside.

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Finally, I would like to thank the participants. I appreciate your time and insight. Your contributions have been invaluable to this study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Educators are aware of the link between the academic support of students and the student's educational achievement (Elias & Haynes, 2008; Shepard et al., 2012). This academic support may be presented in the form of programs and documented for effectiveness. Parental involvement is one such program, which offers support for student learning and achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Schools may use some form of a parental involvement program to enhance student achievement and success.

Parental involvement programs are often represented in varying ways and may be termed family involvement, parental involvement, family-school partnerships, parent engagement, teacher-family partnerships, and parent-school involvement (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Hill & Craft, 2003; Hindman & Morrison, 2011; Patte, 2011; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Despite term differences, the programs have the same goals, which are to create a positive climate of parents and schools working together to improve student success (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). Teachers are viewed as the first school contact and through their support of parental involvement, student achievement is increased (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010).

Teacher support of parental involvement may be complex. Teachers' support of parental involvement is driven by factors beyond expectations of conforming to state and district mandates in acceptable practices (Kurtines-Becker, 2008). Teachers have opinions, beliefs, and prior experiences, which may influence their willingness to encourage parental involvement as a method of improving student success (Patte, 2011).

Kurtines-Becker (2008) stressed the importance of teachers' belief in parental involvement and how this belief is strengthened when the teachers research and ground themselves in the evidence indicating parental involvement programs support student achievement. Teachers' understanding of research or implementation of parental involvement may shape their preconceptions and value of the program.

Teachers, like other individuals, have life experiences which could possibly define their thoughts and reactions to concepts. Teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and prior experiences with parental involvement build their values and attitude toward their program (Kurtines-Becker, 2008; Patte, 2011). These opinions, beliefs, and prior experiences form a teacher's background and how they view parental involvement. What teachers bring to promoting parental involvement in schools and communities, influences parent-teacher, parent-school, and parent-child relationships, which are keys to developing life-long learners (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009).

This chapter is an introduction to a study that examined how teachers' backgrounds, which are described as teachers' beliefs, values, and prior experiences, influence their perception and their facilitation of parental involvement, which is regarded as a strong predictor of student success. Relevant sections outlined in this chapter include the purpose for the study, research question/s, assumptions, scope, and limitations. This study may result in positive social change by highlighting the influence of teachers' experiences and perceptions toward parental involvement. What we do to understand and rectify any problems induced by perceptions will result in positive social change.

Background

Parental involvement consists of programs that are designed to aid parents in using school resources for the academic benefit of their children. Parental involvement is a strong predictor of student success in school (Pattnaik & Sriram, 2010). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) describes parental involvement as a parent's role in the educational support and development of the child in regards to academic learning and school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Some aspects of parental involvement include open communication with schools and active parental involvement at school, including but not limited to partnerships with school organizations (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Parental involvement programs are beneficial. Parental involvement is shown to assist students in the completion of tasks, classroom participation, and attention (Hill & Craft, 2003). It is suggested that students in schools with parental involvement programs excel more academically (Radzi et al., 2010). There may also be a link between parental involvement and children's social interactions including behavior (Deslandes, 2001). According to Deslandes (2001), home-school partnerships have a significant bearing on student achievement because of the parental involvement influence. Home-school partnerships created through parental involvement may lessen barriers and foster a healthier learning experience for students. Teachers are vital to the home-school partnership which has shown positive effects on students and their achievement; therefore, the impact of teachers on this collaboration should be further explored (Deslandes, 2001).

Relationship building is possibly the foundation of parental involvement programs. The teacher is an integral part of building the reciprocal relationships with families (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Through the positive effects of parental involvement programs, parents may instill more trust in teachers, and thereby, the teacher could experience more comfort in working closely with parents and students which may build stronger relationships and student achievement. If this is true, the teacher is an integral part of parental involvement programs. There is a gap in the research that could explain how relationship building is influenced by teachers' opinions from prior experiences (Deslandes, 2001).

According to Hill and Craft (2003), when teachers, based on their preconceptions, believe parents have high educational values for their child and actively participate in their child's education, this correlates with an increase in the child's academic performance. Doucet (2008) clarified this preconception and stated that teachers come from diverse backgrounds and may be skeptical of parents who view parental involvement differently from the way the teachers felt they were raised. In other words, if teachers believe parental involvement is valuable based on their own childhood experiences because their parents were actively involved in their education, then teachers may perceive the parent of a student as less concerned if they are less involved. Teachers may be holding parents accountable to their preconceived standards of parental involvement whether positive or negative. If this is the case, the preconceptions of teachers may shape their opinions of parental involvement and their motivation for promoting parental involvement programs.

If parental involvement results in positive effects on students through increased academic performance, the role of teachers in parental involvement must be further studied. Radzi et al. (2010) explained that teachers have an important role in implementing parental involvement because teachers' perception of parental involvement whether positive or negative affects the parents' participation in schools. At this point it is reasonable to examine the role of teachers' experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement and how this affects their motivation for promoting the program. This study may be used to advocate support for teachers who are responsible for implementing and encouraging parental involvement.

Problem Statement

Schools may research the possible effectiveness of parental involvement programs as a means of building positive student-teacher and parent-teacher relationship as well as boosting student achievement. Researchers continually analyze data with the goal of improving parental involvement in schools, and thereby, improving student achievement (Vellymalay, 2012). Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) suggested parents' impact on their child's educational success is influenced by how they work with the school; this parent-school connection has foundational support through teacher interaction with parents. Based on the findings of Ratcliff and Hunt, teacher interaction with parents establishes the groundwork for a parent-school connection which leads to relationships that may be important in parental involvement programs and therefore strengthening the concept that the teacher is a significant factor in the promotion of parental involvement.

Teachers generally have a professional responsibility to promote parental involvement. Kurtines-Becker (2008) suggested that teachers research parental involvement to build their belief in its importance. Due to the awareness of the benefits of parental involvement on student achievement, federal and state initiatives exist which aim to strengthen teacher knowledge of these same benefits so they can aid in its promotion (Radzi et al., 2010). Some teacher accreditation and teacher training programs consist of in-services and professional development models that focus on parental involvement and how it benefits student success (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). However, if these in-service and professional development programs fail to make a significant impact in providing teachers with adequate resources, teachers may rely on their own personal experiences to facilitate parental involvement (Patte, 2011). This reliance on personal experience may affect the teacher's opinion of parental involvement and affect student achievement.

According to Radzi et al. (2010), parental involvement does improve student achievement; therefore, a study examining teacher background and how it affects parental involvement could help improve student achievement. Such a study would aid in identifying background influences that teachers bring to the teaching profession and how these factors affect parental involvement and student achievement. There is a gap in the research because there has not been a focus on how teachers' lived experiences influence parental involvement. Teachers can be influenced by their preconceptions, possibly from beliefs formed by their opinions and past experiences with parental involvement (Patte, 2011). Influences, such as teacher background factors, may dictate a teacher's

encouragement of parental involvement, and therefore, affect student achievement (Kurtines-Becker, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

According to Bufkin (2006), the qualitative study seeks to understand a social problem through the views of individuals by giving them a voice in the subject matter. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in the classroom. Understanding how teachers' backgrounds and perceptions inform their opinions concerning parental involvement could result in positive social change in educational practices by helping to create a positive environment that encourages parental involvement.

Parental involvement is a key aspect of a child's educational development and as a result, parental involvement programs are continually evaluated for effectiveness (Radzi et al., 2010). Buttery and Anderson (1997) considered parental involvement programs to be significant because these programs contribute to student achievement regardless of the child's grade level, parental socioeconomic status, or parental education level. Teachers are a factor in the success of parental involvement and the subsequent positive student outcomes that follow. Parental involvement programs are partnerships where the parent represents the home environment of a child and the teacher is representative of the school environment. Deslandes (2001) suggested teachers may have the vision of a home-school partnership where all must work together including themselves, parents, and pupils. However, negative teacher attitudes and dispositions

have been associated with the subject of parental involvement (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Further, a teacher's background contributes to preconceptions and attitudes about parental involvement programs.

In a study completed by Deslandes, it was noted there was difficulty when teachers were asked to differentiate between their perspectives or feelings and their motivation to foster parental involvement programs. The motivational factors included the teacher's professional responsibility to promote parental involvement programs (Deslandes, 2001). This is further evidence that teachers' opinions and experiences may influence their willingness to increase student success through parental involvement programs. Based on how significantly parental involvement contributes to the improvement of student achievement, studying how a teacher's background influences parental involvement is relevant.

Research Questions

Phenomenological research should produce questions which are clear in statement and provide for social as well as personal relevance (Moustakas, 1994). The central research question and related subquestions that guided my study were:

Central Research Question: How are teachers' experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement in education related to teachers' facilitation of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Subquestion 1: How have teachers' personal and professional experiences with parental involvement shaped their approach to working with students and their families?

Subquestion 2: To what extent do teachers view their parental involvement

strategies as being successful?

Subquestion 3: How do teachers describe the relationship between parental

involvement and student achievement?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study will be Bandura's (1986) social

cognitive theory and Bandura's (1999) self-efficacy theory. Social cognitive theory

addresses human motivation and behavior and the cognitive and environmental factors

that influence them, including experiences (Bandura, 1986). Social cognitive theory

defines the causal relationship between an individual's experiences and learning

(Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is the fundamental root of human agency and is an

individual's belief that they can effect change through their actions (Bandura, 1999;

Holzberger, Philipp, & Kunter, 2013). Bandura's social cognitive theory is relevant to

this study when examining the task of parental involvement and the teacher's perspective

through experiences and learned behavior.

The concept of teacher self-efficacy has its foundation in social cognitive theory

and further extends the relationship theory of experiences and learning by defining the

teacher's self-concept when approaching tasks (Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011).

Teacher self-efficacy is relational to teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform tasks.

Further, teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform tasks are related to the teacher's value

of educational initiatives (Pendergast et al, 2011). Teachers have value in parental

involvement if they have belief in the ability to perform the tasks associated with this

educational initiative. Further, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy have stronger

beliefs in the value and successful implementation of educational initiatives such as

parental involvement programs (Fives & Gregoire, 2014). Bandura's (1999) self-efficacy

theory will frame the relationship between teacher backgrounds and experiences and

attitudes toward parental involvement. There will be a more detailed analysis of

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive and self-efficacy theories in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

I used a phenomenological design for this study. A phenomenological study is

described as approaching a topic with innocence and subsequently generating a question

to further the research (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological study abandons

preconceptions and expectations (Anfara & Mertz, 2006).

The key concept for my investigation in this study is the relevance of teacher

preconceptions toward parental involvement. I examined the preconceptions and opinions

of teachers and how this impacts parental involvement by encouraging parental

participation or perhaps hindering parental activities. According to Radzi et al. (2010),

when teachers negatively perceive parental involvement in schools, a barrier is created

that negatively affects students' academic achievement. Likewise, if teachers have a

positive perception of parental involvement, a successful collaboration is formed between

parent and teacher resulting in positive academic achievement for students.

Through open-ended interview questions, participants had an opportunity to

express their story (Ohman, 2005). Teachers shared their experiences with parental

involvement while reflecting on their prior experiences. Also, qualitative research

questions followed a semistructured or open-ended format to facilitate an open-minded view from the researcher (Farber, 2006). I analyzed interview findings and reported themes related to positive social change in parental involvement and student achievement. This study used the modified van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data, as described by Moustakas (1994) to: (a) list every expression relevant to the participants' experience, (b) test each expression for particular requirements, (c) cluster core themes of the experience, (d) validate the core themes of the experience, (e) create an Individual Textural Description of the experience, (f) create an Individual Structural Description based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation, (g) create an Individual Textural-Structural Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, and finally, (h) create an Individual Textural-Structural Description of the meanings and essences of the experience which represents the group.

Definitions of Terms

The following are terms and definitions unique to the study:

Academic success: A favorable or desirable educational outcome (Jeynes, 2005).

Family-school partnerships: Collaboration between families and school staff to aid students in success (Patte, 2011).

Home-school partnerships: Cooperation between the school and the family (Deslandes, 2001).

Human agency: An individual's belief in their power to make changes and maintain control in their environment (Bandura, 1999).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Developed out of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, forms the basis for current United States educational policy (Diorio, 2008).

Parental involvement: The participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Parent engagement: Parents actively participating and collaborating with their student's school (Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013).

Socioeconomic status (SES): A social standing measured by education, income, and occupation ("Age & Socioeconomic Status", n.d).

Teacher self-efficacy: Teachers' beliefs in their abilities to organize and execute actions necessary to bring about desired outcomes (Calik, Sezgin, Kavgaci, & Cagatay Kilinc, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Suzuki (2012) describes assumptions in qualitative research as taking the following into consideration: bias, honesty, participant and researcher relationship, timeframe of study, number of participants, and verification of study validity and reliability. There were three basic assumptions of this study. The assumptions were participants would be willing to provide information, the research participants would give meaningful and accurate accounts of their experiences, and that I was aware of my role while engaging with participants.

Scope and Delimitations

My study focused on teachers' backgrounds, which are teachers' beliefs and prior experiences, and the resulting teacher perceptions toward parental involvement. This focus was chosen based on previous literature, which found teachers' willing participation in parental involvement to be a vital factor in its success, and thereby, the achievement of students (Patte, 2011). Purposeful sampling was used to obtain the most effective sample to answer the research question (Newman & Hitchcock, 2011). The scope of the study consisted of 10 primary school teachers who: (a) were employed in the Gulf Coast region of Texas, (b) were employed in the public school system, (c) were classroom teachers, (d) had been employed a minimum of 5 years, and (e) had an awareness of parental involvement.

This study did impose delimitations and this refers to purposeful limitations on the research design (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). The delimitation of this study was in its boundary to a smaller population. In some research studies, a sample size consisting of 15 to 20 participants may be considered small; however, in a qualitative research study the sample size is generally smaller and is appropriate if it adequately answers the research question and provides saturation (Newman & Hitchcock, 2011). Research meets the criteria of generalizability if the findings can be related or transferable to a similar situation outside the context of the study (Krefting, 1991). However, the research tradition in this study, which is qualitative research, was not focused on generalizability but rather on understanding phenomena from the participant's perspective and capturing what may have been overlooked in other studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Limitations

A research study may contain restrictions that are not necessarily in the control of the researcher (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). Such restrictions are known as limitations. As the limitations of this study are acknowledged, so are the purposes and strengths (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Transferability is addressed in this study by expanding on current concepts of a teacher's role in parental involvement programs and describing the possible evolution of this role.

The interviewer, interviewee, or both may impose limitations on the study during the interview process. Such limitations may include the interviewee's lack of full disclosure when sharing experiences, the interviewer's insufficient knowledge of appropriate questioning, the interviewer's inadequate interpretation of the interviewee's responses, or the interviewer's unawareness of cultural differences such as the interviewee's gestures, which may be misinterpreted and biased (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Additionally, as a teacher and elementary school counselor, I am an insider to the functions of parental involvement programs and as a result have to be aware of personal biases.

The phenomenological study aims to obtain a detailed understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of the individuals entrenched in that phenomenon (Lin, 2013). Due to the aims of this type of study, it becomes necessary for the researcher to purposefully select participants who exist within the target population and who have some direct knowledge and experience concerning the phenomenon being studied. As such, some inherent threats existed concerning the reliability of this qualitative study.

These limitations include participant self-selection due to the decision to participate in the study and the possibility of misinterpretation of the data by the researcher. In qualitative research, external validity has been called into question as an important limitation (Siedman, 2006). Further, participants may elect to withdraw from the study, may give the interviewer inaccurate accounts, or may be interpreted incorrectly by the researcher.

Significance of the Study

Parental involvement in public schools is commonly linked to the parent's role in encouraging the academic and behavioral success of the student (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). However, parental involvement is a broad concept with various influences including fundamental elements, which relate to interactions with school staff. In fact, parents and school staff are often examined as key components when measuring the significance of parental involvement on student success (Smith et al., 2011).

Buttery and Anderson (1997) found teachers are more likely to support parental involvement because of a positive regard for parents who involve themselves in their children's education. For this reason, it is beneficial to fill the literature gap by examining how teachers' backgrounds and perceptions inform their opinions, beliefs, and perspectives that become their basis for promoting parental involvement in the classroom.

This study will provide valuable support for policy change and continued usage and implementation of parental involvement awareness trainings in professional practice; thereby, improving parental involvement programs in schools and student success. Examples of such professional practice trainings are teacher preparation and professional

development sessions. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) noted that through these professional practice trainings, teachers can learn how to reach out and get parents involved in their child's education.

Patte (2011) examined the views of preservice teacher candidates with respect to family-school partnerships. At the time, participants were involved in a teacher preparation program, without additional training on family-school partnerships. The preservice teachers were found to have awareness of the positive effects and possible barriers to implementing parental involvement programs; however, their value for the programs was limited. Patte suggested a teacher's value for parental involvement programs could improve if he or she participated in a teacher preparation program, which includes training sessions on family-school partnerships. Patte noted that teacher preparation programs may not include trainings on family-school partnerships despite federal and state legislative initiatives and teacher accreditation standards that mandate increasing parental involvement programs in schools.

It is important for school staff, parents, and community members to acknowledge the advantages of working together to encourage student learning (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). Understanding how teachers' opinions and beliefs build their value of parental involvement programs could create awareness of the underlying influences teachers have on these programs. Further, this awareness should bring additional support to teachers who are used as a primary resource for the promotion of parental involvement programs and lead to a positive social change by improving student success and developing relationships in the school community.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced my study that examined how teachers' backgrounds, a result of the teacher's beliefs, values, and prior experiences, may influence their perception and opinion of parental involvement, which is regarded as a strong predictor of student success. Research supports the concept that parental involvement is a joint mission of parents and school staff; however, there is a gap in the research, which examines the possible significance of teachers' perceptions of parental involvement because of their background influences (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). This is of importance considering teachers are viewed as instrumental in encouraging and maintaining parental involvement for the betterment of student achievement (Kurtines-Becker, 2008). This study will contribute to positive social change by creating awareness of the impact teachers have on parental involvement programs and how the teacher's influence further affects relationships between parents, school staff, students, and community members. In fact, student achievement may be viewed as having a far-reaching global impact when we consider education as universal. The increased knowledge from this study will aid administrators in understanding how teachers may be supported through professional development and teacher preparation programs. This will help teachers fulfill their potential as a resource when advocating for parental involvement and student success.

Chapter 2 is a literature review that provides a concise synopsis of the literature around my topic. In Chapter 2, I will also detail the literature search as well as key search terms used. The study's conceptual framework will also be explored.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Research has shown that students make significant academic gains as a result of parental involvement in schools (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Kurtines-Becker (2008) discussed the importance of teachers building a relationship with parents to foster parental involvement and boost student achievement. Teachers have a role in promoting parental involvement programs in schools; however, the importance of that role may be underestimated and misunderstood resulting in a lack of adequate support for teachers. This support could be in the form of teacher preparation programs, in-service training, and/or professional development which builds skills and provides resources to help teachers develop and encourage parental involvement. It may be assumed that teachers have the innate skills or willingness to successfully perform the tasks necessary to create and maintain parental involvement programs. Considering this, teachers may be seen as automatic contributors to parental involvement programs. However, if teachers are to contribute effectively to the building of home-school relationships and parental involvement, their role in the process should be clearer to increase the understanding of the support needed to successfully carry out this task.

There is a gap in the literature which will be explored to understand how teachers' lived experiences influence their promotion of parental involvement programs and the possible need for training to support positive opinions of parental involvement programs and overcome the negative opinions of these programs (Deslandes, 2001; Kurtines-Becker, 2008). If teachers' opinions on parental involvement programs are researched

and clarified, it could possibly increase society's understanding of the role teachers play in relationship building between home and school. Additionally this research could clarify the impact relationship building has on teachers' willingness to promote and foster parental involvement programs which are meaningful for academic achievement.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement impact their facilitation of parental involvement in the classroom. Current literature supports the significant role teachers have in the development of home-school relationships which are foundational in parental involvement programs (Kurtines-Becker, 2008). Additionally, Kurtines-Becker (2008) stated that teachers should have a belief in the positive effects of parental involvement on student achievement in order to advocate successfully for parental involvement programs. This chapter contains a review of literature that addresses the significance of parental involvement programs and the teacher's role in these programs that have a foundation in building relationships with parents that lead to student achievement. The chapter will also detail pertinent literature used for the study with sections including literature search strategies, relevant concepts, and a review of prior research and its significance.

Literature Search Strategy

I accessed the Walden University Library for online databases with relevant literature. The databases I accessed included Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), Primary Source, PyscARTICLES: American Psychological Association (APA), PyscINFO: American

Psychological Association (APA), Research Starters – Education, SAGE Journals, and Teacher Reference Center. Relevant keywords and phrases used included: *families in schools, family engagement, family-school partnerships, home-school relationships, involving parents, parent engagement, parent-school involvement, parental engagement, parent involvement, parental involvement, parental involvement in education, student achievement, school success, teacher accreditation, teacher preparation, teacher-family relationships,* and *teacher-family partnerships.*

Conceptual Framework

The main theory which emerged during the literature review and the resulting theoretical foundation for this study is Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Bandura's theory also highlights the concept of self-efficacy, which is a second foundational theory that emerged from the literature review. Social cognitive theory is defined as an individual's ability to learn and adapt in their environment (Heyes, 2012). This adaptation results from the effects of environmental factors on a person's individual or personal traits such as cognition and behavior (Bandura, 1999). Heyes (2012) also highlighted that social learning employs the strategies of copying others when uncertain, copying the majority, and copying successful individuals. Based on this theory, there may be relevance in questioning if teachers have learned and adapted to their environment when faced with parental involvement tasks. Teachers may have imitated what other individuals have done without regard to their training in parental involvement. By observing the behaviors of others, teachers may have experiences which affect their beliefs and opinions of parental involvement programs.

Self-efficacy is a function of human agency because it is humans' beliefs in their capability to learn and adapt to events that affect their lives (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy is defined as the belief individuals have in their ability to complete tasks and attain goals (Holzberger et al., 2013). According to Bandura (2006), higher self-efficacy is positively correlated with higher goal setting and firmer commitments to tasks. Teachers with high self-efficacy are believed to be harder working, more persistent, and more involved in other activities (Holzberger et al., 2013). This persistence and hard work may drive teachers to meet and overcome the challenges of other activities such as parental involvement tasks.

Social Cognitive Theory and Learned Behavior

Bandura (1999) discussed that learning and adaptation are functions also known as human agency which demonstrates that an individual is not merely present in their environment but instead is an interacting participant. The act of social learning, which is considered predominately environmental, is viewed differently from other forms of learning which are more instructionally based (Heyes, 2012). Social learning is described as an individual acquiring knowledge by watching others in their environment rather than receiving specific detailed instruction (Heyes, 2012). Therefore, social learning is a concept which may be explained by learning through indirect instructional communication rather than direct instructional communication like other forms of learning (Heyes, 2012).

Bandura (1999) stated social learning provides an individual with the information needed to discern the appropriate behavior for given situations and social interactions.

Bandura's social learning theory may clarify the possible impact teachers' lived experiences have on their opinion of parental involvement. Heyes (2012) surmised that social learning is the means to guide individuals in imitating a particular behavior toward a particular object. The particular socially learned behavior may be a learned tendency, feeling, or opinion toward parental involvement. With this in mind, parental involvement may be the object to which a teacher has imitated a socially learned behavior; therefore, creating an opinion toward a program which may prove beneficial to student achievement.

Heyes (2012) described social learning as a function which helps individuals adapt to their environment and the behavior that is a result of this adaptation prepares individuals for future interactions. Social learning was also described as learning through imitation (Heyes, 2012). Bacalu (2013) stated the imitation in social learning influences perceptions. These may be perceptions which influence teacher opinion of parental involvement. The theory of social learning is instrumental in this research study because it correlates to a teacher's ability to learn from environmental experiences which may also be considered their background through prior experiences. These prior experiences may affect teachers' willingness, motivation, or choice to complete the tasks necessary to implement and sustain parental involvement programs.

Self-Efficacy and Learned Behavior

Self-efficacy is the fundamental root of human agency and is an individual's belief that they can effect change through their actions (Bandura, 1999; Holzberger et al., 2013). Garvis and Pendergast (2010) applied the theory of self-efficacy to teachers when

they discussed the teacher's belief that they could influence and effect student performance. The theory of self-efficacy and the reference to the teaching profession was also discussed by Pajares and Urdan (2006) when they used Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale as an indicator of teachers' perceptions of their ability to influence certain aspects of student learning.

Holzberger et al. (2013) discussed the theory of self-efficacy and the effects on teaching and proposed that a teacher's self-efficacy may determine student achievement. The researchers also supported the findings of Bandura (1997) which stated self-efficacy is an important factor of human agency that assists individuals with completing tasks. Self-efficacy is considered an important factor in how a teacher influences student outcomes because self-efficacy is related to how individuals perform tasks (Holzberger et al., 2013).

A teacher's self-efficacy is considered vital to the effectiveness of schools because without self-motivated teachers, school programs are not as successful and student performance is lowered (Calik et al., 2012). The research of Calik et al. (2012) implies self-efficacy is an important teacher trait which could improve student performance through school programs. Parental involvement programs may be an example of these programs where parents are encouraged to participate in school sponsored functions.

Bandura (1999) concluded that self-efficacy is demonstrated in the relationship between an individual and a behavior. Additionally, Bandura (1999) defined a teacher's self-efficacy as their ability to complete tasks and other related outcomes even in the

most difficult situations. For this study, self-efficacy by teachers may be defined as the belief in their ability to manage the tasks associated with parental involvement and overcome obstacles to obtain success with parental involvement programs and student achievement.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

This section of the literature review is comprised of an analysis of current literature. The literature pertains to parental involvement and key concepts such as defining parental involvement programs and their significance, relationship building and parental involvement programs, training teachers in relationship building, the teacher's role in parental involvement programs, and teacher perceptions of parental involvement programs. This current literature consists of information regarding the significance of the teachers' role in building relationships with parents and promoting parental involvement programs.

Defining Parental Involvement Programs and Significance

According to Hindman and Morrison (2011), the achievement gap in children begins early, and parental involvement programs provide support and enhanced learning for students. Overall, a significant relationship exists between parental involvement and the academic success of students (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Jeynes, 2005). Findings such as these have led to some of the earliest intervention programs designed to promote important academic and social skills in children through teacher intervention and parental involvement. One such program is Head Start with the

foundational concept of educator outreach and family involvement to improve literacy-related skills in children (Hindman & Morrison, 2011).

The research of Hindman and Morrison (2011) supported the need for programs such as Head Start and has substantiated the significance of parental involvement and its impact on student achievement. However, the research of Jeynes (2005) suggested that further study is needed to determine if voluntary acts of parental involvement are as effective as parental involvement programs which require or encourage parent involvement. Voluntary acts of parental involvement are those activities which are not required, encouraged, or scheduled by the school (Jeynes, 2005). Whether voluntary or required, it is clear that parental involvement programs should be the standard in schools to improve student achievement (Dearing et al., 2006).

Most importantly, there is an educational and emotional benefit for children when their families and teachers work together to support them (Hammack, Foote, Garretson, & Thompson, 2012). Academic performance is better when parents are involved in their children's education (Reece et al., 2013). The importance of parental involvement programs and activities could link parents and teachers in an effort to provide vital support to students for their academic success. Communication is another factor in parental involvement programs. The type of communication that is used when inviting parents to visit schools is, at times, known as outreach. School staff should provide outreach opportunities to encourage the activities necessary for successful parental involvement programs (Reece et al., 2013).

Outreach by school staff to families is also supported by the National Parent Teacher Association's (PTA's) National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (2009). The standards for family engagement provide a framework to assist teachers in partnering with parents to encourage children's achievement (National PTA, 2009). This framework stressed the significance of communication as a tool for building home-school partnerships (National PTA, 2009). It is important for teachers to facilitate ongoing communication with parents to encourage parental involvement (Hammack et al., 2012).

The research of Hindman and Morrison (2011) expanded further on the relevance of communication between home and school. The mixed method study conducted by Hindman and Morrison was an analysis of student academic skills resulting from increased communication between home and school. Hindman and Morrison included interviews from students, teachers, school staff, and parents in their research. This study gave an example of the significance of communication between home and school and the effectiveness in building parent-teacher relationships which foster student achievement (Hindman & Morrison, 2011). The qualitative design of their study and usage of the interview process to analyze parental involvement is consistent with the scope of my study. Based on research findings, it is known that parental involvement regularly occurred and contributed to improved literacy in children (Hindman & Morrison, 2011). The study of Hindman and Morrison was limited by research on only one form of parental involvement which was defined as parents reading with children.

There are other forms of parental involvement as described by Dearing et al. (2006), such as involvement in the home (homework and phone conferences with

teachers) and involvement at school (classroom visitations, open house, parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences, participation in social events and volunteering in the classroom). The various forms of parental involvement have led to various definitions as well. The authors of NCLB admitted to varying forms and definitions of parental involvement but set a standard by stating the definition of parental involvement as a parent actively engaged in communication with their student's school to support academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Hindman and Morrison (2011) stated there is still controversy regarding a viable definition of parental involvement which should give specific practices and activities that promote literacy in children. Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) also noted family involvement is defined in many ways and is used to describe various types of parent interactions including fund raising, volunteer activities, parents exchanging information, parents advocating for education policy changes, and parent education. The research of Jeynes (2005) also discussed the lack of a specified parental involvement activity which contributed to student achievement by stating various activities were studied. Further study is needed to develop a common definition of effective parental involvement and create a comprehensive plan for implementation of parental involvement programs.

Relationship Building and Parental Involvement Programs

Building positive relationships with schools is an integral part of engaging parents and families in activities which promote and foster parental involvement programs for the academic and emotional growth of students (Kurtines-Becker, 2008; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Additionally, Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) suggested that teachers should see parents

and families as willing and able partners and assets in the successful education of students. Perhaps it is this positive outlook of teachers in regards to relationship building that may encourage healthy communication between parents and schools.

Healthy communication is considered positive and meaningful if it has the capability of aiding in the success of students by building family-school partnerships and parental involvement. Relationship building through healthy communication should assist with problems that a student may incur during the school year and build a Student Support Team (SST) consisting of parents and schools (Baum & Swick, 2008; Kurtines-Becker, 2008). Parent teacher conferences provide an example of healthy communication because of the valuable resource for relationship building and opportunity for the meaningful exchange of information that is beneficial for family-school partnerships and the betterment of students (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009).

It is known that research supports family-school partnerships and the resulting parental involvement which contributes to the success of students (Kurtines-Becker, 2008; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). However, the key relationship building practices that are needed to foster these healthy communication channels between families and schools could be examined in a future study. For example, the research of Kurtines-Becker (2008) and Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) did not give examples of the types of relationships that assist parents, family, and teachers in parental involvement. Hindman and Morrison (2011) explained that family-school relationships, which are the core of parental involvement, should be balanced and not represent a power struggle between parent beliefs and the beliefs of teachers. Hindman and Morrison also admitted the relationship

between home and school may come in many forms and the key is in finding what will bring success to a chosen parental involvement program.

McFarland-Piazza, Lord, Smith, and Downey (2012) suggested that any parental involvement program must have the main element of a parent-teacher relationship which is important to the learning environment. A more successful parent-teacher relationship may be built on mutual respect between parent and teacher. This respect is formed when both parties value the contribution of the other and collaborate for the success of the student. McFarland-Piazza et al. supported this when they stated teachers felt more valued when they were encouraged and listened to by parents. Additionally according to McFarland-Piazza et al. parents believe their relationship with teachers is a contributing factor in the success of their child.

The Teacher's Role in Parental Involvement Programs

Teachers have a professional responsibility to mentor family-school relationships which lead to parental involvement programs and the fostering of successful students (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). For the betterment of their students, teachers are obligated to eliminate barriers and opinions in an effort to build relationships between themselves and the families of their students (Hammack et al., 2012). In other words, teachers have an important role as advocates for parental involvement programs. Further, it is important for teachers to provide a positive communication between themselves and families.

Although teachers are considered instrumental in the development of parental involvement programs they may lack the skills, knowledge, and perception to build the relationships necessary for successful programs. Studies show that many teachers have

not been provided the necessary training to work with families from diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Hammack et al., 2012). If teachers are knowledgeable about the effects their perceptions and opinions can have on relationship building and parental involvement it could provide a means to work toward possibly improving their ability to use parental involvement programs resourcefully to aid in student achievement. However according to Hammack et al. (2012), surveyed teachers felt training for parental involvement activities is not a priority in teacher training programs. If teachers attain greater knowledge of relationship building they may have a better understanding of their perception and opinion of parents and the impact this perception and opinion has on parental involvement.

Baum and Swick (2008) stated teachers should perceive parents as knowledgeable with opinions that contribute to the education process. Teachers may have to abandon bias and personal beliefs to connect with families in a productive manner (Hammack et al., 2012). Additionally Hammack et al. (2012) stated teachers exposed to tolerance activities were better equipped to perceive parents as an asset in developing home-school relationships. Tolerance activities also open communication and parents generally respond favorably to a teacher's efforts. Tolerance activities are functions or processes which create an awareness of acceptance of other races, cultures, religions, or ideas without prejudice or judgment (Hammack et al., 2012). These researchers believed teacher bias and personal beliefs affect relationship building and parental involvement. This offers support for my study.

Teachers are not the only ones who may lack necessary relationship building skills. Often parents lack key relationship building skills and develop barriers which may create bias toward teachers and other school staff (Reece et al., 2013). These skills and barriers may include poor verbal and written communication, a lack of resources, and self-efficacy. This may provide clarification of the need for teachers to act as facilitators in the relationship building team. For this to take place the role of teachers as crucial to parental involvement must be understood in an effort to highlight the need for their training in parental involvement (Ratcilff & Hunt, 2009). Reece et al. (2013) discussed the relevance of future research in the area of parent awareness. They proposed research that analyzed the benefit of helping parents by teaching them skills that could increase their strengths in self-efficacy (Reece et al., 2013). This potential parent training could enable parents to effectively develop skills that may increase their relationship building and parental involvement skills to support their children's education.

The research of Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) and Baum and Swick (2008) provided the concept for training teachers in relationship building to strengthen a home-school connection and the foundation for parental involvement. These researchers had a strong approach because they stressed the importance of supporting teachers by providing training that helps them acknowledge that the education of children is an effort that includes the school, family, community, and society (Baum & Swick, 2008; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Ratcliff and Hunt stated a significant obstacle to building relationships is the negative perceptions that teachers have regarding family-school partnerships. A significant factor may be in teachers realizing that parents are an integral part of the

child's education and not simply bystanders waiting solely on teacher intervention (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Teachers ideally should view parents as the student's first teacher. The controversy is whether teacher training, alone, can alter this formed perception of parent as bystander which could be based on early experiences and learned behaviors (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). What remains to be studied is the impact of training or professional experience on perceptions and opinions of teachers. Such a study would benefit student achievement by revealing other aspects of family-school relationships and parental involvement that may be limited as a result of teacher perception and opinions.

Johnson (2011) explored the possibility of teachers perceiving parents as a barrier to parental involvement and increased student achievement. There could be a lack of parental involvement due to factors such as teacher perception and family-school relationships which eventually effect student achievement (Johnson, 2011). The Johnson (2011) study focused on teachers' perceptions of parents as barriers to parental involvement which provides a strong base for the concept of teacher perceptions and a link to this study that explored how the lived experiences of teachers affect their perception of parental involvement. Specifically the study examined teacher perceptions of parental involvement and the possible formation of opinions as a result of early experiences and learned behavior.

Training teachers. The development and academic success of children is influenced by factors such as family, culture, and community; therefore, it is imperative that teachers understand the importance of building relationships with families (McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012). Despite some knowledge of the importance of

relationship building and the possible positive outcomes for students, some teachers may feel unprepared and exhibit unease and difficulty in developing family-school partnerships. The findings of McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012) contributed to research by providing evidence that supported the importance of activities in teacher education programs that develop the skills for building relationships with families and community.

Teacher education programs could use basic discussions in the area of parental involvement to serve as an activity in assisting teachers with building relationships. Teacher preparation programs should provide teachers with information and time to discuss their prospective student's and the continually developing connection that always exists with their families (Hammack et al., 2012). According to Hammack et al. (2012) well-trained teachers will enter the classroom better prepared to establish meaningful relationships.

McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012) have provided a strong approach in their study on the benefits of training teachers in relationship building skills because of the key questions asked of teachers who were in training prior to working in schools. Questions were asked through interviews with teachers and focused on the general concept that teacher training programs may be used to teach the skills teachers need to facilitate relationship building between themselves, families, and the community. The study of McFarland-Piazza et al. used a phenomenological design which is also consistent with this study. The interview transcripts were repeatedly reviewed to identify key themes in the phenomenon of interest.

The McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012) study indicated the importance of teacher education programs in providing opportunities for teachers to practice relationship building with families and communities; additionally, without the adequate skills and knowledge that teacher education programs provide, teachers may begin their profession unable to develop the family-school relationships necessary for the achievement of students (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). There is perhaps controversy regarding if these training programs are only beneficial for teachers beginning their careers or are they also significant for veteran teachers. There is also a question of whether or not relationship-building programs affect possible teacher perceptions of parental involvement programs; therefore, what remains to be studied is if teacher training on relationship building can affect the already formed perceptions and bias of new teachers as well as veteran teachers regarding parental involvement.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter reviewed current literature related to the teacher's role in parental involvement. Teachers' self-efficacy in building relationships for successful parental involvement programs is related to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy represents the teacher's belief in his or her ability to learn and adapt to situations in which parental involvement is necessitated. Major themes in the literature describe the impact of parental involvement on student achievement and the need for a viable definition of parental involvement and activities which would assist teachers in promoting parental involvement programs (Hindman & Morrison, 2011; Jeynes, 2005; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). There was also available research on the teacher's professional

responsibility in developing family-school relationships which are foundational in parental involvement programs (Kurtines-Becker, 2008; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Additional research discussed the feasibility of training teachers to understand their role in parental involvement and how this understanding may affect teacher attitude and assist in building family-school relationships (McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) suggested the attitude needed for building family-school relationships should be developed and fostered in teachers through modeling. The available research did not address the existing attitude and perception of teachers through prior experiences and learned behavior and the possible effect this preexisting attitude may have on training teachers in parental involvement. This gap in the literature substantiates a need for further understanding of lived experiences and how they may be significant when proposing to train teachers in family-school relationship building and parental involvement. This phenomenological study could extend the literature on teacher perception and enhance the teachers' experience and success in professional development programs involving parental involvement. Chapter 3 will provide more detail of the study including the research design, methodology, target population, instrumentation, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore teacher experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement and the effect that these experiences and perceptions may have on their facilitation of parental involvement and academic achievement among their own students. The aim of this exploration was to explore how the teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education. Teachers are a factor in the promotion of parental involvement programs; however, a teacher may not encourage parents to participate in these programs because of their personal perceptions and experiences (Radzi et al., 2010). There is a gap in the literature addressing how teachers' lived experiences influence their facilitation of parental involvement. The perceptions of teachers due to past experiences may affect their willingness to promote parental involvement programs (Patte, 2011). When used, these programs have been shown to positively affect student achievement (Radzi et al., 2010). Parental involvement programs are significant because they contribute to student achievement regardless of grade level, parental SES, or parental education level (Buttery & Anderson, 1997).

This chapter will proceed with a discussion of the research design used in this study and will present the rationale for using a phenomenological design. The role of the researcher in this exploration will also be discussed. The methodology employed in this research will be described, including participant selection and recruitment,

instrumentation, and the plan for the analysis of the data. Finally, a discussion of the trustworthiness of the data will be presented.

Research Design and Rationale

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological researchers should aim to produce a rich description of the lived experiences of participants. In this study, understanding how teachers' experiences and perceptions influence their facilitation of parental involvement programs could create awareness of the underlying influences teachers have on these programs. This awareness would be acutely relevant to teachers in their roles as the primary resources for the promotion of parental involvement programs.

In phenomenology, the development of a research question should communicate the researcher's aim to understand the lived experience and meaning of the phenomenon of interest (Englander, 2012). The guiding research questions in this phenomenological exploration are the following:

Central Research Question: How are teachers' experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement in education related to teachers' facilitation of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Subquestion 1: How have teachers' personal and professional experiences with parental involvement shaped their approach to working with students and their families?

Subquestion 2: To what extent do teachers view their parental involvement strategies as being successful?

Subquestion 3: How do teachers describe the relationship between parental

involvement and student achievement?

Central Phenomenon of the Study

The central phenomenon in this study relates to teacher experiences and

perceptions concerning parental involvement and its effect on parental involvement and

achievement among their own students. Parental involvement is an important aspect of a

child's educational achievement (Fan & Williams, 2010; Fan, William, & Wolters, 2012;

Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005, 2007). The relationship appears to hold true across

races (Fan, 2001; Jeynes, 2003), gender (Jeynes, 2005), and socioeconomic level (Hartas,

2011). Parental involvement programs are the subject of much research. Jeynes (2012)

conducted a meta-analysis of 51 studies addressing parental involvement programs and

found these programs to be significantly associated with improved academic

achievement. Buttery and Anderson (1997) also argued for the significance of parental

involvement, maintaining that these programs contribute to student achievement

regardless of the child's grade level, parental socioeconomic status, or parental education

level.

Teachers are an important factor in the success of parental involvement programs

and the positive student outcomes that follow. Zhou (2014) maintained that parental

involvement programs may facilitate the formation of partnerships where the parent

represents the home environment of a child and the teacher is representative of the school

environment-- creating the home-school partnership. Deslandes (2001) suggested that

teachers may have the vision of a home-school partnership where all must work together

including themselves, parents, and pupils. However, negative teacher attitudes and dispositions have been associated with the subject of parental involvement (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Teachers' backgrounds, or the teacher's beliefs and prior experiences, contribute to preconceptions and attitudes. In a study completed by Deslandes (2001), it was noted that teachers had difficulty responding when asked to differentiate between their perspectives or feelings on and their motivation to foster parental involvement programs. The motivational factors included the teachers' professional responsibility to promote parental involvement programs (Deslandes, 2001). This is further evidence that teachers' opinions and beliefs may influence their willingness to increase student success through parental involvement programs. Due to the significant impact of parental involvement on student achievement, examining the influences of teacher perceptions and experiences concerning parental involvement is a worthy course of study.

Research Tradition

This is a qualitative study with a phenomenological research design. In a phenomenological study, the researcher approaches a topic without preconceptions or expectations and produces a question that expands the research (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological research design allows individuals the opportunity to share their experiences with a particular phenomenon (Ohman, 2005). For this study, the phenomenon of interest is teacher perceptions and experiences concerning parental involvement and its impact on parental involvement and achievement among their own students. The teachers in this study were asked to share their experiences with parental involvement, discuss how these experiences impacted their belief in the value of

parental involvement, and explore the ways in which prior experiences and perceptions affect their motivation for promoting parental involvement programs. I used semistructured interviews to explore this phenomenon and gain insight which may help to improve parental involvement programs and bring a positive social change to education.

The aim of this phenomenological study was to understand the participants' perspective of the phenomena and create questions to further the research. Perception is the principal source of knowledge in a phenomenological study because the participants' perceptions are theirs and cannot be disputed (Moustakas, 1994). Edmund Husserl (1982), a key theorist in the phenomenological tradition, argued that an understanding of a phenomenon begins with the setting aside of our own held beliefs and preconceptions. Central to the explication of a phenomenon is the exploration of individuals' lived experiences with a phenomenon and the examination of the ways in which they ascribe meaning to it (Edmund Husserl, 1982). Heidegger (1962) espoused a somewhat different take on phenomenology, known as hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger (1962) maintained that researchers should adopt an interpretive position in which they examine "the engaged, unreflective ready-to-hand activity of participants" (p. 66). Moustakas (1994) posited that the purpose of the phenomenological approach is to describe and distill the lived experiences of individuals to derive the essence of the phenomenon of interest. Using this model, I examined the totality of the experiences of teachers as they related to parental involvement and examined those experiences from the perspectives of the individuals entrenched in this phenomenon. As an insider in this study, the influence of researcher bias is an important consideration (Chenail, 2011). To mitigate the effects

of researcher bias, I practiced epoché, or bracketing (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing refers to the setting aside of one's personal beliefs and preconceptions to view the data through a more objective lens (Moustakas, 1994).

The purpose of the phenomenological approach in my study was to generate meaning from lived experiences and achieve an understanding of the essence through the use of perceptive and contemplative means. By using Moussakas' (1994) methodological model, I was able to achieve a greater appreciation of how teacher experiences concerning parental involvement affected their facilitation of parental involvement among their students. Moussakas' methodological model also helped me understand how these factors were related to student success.

Rationale

Many different research designs are used within the qualitative research tradition. This section will contain justification for why phenomenology is the most fitting design for my study. The most widely used qualitative designs are case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology. The subsequent sections will offer an outline of each of the aforesaid designs and provide justification for why phenomenology was the most fitting for my study.

Ethnography is typically the design used when the researcher seeks to increase the understanding of a particular culture (Sangasubana, 2011). Data are gathered through a lengthy and immersive investigation and inhabitation within the culture of study (Van Maanen, 1988). In ethnographic research, the researcher may assume a background role, or may act as an observer-participant, to better apprehend the nuances of a culture (Lewis

& Russell, 2011). The ethnographic approach requires thorough field research consisting of direct observation of the individuals comprising the culture of interest (Moustakas, 1994). Ethnography is most appropriate when the unit of analysis is a particular cultural group (Sangasubana, 2011).

The case study is a fitting design when the goal of the researcher is to undertake a comprehensive examination of a subject, setting, or activity of interest by studying one or more cases that possess a common link (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). Case study research employs the use of many data collection methods and sources to engender a comprehensive understanding of the case (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). Generalizing the results of the study to the larger population is not the aim of case study research (Morse & McEvoy, 2014). Rather, case studies are designed to obtain a deep understanding of the how and why of the topic of interest (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). Case studies are most appropriate for studies in which the researcher is examining clearly defined cases within designated boundaries and desires to attain a richer comprehension of these cases (Cassell & Symon, 2004).

Grounded theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is an apposite design when the objective is to uncover the features underlying the topic of study and to construct an overall theory that is grounded directly in the data (as cited in Charmaz, 2008). Grounded theory requires the use of many stages of data collection and the persistent fine-tuning and connecting of emergent categories among the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The theory which emerges from the analysis of data is aimed at offering an explanation of the topic of interest (Charmaz, 2008). This theory is based upon, or

grounded in, the examination of the elements of the data and an analysis of the

connections between these elements (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology entails the examination of a phenomenon by exploring the actual

lived experiences of individuals who have faced the phenomenon (Walsh, 2012).

Researchers adopting a phenomenological design place emphasis on the meaning

attributed to these experiences by the participants themselves, rather than focusing on the

researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). An objective of

phenomenological inquiry is to explore the lived experiences of a variety of individuals

to broaden the spectrum of represented perspectives (Groenewald, 2004).

Phenomenological research is aimed at developing descriptions of the essence of

a phenomenon, rather than producing explanations or validating hypotheses (Moustakas,

1994). The goal of this study was to explore and describe teachers' experiences with

parental involvement in education and to ascertain their perceptions of the connection

between parental involvement and student success. Through the distillation of the

participants' reports, the aim was to reduce the phenomenon to its basic essence (Van

Maanen, 1990). For these reasons, a phenomenological approach was the most suitable

design for this study.

The Role of the Researcher

A critical task of any researcher is to convince others of the usefulness of the

proposed research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A researcher can argue that qualitative

research leads to rich, detailed conclusions and recommendations. It is equally important

that researchers acknowledge their assumptions and or biases related to the study (Pascal,

Johnson, Dore, & Trainor, 2011). According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), the role of the researcher in a qualitative study is the human instrument for data collection because data is mediated through the researcher rather than other instruments such as inventories and questionnaires which may be used in quantitative studies. Dahl and Boss (2005) maintained that in phenomenological research, the researcher "acts as a major instrument" (p. 73). In this role, the researcher is subject to strain, tiredness, misperception, and partiality. However, Dahl and Boss (2005) argue that these limitations are outweighed by the tractability, intuition, and ability to extend and develop implicit information that is the unique to the human instrument.

Due to my role as the research instrument, it is necessary to describe any biases, assumptions, expectations, or experiences that could affect the research. I have biases, assumptions, and expectations due to my personal and work experiences. As an individual, I am biased by personal experiences from childhood. I have the memories of my parents serving as advocates for my education. They were actively involved and supportive during my primary and secondary years of school. My parents' activities included those which used parental involvement as a foundation such as PTA, Booster Club, Homeroom Mother and Father, and Parent Nights. I believe my parents increased my opportunity for academic achievement and success because of their parental participation. At the time, I believed that it was the desire of every parent to participate at their child's school. It was not until adulthood that I realized all parents do not take advantage of these opportunities. I still believe it is a parent's responsibility to participate actively in a child's academic endeavors.

As a teacher and elementary school counselor, I have observed, facilitated, and participated in activities and functions of parental involvement programs therefore I am biased by these experiences. I have been an educator for 18 years serving in the capacities of elementary classroom teacher and school counselor. In my role as a classroom teacher and school counselor, I have had experiences which influenced my perceptions and expectations of parental involvement programs. Specifically my experiences have shaped my perceptions and expectations of parents and teachers who engage in parental involvement programs. Additionally as a counselor in the district where the research will be conducted, I bring some bias to this study. This bias may be in the form of known district expectations and policies regarding parental involvement. Examples of these are teacher and staff expectation to participate in parental involvement by attending school events such as Family Fitness Night, Museum Night, Fall Festival, Open House, and Family Literacy Night. Although I know of some teacher opinions of these district expectations, I do not have a personal, working or supervisory relationship with participants, so this should not affect participant performance in interviews. I am a supporter of parental involvement programs and relationships built through these programs. I perceive these programs as positive avenues for promoting student achievement and emotional growth. Pascal et al. (2011) discussed the importance of researchers acknowledging their assumptions and or biases of a study.

As the primary research tool in this phenomenological study, I took several iterative measures to continually maintain an open mind and limit the influence of my individual biases in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. In order to

accomplish this objective, I employed Edmund Husserl's (1982) concept of epoché, often referred to as bracketing. Bracketing signifies the setting aside of one's personal experiences and views in order to examine the phenomenon from an objective and novel perspective (Moustakas, 1994). Through the use of bracketing, the influence of my biases was minimized, and the objectivity of the analysis will be maximized.

I used two methods to accomplish bracketing in this study: *memoing* and *reflexive journaling* (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Memoing, which occurs throughout the process of data collection and analysis, refers to note-taking by the researcher that includes personal observations and theoretical or analytical hunches (Rhodes, Dawson, Kelly, & Renshall, 2013). Memoing permits the researcher to inspect their feelings about the research and lead to deeper insights about the data (Tufford & Newman, 2010). I also used reflexive journaling as a means to record my preconceptions for the purpose of increasing self-awareness and limiting the influence of my subjectivity on the data itself (Dowden, Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Unlike memoing, reflexive journaling begins prior to data collection. By creating a reflexive journal, I was better able to examine my personal reactions to newly collected information and recognized the influence of my preconceptions on these reactions (Dowden et al., 2014).

Methodology

Participant Selection

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement impact their

facilitation of parental involvement in education. The sample frame for this study was limited to primary public school teachers within a chosen school district located in Southeast Texas. Purposeful, convenience sampling was the sampling technique used in this study. Purposeful sampling is appropriate when a researcher wishes to identify and select individuals with salient experience relevant to the topic of interest (Coyne, 1997). The sampling method was one of convenience because I sampled from the school district in which I am currently employed. The identities of participants in the study were protected through the assignment of participant ID numbers. Identifying information such as the participants' name or specific school of employment was not included in the publication or presentation of the results of the study.

I recruited participants for the study by using personal contacts to disseminate recruitment materials, including a research invitation (Appendix A) posted or sent by email, to potential participants' personal email in several schools throughout the school district of interest. In these materials I included the consent form and explained the topic of the study, listed the exclusion criteria, and invited prospective participants to contact me for more information. It was my belief that the teachers who put forth the effort to contact me in response to these recruitment materials would have the greatest level of investment, and be able to provide the richest information in the topic of study. Should initial recruitment efforts result in too few participants, I would use snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to the process by which study participants provide suggestions for other prospective participants who may inform the study (Newman & Hitchcock,

2011). I would then contact these prospective participants to explain the purpose of the study and to solicit their consent for participation.

According to Moustakas (1994), participants should meet the essential criteria of having experience with the phenomenon, interest in the phenomenon, and willingness to participate in the study. I used a selection criteria for inclusion in the study. Participants must: (a) currently be employed as a teacher within the school district chosen for study, (b) have at least 5 years of experience as a teacher, and (c) have an awareness of parental involvement.

For qualitative research, saturation is the primary consideration when making determinations concerning sample size (Bowen, 2008). The data reaches saturation when the researcher determines that including additional participants in the data collection process no longer adds novel or substantive information to the data (Bowen, 2008; Francis et al., 2010). One must consider both information which points to novel themes, as well as information which illuminates the relationships that exist between identified themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It is also necessary to examine every identified theme to determine that it has been described and substantiated sufficiently in order to achieve saturation (Mason, 2010). Corbin and Strauss (2008) maintained that sampling should be considered satisfactory when the identified themes reflect complexity, profundity, and diversity of experience and the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon has fully developed.

Researchers have offered different suggestions for the practical determination of sample size when conducting a phenomenological study. When conducting

phenomenological studies, Francis et al. (2010) recommended a sample size between 10 and 13 participants. Morse (1994) advised researchers to use a sample size of six, minimally. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) argued that a sample size of 12 is fitting to achieve saturation when conducting interview-based qualitative research. In accordance with these prescriptions, a sample size of 10 participants was used in this study. It is my belief that a sample of this size was sufficient to elicit responses which encompassed and adequately represented the perceptions held by the target population.

Data Collection

Face-to-face interviews were used as the method of data collection in this study. Interviews were conducted using a list of guiding questions that I developed (Appendix B). The semistructured interviews include open-ended questions. The questions included in the interview were designed to explore participant experiences with parental involvement in education, to examine the participants' facilitation of parental involvement among their students, and to elicit the participants' perceptions concerning the relationship between these factors and student achievement.

Britten (1995) argued that interviews are a flexible and dynamic tool for qualitative researchers. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) explained that interviews are utilized in qualitative research to collaboratively build meaning with interviewees by reassembling and regenerating impressions of happenings and occurrences. Opdenakker (2006) has discussed several advantages of face-to-face interviewing as a tool in qualitative research. He cited the ability of face-to-face interviewers to pick up on nonverbal cues which can inform and illuminate implicit feelings and perceptions. He

also discussed the spontaneity of response that occurs in face-to-face interviews as a beneficial aspect of this form of interviewing, which may yield more honest responses from participants. Further, I tape-recorded interviews for the purposes of extended analysis and reflection.

Opdenakker (2006) cautioned that face-to-face interviews can lead to researcher bias when the researcher directs the respondent toward a specific direction. However, the use of an interview guide in this study will limit this potentiality (Opendakker, 2006). The use of interviews enables a researcher to explore participant perceptions to deduce and illuminate the meaning ascribed to a phenomenon (Roulston, 2010). Due to this fact, semistructured interviewing was an appropriate data collection tool for my study.

Once I received responses to the solicitation materials from prospective participants, I identified those participants who met the inclusion criteria. I contacted them through phone to apprise them of the details of the study, and solicited their consent for participation (Appendix A). Participants who agreed to participate in the study were scheduled for an individual meeting time. I conducted an interview with each participant in one individual, face-to-face session. Interviews took place in a neutral location that was agreed upon by myself and the participant. Interviews were held in a location that was comfortable for the participant, and allowed for privacy and minimized the possibility of interruptions during the interview process. Possible interview locations did not include participants' or my home, nor the participants' office. Possible locations did include a private or conference room at a public library. Interviews were expected to last approximately 1 hour. Experts in qualitative interviewing have offered 1 hour as a

general guideline for interviews (Brinkmann, 2013; Edwards & Holland, 2013). Jacob

and Furgerson (2012) advised against developing interviews in excess of 60-90 minutes,

as individuals may be less likely to commit to participating in the study and may grow

fatigued during the interview process. A follow-up interview was scheduled for

clarification or elaboration of the items discussed in the first interview. Participants were

informed of their rights and told that they had the ability to withdraw from participation

in the study at any time without adverse impact.

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix C), which

included an explanation of the purpose of the study and consent for audio recording of

the interview. Interview questions were created to address the research questions guiding

this study. Interviews were recorded through the use of an audio recording device.

Participants were debriefed following the completion of the interview to answer any

questions they had regarding the research. The findings of the study were disseminated

by preparing a one-two page summary of the findings for each participant. Participants

were given my contact information to address any future questions or concerns they may

have concerning the study. Upon completion of the interviews, a transcriptionist was

given the audio recordings to transcribe the interviews, so I could analyze the data. The

audio recordings were labeled with participant ID numbers, and did not contain

identifying information. Prior to receiving the audio recordings, the transcriptionist was

required to sign a letter of confidentiality (Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological steps to data analysis was used for this study. After the data was collected and transcribed, I read the transcribed interviews to gain an understanding of the predominant messages shared in the interviews, as well as implicit nuances within the participant responses. I organized the data through coding and then sorted according to the themes which emerged from the data. Through this process, I created an interpretation of the deeper meaning of the data. I checked for discrepant cases or contradictory findings during the analysis of the data.

In this study, the findings may be used to deepen the understanding of teacher-facilitated parental involvement and inform policy development to improve student outcomes. The aim of the study was to gather data which would lead to the formation of a textural and structural description of the participant experiences, with the ultimate goal of developing a deeper comprehension of the way in which participants' experiences and beliefs influence parental involvement and student achievement. Moustakas (1994) prescribed a series of 7 steps for data analysis in phenomenological research. I followed the first 4 steps that Moustakas felt were critical to the process, and modified the remaining steps. Support exists in the literature for further modification of the modified van Kaam method in phenomenological analysis. Bradshaw (2008) opted to forego the construction of individual textural and structural descriptions, as specified in steps 5-7 of the modified van Kaam method. She maintained that these omitted steps produced repetitive information which did not substantively answer the research questions. Likewise, Jalal (2011) excluded the fifth and sixth steps from her phenomenological

analysis and Dukes-Robinson and Esmail (2013) described their use of a "modified version of the Moustakas van Kaam method" which revised and condensed the 7 original steps into a 5-step process (p. 49).

The first 4 steps prescribed by Moustakas (1994), which the analysis used in this study followed, are listed in the subsequent section. The fifth step details the modified approach I utilized in analyzing the data in the present study. I revisited the data iteratively throughout the analysis to refine and reflect on my experiences during the interview process and to examine how that informs the development of themes. A system of organization for data analysis resulted in the grouping and coding of the data into horizons or main ideas. Themes were identified from this organized data:

1. The first step in the data analysis is the process of horizonalization. I denoted every expression relevant to the participants' experience. This process required me to review the data to recognize and isolate noteworthy statements that clarified and described the ways in which the participants experienced the phenomenon of interest.

2. In the second step of this process, I employed reduction and elimination. In this step, I tested each expression by determining whether it met the following criteria: its inclusion is necessary and sufficient to describe an element of the phenomenon of interest, and it has the ability to be labeled and abstracted. The aim of this step was to eliminate redundant or vague expressions, and reduce the data to only that which adds informative value, or the invariant constituents of the experience.

3. The third step in this process is the clustering of core themes of the experience and thematizing of the invariant constituents. The purpose of this step is to arrange the data into themes which represent the essence of the experience. The themes were explicated using verbatim quotes from the transcribed data.

4. The fourth step of the process involved validation of the core themes of the experience. To validate the core themes I compared them to the transcript of each participant to determine whether they were: (a) stated directly in the participant's account; (b) compatible with the account if not explicitly stated; or (c) if not explicit or compatible, are relevant to the participant's lived experience.

5. The last step of the iterative analysis procedure involved the creation of a composite description. I created an amalgamation of the descriptions to form a synthesized presentation of the "essence" of the phenomenon. The commonalities among participant experiences were highlighted. The aim was to provide a descriptive summation of the phenomenon which will enable the reader to better comprehend and appreciate what it is like to have experienced the phenomenon.

Data Presentation

The results of the thematic analysis of data were presented using text and tables, where appropriate. The presented themes embodied the salient commonalities found within the data and represented a composite description of the essence of the experience. Demographic characteristics of the study's participants were presented first.

Subsequently, I presented a summary outlining the themes identified from the analysis of the data. The themes presented in this section formed the organizational structure for the subsequent portions of the results chapter. I presented excerpts and summary material taken from the participant responses to provide support for the presented themes. The themes were organized according to the research question they addressed.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Anderson (2010) argued that when performed correctly qualitative research is "valid, reliable, credible and rigorous" (p. 22). As Rolfe (2006) explained, validity in qualitative research is referred to by a variety of nomenclature, including the term credibility. Credibility, in qualitative research, refers to the degree to which the results reflect the true and accurate experiences of the participants (Krefting, 1991). A study is said to be credible when the findings presented are sufficiently accurate in description so an individual with similar experiences would readily express recognition of the presented phenomenon (Krefting, 1991). A number of methods can be used to improve the credibility of a study. To improve credibility, I aimed to support participants in providing honest and candid information throughout the interviews. I encouraged participants to elaborate on responses which warranted additional explanation.

To further enhance the credibility of the study, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by a third-party designee. Member checking was used to verify the accuracy of the recordings (Harper & Cole, 2012). Participants in the study were provided with a copy of the transcript of their interview. The participant was asked to

read the transcript and verify that it presented an accurate depiction of what they intended to express.

Saturation increased the credibility of the findings of this study by ensuring that the identified themes were confirmed sufficiently by the data (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). There were no discrepant cases or contradictory findings in the data. I also used epoché, or bracketing, to acknowledge and set aside personal biases and experiences as much as possible and to examine the data from a more objective and unbiased perspective (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of the reader to make a judgment concerning the applicability of the findings of the study to other contexts (Kreftin, 1990; Seidman, 2006). Several researchers have argued that generalization is not a relevant concern in qualitative research due to the fact that qualitative studies aim to describe a unique phenomenon or experience, rather than generate broad generalizations (Kreftin, 1990; Seidman, 2006). Instead, the reader determines the degree of transferability of a study. Through the provision of thick and detailed description, the reader will be able to make personal judgments concerning the ability of the study's findings to be transferred and applied to other settings (Krefting, 1991).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the findings are consistent (Cho & Trent, 2006). Several methods have been prescribed to enhance the dependability of qualitative research studies. In this study, dependability was enhanced through the use of

triangulation. I used the varied accounts offered by different participants as the source of triangulation in this study. Through the use of multiple sources of information, a more reliable, impartial, and accurate depiction of reality is formed (Cho & Trent, 2006). In this study, the examination of the accounts of multiple participants produced a composite narrative which more astutely depicted the phenomenon of study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings reflect the participants' overall intent and meaning, rather than those of the researcher. Confirmability was enhanced through the use of reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the continual examination of the researcher's impact upon the development and construction of knowledge (Malterud, 2001). I examined the ways in which personal experiences and biases affected the research process. Through use of epoché, personal biases were set aside to examine the data from a fresh and open perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

Ethical Procedures

When a researcher conducts studies which involve the use of human subjects, the protection of participants becomes a major responsibility of the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In the present study, this was addressed by the ethical prescriptions set by the Institution Review Board (IRB) and federal regulations. Participants were informed prior to beginning the study of any known risks associated with their participation in the study. Participants were then asked to sign a consent form for their participation in the study (Appendix C). All participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any point. All data collected

in this study was kept confidential to protect the identity of participants. ID numbers were assigned to all participants. Interview materials, including audio recordings and interview transcripts, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home office for a period of 5 years. Digital material is stored on my personal password-protected computer. Access to the raw data is limited to myself and the research committee. Once this time has elapsed, I will destroy the material by shredding written documents and erasing the information from computer drives.

I collected data from human subjects for use in this study. Institutional approval for the study was obtained through the IRB. The method of data collection consisted of individual interviews completed with all participants. In the presentation of this dissertation, no identifying information was included, to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

This study was conducted within the school district in which I am currently employed. Although I may have been known tangentially to prospective participants, I did not recruit participants personally known to me. I did not have a supervisory relationship with any of the participants who were included in the study. As such, no power differentials influenced the conduct of this study. I guaranteed participants that no identifying information was included in the dissemination of the results. Participants were also informed that their participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were not given incentives for their participation in the study, and were assured that they would not be adversely impacted by their nonparticipation.

Summary

In Chapter 3 of this dissertation, I provided a detailed explanation of the methodological procedures which were used in my study. The procedures for the collection and analysis of the data were also presented. The objective of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of teachers in regard to parental involvement in education, and examine their impact on teacher facilitation of parental involvement among their own students. I sought to examine the relationship between these factors and teacher perceptions of student achievement. Through this inquiry, the body of knowledge concerning parental involvement programs and student outcomes will be illuminated. In Chapter 4, I will present the results of the research. Thematic analysis of the obtained data will also be presented along with the comprehensive findings of the research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education. Through semistructured interviews with 10 teachers, I gathered data to illuminate this phenomenon. No discrepant cases or nonconforming data were expressed during this study.

In this chapter, the results of the data collection implemented in the study are presented. A description of the setting of the study and the demographic characteristics of the population is included at the beginning of the chapter. The data collection measures and data analysis procedures are then detailed within the chapter. Following these descriptions, the evidence of trustworthiness is discussed. Finally, the research findings are presented and the chapter closes with a summary of the salient information presented.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this phenomenological study:

Central Research Question: How are teacher experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement in education related to teacher facilitation of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Subquestion 1: How have teachers' personal and professional experiences with parental involvement shaped their approach to working with students and their families?

Subquestion 2: To what extent do teachers view their parental involvement

strategies as being successful?

Subquestion 3: How do teachers describe the relationship between parental

involvement and student achievement?

Research Setting

Participants were recruited from a chosen school district located in Southeast

Texas. At the time of data collection, no significant organizational changes were

observed or reported by the participants. Further, the participants did not report any

significant personal issues that were ongoing during the time of the interviews. There

appeared to be no major external events or conditions which could potentially affect the

interpretation of the results of this study.

Demographics

The sample consisted of 10 primary public school teachers. As a condition of

eligibility for the study, all of the participants were actively employed as teachers in the

chosen school district and had a minimum of 5 years of experience as a teacher.

Participants' years of teaching experience ranged 5 to 35 years. All of the participants

were women. Within the sample, six participants had one or more children and four

participants had no children. Detailed demographic information for the sample is

presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Years of Teaching
1	35
2	10
3	5
4	14
5	20
6	9
7	19
8	6
9	5
10	8

Data Collection

This section describes the data collection process that I used in this study. It

contains descriptions of the distribution of the invitation and potential participant contact

and criteria. This section also describes the interview process.

The research invitation (Appendix A) and consent for participation (Appendix C)

were posted in 23 of the 24 elementary schools in the school district in Southeast Texas

where primary school teachers were employed. One elementary campus was excluded

from the research invitation (Appendix A) and consent for participation (Appendix C)

distribution due to my role as school counselor on that campus. Although I do not have a

supervisory relationship with teachers, the elementary campus was excluded to eliminate

the question of a possible personal relationship with any potential research participant. 12

prospective participants contacted me via phone and expressed their interest in

participating in the study. I apprised each prospective participant of the details of the

study and identified those participants who met the inclusion criteria. For those

prospective participants that met the inclusion criteria, I solicited their consent for

participation (Appendix C) through email. The signed consent was handed to me before

each interview. Two prospective participants did not meet inclusion criteria because they

did not have at least 5 years of experience as a teacher. Prospective participants not

meeting inclusion criteria were thanked for their reply to the study invitation. I met

individually with each of the 10 participants to conduct a single semistructured interview.

Each prospective participant handed me their signed consent form when we met for their

interview. All interviews were conducted using the guiding questions (Appendix B). A

private room in a local library served as the interview site for each of the participants.

The interviews were recorded using an audio recording device, with the permission of

each participant. Once the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed by

a professional transcriptionist who completed a letter of confidentiality (Appendix D).

These transcriptions facilitated the textual analysis of the data.

I conducted semistructured interviews with the 10 participants who responded to

the recruitment materials and met the inclusion criteria. Once these individuals were

screened to ensure they met the inclusion criteria, I scheduled an individual face-to-face

interview session with each participant. All of the selected participants completed their

scheduled interviews, and none of the participants elected to withdraw from the study at

any point. Interviews lasted 45 - 60 minutes. The majority of the interviews were close to

60 minutes long with two interviews lasting 45 minutes and one lasting 50 minutes. No

follow-up clarification interviews were deemed necessary following the completion of the initial interviews. No unusual circumstances affected the data collection process. Each participant came prepared to spend time in the interview session.

Data Analysis

A modified van Kaam method was used to analyze the data in this study. This modified data analysis process consisted of five steps. The steps in the data analysis process as outlined by Moustakas (1994) are not linear. Due to the flow between the steps, the interview data were revisited throughout the process. The first four steps prescribed in the method described by Moustakas (1994) were adhered to in the modified process employed in this study. Within my study, the fifth step of the process outlined by Moustakas (1994) was modified. The steps of the analysis are detailed below:

1. The first step in the data analysis was the process of horizonalization. I audio recorded and a transcriptionist transcribed each of the participants' interviews. I listened to each participant's recording as I read the transcript. I read the transcripts to highlight preliminary groupings of statements. I denoted every expression relevant to the participants' experience by using a highlighter to highlight these expressions which were sentences or phrases in the printed transcripts. I then created a list of each sentence or phrase that represented a separate thought. Each sentence or phrase had an equal value. This process required me to review the data to recognize and isolate noteworthy statements or quotes that clarified and described the ways in which the participants experienced the phenomenon of interest.

2. In the second step of this process, I employed reduction and elimination. In this step, each expression was tested by determining whether it met the following criteria of its inclusion being necessary and sufficient to describe an element of the phenomenon of interest and that it had the ability to be labeled and abstracted. The aim of this step was to eliminate redundant or vague expressions and reduce the data to only that which added informative value, the invariant constituents of the experience. After considering each sentence or phrase as having equal value during the horizonalization process, I then removed those statements that were overlapping, repetitive, or vague to leave only the invariant constitutes of the experience. These resulting horizons were clustered into 13 initial categories.

3. The third step in this process was the clustering of the core categories of the experience and thematizing of the invariant constituents. The purpose of this step was to arrange the data into themes which represented the essence of the experience. I clustered the 13 initial categories of the invariant constituents into three primary themes and seven subthemes by identifying and consolidating overlapping or repetitive categories. The themes were explicated using verbatim quotes from the transcribed data.

4. The fourth step involved validation of the core themes of the experience. To validate the core themes, I compared them to the transcript of each participant to determine whether they were: (a) stated directly in the participant's account, (b) compatible with the account if not explicitly stated, or (c) if not

explicit or compatible, were relevant to the participant's lived experience. Through this analysis of the data, three primary themes and seven subthemes were identified.

5. The last step of the analysis procedure involved the creation of a composite description. An amalgamation of the descriptions was created to form a synthesized presentation of the "essence" of the phenomenon. The commonalities among participant experiences were highlighted. The aim was to provide a descriptive summation of the phenomenon which would enable the reader to better comprehend and appreciate what it is like to have experienced the phenomenon.

Validation

The fourth step of the process was the validation of the core themes and subthemes that described experiences. Themes and subthemes arecomprised of statements that capture important aspects of the data in relation to the research question and represents a level of patterned response or meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Salient statements were identified as themes and subthemes due to their recurrence and perceived relevance to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although a strict quantifiable benchmark for indicating a theme or subtheme was not highlighted, I was consistent in ensuring consensus was reached among a significant amount of participants prior to noting a theme and subtheme. To validate the identified themes and subthemes I compared them to the transcript of each participant to determine whether they were: (a) stated directly in the participant's account, (b) compatible with the account

if not explicitly stated, or (c) if not explicit or compatible, were relevant to the

participant's lived experience. This validation step comprised reviewing the transcripts

and checking to ensure the identified themes and subthemes were supported among the

participants' responses. Tables E1-E4 (see Appendix E) illustrate the endorsement found

for each of the emergent themes and subthemes among the 10 participants. Assuring that

each of the identified themes and subthemes had sufficient support among the responses

served as confirmation that saturation was achieved. The explication of the themes using

verbatim quotes from the participants will be found in the Results section. The themes

and subthemes identified within the current study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Emerging Themes and Subthemes from Data Analysis

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
History of high parental involvement	Fostering open and positive communication with parents	Teacher-parent relationship-building
Subthemes of 1	Subtheme of 2	Subthemes of 3
Importance of parental guidance	Ongoing challenges related to communication barriers	It takes a community
Parents can reinforce learning		Assisting parents with getting necessary resources to support their children
Working as a team with parents		Planning school-based activities

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility relates to how well the results reflect what the participants were

attempting to convey (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several strategies were implemented in

this study to contribute to credibility. Prior to beginning the interview process of the data

collection, I used a bracketing method known as reflexive journaling. Reflexive

journaling was used to record my preconceptions for the purpose of increasing self-

awareness and limiting the influence of my subjectivity on the data itself (Dowden,

Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Prior to the interview

process I used reflexive journaling by answering the guided interview questions

(Appendix B) and documenting my responses on the computer. This process helped me

identify my biases regarding the phenomenon and bracket them before data collection

and analysis. During the interview process, I actively listened to responses to probing

questions to encourage elaboration during the interviews. This allowed for the collection

of richer, detailed responses from the participants. I also used memoing (note-taking) as

another bracketing method to document personal observations (Rhodes, Dawson, Kelly,

& Renshall, 2013). Memoing permits the researcher to inspect their feelings about the

research and lead to deeper insights about the data (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Memoing

was completed immediately after the interview process so I could reflect on information

while it was new. Memoing was not done during the interview process to eliminate

distractions and give participants my full attention. I used audio recording to document

each of the interviews, and enlisted a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the

recordings. This contributed to more accurate documentation of the collected data.

Member checking was used to verify the accuracy of the recordings (Harper &

Cole, 2012). After the transcripts were complete, I emailed copies to the participants to

assess for accuracy, thereby ensuring that the data was an accurate representation of what

they intended to say during the interviews. Each of the 10 participants responded to my request for verification of the accuracy of their transcripts and each participant validated that their transcript gave an accurate accounting of their interview. Another strategy that contributed to credibility was saturation. During the interview process, the 10 participants provided thick descriptions of the phenomenon. During the process of data collection and analysis, I continually examined the data to determine the point at which no new themes appeared to emerge from the interviews. Once interviews were completed, transcribed, coded, and member checked, I completed a final check to ensure that saturation had been achieved. Every identified theme was examined to determine that it had been described and substantiated sufficiently in order to achieve saturation (Mason, 2010).

Triangulation was also implemented as a strategy to enhance the dependability of the study. Ten diverse individuals formed the sample of this study. By comparing the insights of these different individuals, I could triangulate the findings to develop confirmatory support for the emergent themes. To further enhance the credibility of this study, I examined the data to identify discrepant cases. No discrepant cases were found during data analysis.

Transferability

Transferability is defined as the generalizability of the results across other individuals or settings (Transferability, 2009). To enhance the transferability of the study, I focused on one primary strategy--thick description. Thick description involves a detailed, context-heavy depiction of the participant's perceptions and experiences. I used probing questions to elicit more detailed responses from participants. Through this

process, I was able to collect data which offered a more vivid background through which the participant's perspective could be viewed. This data were used to contextualize the findings reported in this study.

Dependability

Dependability is the capacity to display how, if given the same context, methods and participants, similar results would arrive at the same results (Shenton, 2004). The strategy by which the dependability of the study was enhanced was the development of an audit trail. An audit trail refers to the provision of a detailed account of the procedures followed in carrying out a study and analyzing the data. For this study, I have reported in detail every step taken in conducting the interview-based data collection, and used the modified van Kaam method to arrive at the research findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a qualitative equivalent to the objectivity within in quantitative studies (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To contribute to the confirmability of the study, I implemented strategies to minimize researcher bias. The first step in the data analysis process is epoché. Epoché, or bracketing, served as a method to address researcher bias. Prior to the interviews, I used epoché to set aside all forms and levels of personal preconceptions, biases, and prejudgments (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing was attained by reflecting on my biases regarding the phenomenon through the use of a journal which contained my responses to the guided interview questions (Appendix B). Immediately following each interview, I employed epoché by using memoing (note taking) to view data with an open and clear mind. Epoché was used to target my bias and

facilitate a more objective study (Moustakas, 1994). The validated interview guide assisted me in remaining cognizant of the interview focus and standardizing the questions across participants. By ensuring that emergent themes were supported by an abundance of data across the participant interviews, I could be more confident that the identified themes were valid representations of the participants' views, and not merely a reflection of researcher bias.

Research Results

Based on the Central Research Question and subquestions guiding this study, three themes and seven subthemes emerged in regard to these questions. The themes were: (a) history of high parental involvement, (b) fostering open and positive communication with parents, and (c) teacher-parent relationship-building. The subthemes were: (a) importance of parental involvement, (b) parents can reinforce learning, (c) working as a team with parents and other teachers, (d) ongoing challenges related to communication barriers, (e) it takes a community, (f) assisting parents with getting necessary resources to support their children, and (g) planning school-based activities. I will introduce each theme, provide verbatim quotes to support the theme, and end with a concluding statement.

Theme 1: History of High Parental Involvement

Most of the teachers in the study reported that their own parents had been very involved in their education during their childhood. As such, they had become accustomed to a high level of parental involvement in the educational process. Participant 10 recalled her parents' involvement during her schooling sharing, "Fortunately my parents were

very involved and they always wanted to know how I was doing academically, how I was behaving." Participant 6 similarly shared that her mother was actively involved in her education saying, "My mom volunteered at the school, so she was always there for anything that was going on at the school." Participant 9 discussed her experiences with her mother's active involvement in her school:

> My mom was always involved. She was involved in PTA at the school. Both of my parents worked two jobs but they always found time to read with me. They always found time to go over my homework even though they were busy. I know a lot of parents are like oh we have so and so going on, but I think if you want to find the time to work with your child you definitely can. I do think it helped because it always made me realize okay education is really important. It gave me that value for education I think from a young age.

For Participant 5, high parental involvement in education was inevitable for her because "everyone in my family were teachers. My mother was a teacher. Both of my grandmothers were teachers." Because the teachers grew up in households that practiced active participation, they developed an ingrained belief in the importance of parental involvement in education; thus, the teachers were more likely to encourage parental involvement in their current roles.

Increased student motivation. Many of the teachers reported that a high level of parental involvement can serve as a source of personal motivation for students. The teachers suggested that students take a vested interest in their studies when they know that their parents are invested in the educational process. Participant 2 noted that her

mother's commitment to her education served to motivate her when she was in school. She recalled, "I think of her sacrifice, like I saw how much she worked and it made me think, well my mom did this for me so I want to make sure I'm a good student. I would do good for her." Likewise, Participant 9 suggested that her students' parents can serve as motivation for their children to do well in school. She opined, "I feel like if the parents have that expectation of their child to do well, then the kids want to do well. They want to get the good grades. They want to impress their teachers, their parents and…others." Participant 1 proclaimed that increased parental and familial involvement can also bolster a child's confidence:

> I truly believe that it helps them. This way, children know that there's someone here saying, "You can do this." There's someone at home, there's someone at school, their friends, their friends' parents, everyone is involved. You don't have it right now, but you will have it. You will get it.

By staying actively involved in their children's education, parents can motivate their children to take their education more seriously and increase their sense of academic self-efficacy.

Improved student behavior. Several of the teachers maintained that high parental involvement leads to marked improvements in the behavior of students. Some of the participants described trends they had observed concerning parental participation and student behavior. To this point, Participant 7 posited, "It's always the parents of the better behaved kids that are coming to school." However, when the parents play a more active role, these behavioral issues tend to diminish. Participant 2 shared, "They come to me

thinking they can do whatever. As soon as their parent is involved in it and they put their foot down at home too it gets better. It just, it goes hand in hand I think." Participant 10 described how she is able to enlist the help of parents to address such issues:

> If I have a child who is not behaving the way they should, most of the time, if the parent is aware of that, they can handle that at home …Because if a parent doesn't know what's going on, and they think everything is fine, then nothing will be done. So, when you have parents that support you in that way, as far as discipline and things like that, it really helps out a lot. So, that has helped me this year.

By making parents aware of behavior issues in the classroom, and soliciting their help, teachers have seen great improvements in their students' behavior. As Participant 10 reasoned, "the academics will come if the students' behaviors are in check."

Resulted in better overall academic outcomes. The teachers observed a connection between high parental involvement and greater academic achievement among their students. Participant 6 described parental involvement as "key to a child's success." Participant 5 reported that she has seen "a direct correlation" between parental involvement and student achievement. Similarly, Participant 3 explained, "I think it's just the success, the achievement of the students. I know they're going to do a lot better if their parents are involved." Even during her childhood, Participant 8 was able to make the connection between parental involvement and student success. She recalled, "There were some parents that were truly there for their kids, and those kids I saw them succeed and they do a lot better in class." Participant 9's similar childhood observations seemed to contribute to her philosophy on the importance of parental involvement:

I think with parental involvement, it does help a child be more successful because I've seen it in my classroom. The parents that are involved, their kids have better grades. They are more successful. Even just as a child, they are more well-rounded. You can see those kids have better manners. They have really good social skills. I saw it with my mom. My parents were involved. My brother and I were both in college. My brother is almost done. I see it with us. My friends' parents also. I guess just based off experience.

Parental involvement was observed to contribute to a host of positive outcomes, including greater academic achievement. The connection between parental involvement and student achievement was established for many of the teachers during their own childhood experiences, and persists in their present-day experiences as teachers. Teachers experienced the positive academic results of their own parents' involvement when they were students and teachers continue to see these positive academic results in the educational experiences of the students they teach.

Subtheme 1: Importance of Parental Guidance

Through their own childhood experiences, the teachers came to appreciate the importance of parental guidance and support in a child's education. Teachers acknowledged the importance of getting parents to participate in the educational process at any participation level.

Participant 7 explained:

Sometimes growing up, because my mom was not as involved with me growing up with school, I basically did my own thing. I was teaching myself and not

teaching myself the right things and not understanding what I was reading

sometimes depending on the subject. A parent needs to come alongside a child

and help them with their work. It's an extension of what's happening in the

classroom at home and it's important. They need to know that.

Participant 10 echoed this assertion saying, "When the parents know what is going on

they are…able to help their children. So, I'll be able to help them at school, the parent is

able to help them at home. So there's constantly somebody is on them." Similarly

Participant 5 noted, "They have to see that the parents care ... at least ask questions. My

daughter will come home with a C or something, but we talk every single day…she

knows I'm on it…She knows it's important." The teachers indicated that children benefit

from the active attention and guidance of their parents in the context of their education.

Teachers additionally expressed that they are more inclined to participate in their own

children's education due to the teachers' experiences when they were students.

Subtheme 2: Parents Can Reinforce Learning

Through their personal experiences, the teachers came to believe in the

importance of parents in reinforcing learning in the home. The teachers indicated that

parents have a vital role in buttressing the lessons and skills children gain in the

classroom. Participant 3 declared, "I think all parents are capable of their kids learning.

Really whether you want to or not, you're going to teach them something so definitely

you can help them learn." Participant 8 agreed with this sentiment, also noting the life

lessons that parents can impart saying, "Yes, a parent is going to teach them. It might not

be academically, but it'll be life lessons that they'll be taught." Although parents may not

have the education or experience to relate to everything the teachers discuss in school, the teachers maintained that parents can be valuable resources for offering additional support for their children.

Subtheme 3: Working as a Team with Parents and Other Teachers

Because of the teachers' experiences with, and positive esteem for, high parental involvement, they stressed the need to work collaboratively with parents and other teachers. Participant 6 reasoned that by working together:

…the parent and the teacher are on the same page, that they both want the best for the child. And it also looks like that the parent trusts the teacher, that the parent really knows that the teacher has their child's best interests at heart, and that the teacher is not out to get the child, that it is all about "I want your child to succeed." I want them to be successful, so I'm going to do everything within my power to make sure the child succeeds. It's really a working relationship. It's not combative.

To engender such a working partnership the teachers have worked actively to assist parents with increasing their role in the educational process. Participant 7 recalled, "I have a grandmother who's raising her granddaughter and what I did was send home examples for extra work for her and then I will guide her on how to go about asking questions and all of that." Similarly, Participant 3 recalled, "Sometimes there's ineffective ways [of teaching] but that's when I'll step in and say [to parents], 'Hey we're not teaching it this way anymore but this is what you can do."

Theme 2: Fostering Open and Positive Communication with Parents

Based upon their experiences and perceptions concerning the importance of parental involvement in education, the teachers strive to promote open and positive communication with their students' parents. The teachers noted the importance of approaching parents in a nonjudgmental way. Participant 1 gave the following advice: "I just think they need to see their parents, welcome them, let them know that they are there for them. No judging. Keep judgment out of it. It's a judge-free zone when talking to parents." Further, the teachers emphasized that teachers should strive to remain respectful of parents. To this point, Participant 5 argued, "I think it's really important to have a respect for each other. It's an onus on the teacher to be respectful of the parents as well because they don't want to be put down." The participants also asserted that to lay the foundation for positive communication it is helpful to focus on the positive. Participant 3 proclaimed, "I always start with positives. I want to talk positives. I want to ask you something positive….It doesn't even have to be academics. Let's just talk about your child so you know that I do care about your child." As Participant 9 explained, "I would definitely tell a teacher if you start a good line of communication at the beginning of the year, it will definitely help throughout."

Subtheme 4: Ongoing Challenges Related to Communication Barriers

Despite these successful strategies, several teachers did acknowledge that persistent communication barriers have the potential to undermine their efforts. Primarily the teachers noted that they encountered difficulty when trying to reach parents to discuss issues with their children. Participant 10 reported the following:

There are other parents who are completely, I mean they are very hard to get in touch with. They don't prefer to meet or sometimes their schedule is very hectic. You know they work a lot or, you know they have two jobs, or it is really hard for them to meet. So, sometimes it's kind of hard to contact the parents.

Participant 5 recalled similar difficulties with making contact with parents saying she has dealt with "a lot of phone calls, and unfortunately, a lot of trying to find new numbers. A lot of disconnected numbers." Participant 7 also expressed frustration with incorrect phone numbers and incorrect addresses: "You either have phones not working, or sometimes they lie about their addresses too…it sometimes is discovered that the family does not live at the address on record...The biggest thing is phone numbers, not having a working phone."

Additionally, many teachers discussed the difficulty they faced when communicating with parents whose first language is not English. Participant 6 discussed this issue at length:

Well, I know one challenge is because we serve a huge bilingual population. So we have a lot of parents who don't speak English. And not only Spanish, but we have children and parents that speak Burmese, and we also have parents that speak so many different languages. So it's kind of hard to communicate at times. So I try to call the District and actually have an interpreter help me, or another teacher. But sometimes it takes a while to get those people to be able to communicate through those channels. That's the biggest barrier, the language, because everyone does not speak English. And there are so many different

languages in our district. The district is so diverse, you may have a child who

speaks Arabic and you have no way of communicating with the parent. So that's

the issue I notice, it's just the language barrier that a lot of parents don't speak

English.

Participant 10 similarly shared, "We now have a population of Burmese children"; she

added, "It's kind of difficult to get in contact with them because of the language barrier,

things like that." Participant 3 echoed this idea saying, "Sometimes language is a barrier.

If you can't get someone that's going to translate, then it's hard to go back and forth." To

overcome this obstacle, participants must work to devise creative solutions. Participant 1

stated that when she was faced with this problem, "That was a big challenge for me,

because we had to try to find someone who spoke the language, and then have them

communicate the feelings from school and from home." She explained, "That was a real

challenge, but having one person who was able to speak the language broke that barrier."

Theme 3: Teacher-Parent Relationship-Building

Building positive working relationships with parents was emphasized by several

teachers as a successful strategy in engendering parental school involvement. Participant

5 described the ideal parent-teacher relationship saying, "It should be almost like a

colleague relationship. We're in it together for a sole goal or purpose is to have your kids

succeed or grow in reading and math." Participant 10 boasted that the development of a

positive working relationship with her students' parents "has helped me tremendously

because, the parent, when you have a good relationship with that parent, that parent has a

good relationship with you. That parent genuinely knows that you are genuinely there for

their child." Participant 3 described her efforts to build a relationship with her students'
parents saying, "I want to know you. If I have your child, I do want to know you."

Participant 1 shared her strategy for initiating this working relationship stating, "I
try to reach parents where they are. I really let them do more of the talking to tell me
what it is that they need, then I try to help them from there." Participant 6 shared her
philosophy on the benefits of a positive parent-teacher relationship explaining, "It's
always good in my opinion to let the parent know a little bit about you and your
background and where you come from and where you stand." By creating this type of
relationship, teachers are able to enlist parents as allies and avoid the combativeness that
can result when parents feel disconnected from the educational process.

Subtheme 5: It Takes a Community

The teachers also acknowledged that a "community" of support is often necessary
to achieve positive academic outcomes. This community may include extended family
members, family friends, and other adults in the neighborhood. By using the time and
talents of a wide network of caring individuals, parents are better able to meet the needs
of their children. Participant 1 offered the most cogent illustration of this concept:

> To me, parental involvement can also include community involvement, because it
> takes a whole community to help educate your child. Parental involvement
> involves them coming into the school, working with our kids and with our
> parents, and community leaders and people from the community coming in and
> having an inter-generational program with our kids.

Many participants recalled having the support of extended family and friends during their childhood education. Participant 4 shared that her brothers and sisters pitched in to help her when her mother was ill; Participant 1 discussed receiving support from "grandparents and church members." Other teachers noted that they have observed uncles and aunts and even community organizers assisting to provide parents with additional supportive resources.

Subtheme 6: Assisting Parents with Getting Necessary Resources to Support Their Children

To support parents in taking an active role in their children's education, the teachers discussed their efforts to assist parents with getting the resources they need to contribute to their children's education. Participant 1 described her use of other staff to provide linkages to supportive resources:

> I work closely with the person here who's in charge of that. The parents are in and out all the time. I communicate with the parents to see what their needs are. There are many resources in there. If she doesn't have the resources, she'll bring in resources or find/contact someone, and then I can contact them for resources for our kids.

Participant 3 reported providing parents with education resources to take home. Participant 6 stated, "I'm constantly giving parents websites, games that they can play with the child, or directing them to You Tube, because with You Tube you can find just about anything that you need." By supplying parents with the resources they need, the

teachers were able to empower the parents to take a more active role in their children's education.

Subtheme 7: Planning School-Based Activities

The teachers reported that a number of school-based strategies have been successful in increasing parental involvement in the school. Several teachers discussed the implementation of a school-based activity such as "curriculum night" that has contributed to higher parent turnout. Participant 10 commented on the use of various curriculum nights at her school:

> I know at our school we have a lot of different curriculum nights, like we'll have curriculum nights, literacy nights, math and science nights, things like that and it really gets the parents involved and I'm really proud to say that this year I had a pretty good turnout. I remember last year when we would have literacy nights and math, science nights and things like that. I didn't have a really good turnout but this year I had a lot more people show up and come, and that's always good because it really lets them know exactly what we're working on, exactly how you can work with your child on certain things that we're doing.

Participant 5 emphasized the importance of fun family events as opposed to strictly academic activities. She shared, "I do wish we had more parental involvement events, sometimes, that were simply fun…This year we got to have a Fall Festival. There were some different family nights and things like that. We had never ever, ever had before." Participant 6 spoke about the Parent Center at her school saying, "A lot of parents come. I kind of like it because I get to meet parents… I get to talk to them about their child, and

they can see that I really care." Participant 8 boasted about the success of some of the school-based activities in her school:

> I know our team this year did, especially the block team, did some amazing things with the multicultural Festival and Field Day. Instead of having the block team do all the work have some parents come help and set up, and have some parents come help and do the artwork.

While the participants noted that these activities had been largely successful in increasing parental turnout and presence within the school, Participant 9 made an interesting observation:

> When we have events, like Fall Festival, you always see so many parents out here. It kind of makes you wonder the parents are here for the fun stuff, why are they not here supporting their kids academically? When you have the Literacy Nights and there was another one that I stayed for, we had maybe 8 parents from the entire second grade. It's like the involvement's there but sometimes you only see it towards all the fun things that go on.

Although an increase in parental participation was observed because of these activities, parental commitment to their children's academics sometimes appeared to be less of a priority.

Composite Description of the Experience

The final step of the analysis was the creation of a composite description of the experience. Through the synthesis of the insights gained from the participant's responses, a composite narrative highlighting the commonalities within the participants' varied

experiences was created. The objective was to provide a descriptive summation of the "essence" of the phenomenon.

Nine of the 10 teachers reported that their own parents had been greatly involved in their education. As such, they became acclimatized to a high level of parental involvement in the educational process. From their own childhood experiences emerged a sense of the importance of parental involvement in education. The teachers came to appreciate the importance of parental support in guiding a child's education.

Based upon the teachers' high esteem for the role of parents in education, the teachers have striven to develop open and positive communication with their students' parents. Due to their personal perceptions concerning parental involvement, the teachers emphasized the necessity of working collaboratively with parents and other teachers, and tried actively to do so. To empower parents to take a more active role in their children's education, the teachers endeavor to assist parents with getting the resources they need to participate in their children's education. Teachers refer parents to other staff members such as the Parent Liaison who facilitates the Campus Family Center. In the Campus Family Center, parents have access to literature, computers, parenting classes, and contact info for basic needs assistance.

Current security regulations which are mandated by the school district limits the time a parent can spend in the classroom with students. These new guidelines were established in the wake of school shootings. Additionally, due to these new guidelines teachers are only allowed to invite parents to observe the classroom for 30-45 minutes at any one time. However, there are opportunities for parents to visit campus during school

functions such as Family Fitness Night, Fall Festival, Open House, Family Literacy Night and Parent Teacher Conferences. The teachers of this school district are prohibited from actively planning family activities in addition to school sponsored events due to security regulations and liability concerns.

The teachers reported that several strategies, including school-based programs and activities, have been successful in encouraging parents to become more active in the school. Building positive working relationships with parents was emphasized as a key strategy in encouraging parental school involvement. Administrative buy-in and support was cited by three teachers as a significant contributor to the successful facilitation of parental involvement. The support of the administration helps these teachers to feel that they have an additional ally when dealing with difficult parents. Although many parental involvement strategies have been met with great success, several teachers did admit that persistent communication barriers have undermined their efforts in reaching out to parents. The single most troublesome factor was making contact with parents when primary phone numbers are out of service. Additionally, communicating with parents whose first language is not English also presents a challenge for teachers. Although strategies such as email communication and translators have had some success in addressing these issues, they remain an ongoing problem.

The teachers affirmed that parental involvement increases student achievement. When parents play an active role in the educational process, it can serve as a source of personal motivation for students. Students are more likely to take their studies seriously when they know that their parents are working in accordance with their teachers to ensure

their academic success. The teachers suggested that students take a vested interest in their studies when they know that their parents are invested in the educational process. Behavioral gains were also supported as a positive offshoot of high parental involvement. Through the active participation of parents in the educational process, substantial improvements in academic achievement can be attained.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education. Through this study, I endeavored to develop a better understanding of how a teacher's background and perceptions might inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education. Semistructured interviews with 10 teachers served as the sole method of data collection. Several research questions guided this study.

Based on the Central Research Question and subquestions guiding this study, three themes and seven subthemes emerged in regard to these questions. The themes were: (a) history of high parental involvement, (b) fostering open and positive communication with parents, and (c) teacher-parent relationship-building. The subthemes were: (a) importance of parental involvement, (b) parents can reinforce learning, (c) working as a team with parents and other teachers, (d) ongoing challenges related to communication barriers, (e) it takes a community, (f) assisting parents with getting necessary resources to support their children, and (g) planning school-based activities.

The teachers shared that their personal experiences led them to see the importance of parental involvement in education. Most of the teachers' own parents had been very involved in their own education. As such, these teachers place a high value on parental participation in the educational process. Teachers also assert that parents can assist their children with making strong academic gains by soliciting the support of other family members and friends.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the research findings. An interpretation of the findings within the context of the literature is also presented. The chapter closes with suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education. There was a gap in the literature addressing how teachers' lived experiences influence their facilitation of parental involvement. Understanding how teachers' experiences and perceptions influence their facilitation of parental involvement programs could create awareness of the underlying influences teachers have on these programs. This awareness would be acutely relevant to teachers in their roles as the primary resources for the promotion of parental involvement programs.

A phenomenological research design and purposeful sampling was used to conduct face-to-face, semistructured interviews with 10 participants who responded to the recruitment materials and met the inclusion criteria. Each of the interviews fell within the predicted duration of 60 minutes. Participants consisted of teachers with a minimum of 5 years of experience who were actively employed in a school district in Southeast Texas. The first four steps prescribed in the method described by Moustakas (1994) were adhered to in the modified process employed in this study. Based on the Central Research Question and the three subquestions guiding this study, three themes and seven subthemes emerged in regard to these questions. The themes were: (a) history of high parental involvement, (b) fostering open and positive communication with parents, and (c) teacher-parent relationship-building. The subthemes were: (a) importance of parental

involvement, (b) parents can reinforce learning, (c) working as a team with parents and other teachers, (d) ongoing challenges related to communication barriers, (e) it takes a community, (f) assisting parents with getting necessary resources to support their children, and (g) planning school-based activities.

Interpretation of the Findings and the Literature Review

In this section, I will present an interpretation of the findings of this phenomenological study in comparison to the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. In general, the results of this study supported the peer-reviewed literature described in Chapter 2. All teachers view parental involvement as important and believe parents can reinforce learning in their children (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Most teachers formed this belief from their childhood experiences (Heyes, 2012). Teachers further believe in building relationships with parents and fostering open and positive communication (Hammack et al., 2012; Hindman & Morrison, 2011). Three themes and seven subthemes emerged from the Central Research Question and the three sub-questions guiding this study. The themes were the result of data collection and analysis from face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 10 participants.

Theme 1: History of High Parental Involvement

Teachers have consensus in their belief in the positive effects of parental involvement on student achievement; however, the findings of this study indicate that two teachers developed this belief regardless of their experiences during childhood. In other words, two teachers formed a positive belief of the effects of parental involvement even though the teachers' parents were not actively involved in their education when they

were children. Although teachers believe in the positive impact of parental involvement on student motivation and academic outcomes, teachers also admit, at times, parents have more interest in the social component of parental involvement instead of the educational component. In other words, parents will come to school functions such as Fall Festival rather than Family Literacy Night. Teachers believe that parents could have a stronger impact on student motivation and academic outcomes if they attended the more educational related school functions that are offered.

Most teachers in the study reported that their own parents had been very involved in their education during their childhood. Likewise, they had become accustomed to a high level of parental involvement in the educational process. Since the teachers grew up in households that practiced active participation, they developed an ingrained belief in the importance of parental involvement in education.

Teachers additionally described their own parents' involvement in their education as "actively involved" when it came to specific activities such as the PTA and field trips. Considering teachers' experiences with their own parents' involvement in their education, teachers may be demonstrating aspects of social learning which employs the strategy of copying successful individuals. The findings of this study are similar to Heyes (2012) which described social learning as an individual acquiring knowledge by watching others in their environment rather than receiving specific detailed instruction. Teachers had experiences with their own parents' involvement with their education, and in turn, believe this to be a positive activity for all parents in the educational process. Johnson's (2011) study examined teacher perceptions of parental involvement and the possible

formation of opinions as a result of early experiences and learned behavior. Kurtines-Becker (2008) stated that teachers should have a belief in the positive effects of parental involvement on student achievement in order to advocate successfully for parental involvement programs.

Increased student motivation. Many of the teachers reported that a high level of parental involvement can serve as a source of personal motivation for students. The teachers suggested that students take a vested interest in their studies when they know that their parents are invested in the educational process. Research has shown that students make significant academic gains as a result of parental involvement in schools (Rapp & Duncan, 2012). Overall, a significant relationship exists between parental involvement and the academic success of students (Dearing et al., 2006; Jeynes, 2005). According to McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012), parents believe their relationship with teachers is a contributing factor in the success of their child.

Improved student behavior. Several of the teachers maintained that high parental involvement leads to marked improvements in the behavior of students. Some of the participants described trends they had observed concerning parental participation and student behavior. By making parents aware of behavior issues in the classroom and soliciting their help, teachers have seen great improvements in their students' behavior. Parental involvement in public schools is commonly linked to the parent's role in encouraging the academic and behavioral success of the student (Smith et al., 2011). The research findings of Deslandes (2001) indicated there may also be a link between parental involvement and children's social interactions including behavior.

Resulted in better overall academic outcomes. The teachers observed a connection between high parental involvement and greater academic achievement among their students. By staying actively involved in their children's education, parents can motivate their children to take their education more seriously and increase their sense of academic self-efficacy. This is consistent with research study findings indicating that academic performance is better when parents are involved in their children's education (Dearing et al., 2006; Jeynes, 2005; Rapp & Duncan, 2012; Reece et al., 2013). The connection between parental involvement and student achievement was established for many of the teachers during their own childhood experiences and persists in their present-day experiences as teachers.

Subtheme 1: Importance of Parental Guidance

Through their own childhood experiences, the teachers came to appreciate the importance of parental guidance and support in a child's education. Even among the participants who did not report high parental participation during their childhood, they still acknowledged the importance of getting parents involved in the educational process. Consistent with the research of Kurtines-Becker (2008) that found teachers should have a belief in the positive effects of parental involvement on student achievement in order to advocate successfully for parental involvement programs, teachers in this study indicated that children benefit from the active attention and guidance of their parents in the context of their education.

Subtheme 2: Parents Can Reinforce Learning

Through their personal experiences as children, the teachers came to believe in the importance of parents in reinforcing learning in the home. The teachers indicated that parents have a vital role in buttressing the lessons and skills children gain in the classroom. Although parents may not have the education or experience to relate to everything the teachers discuss in school, the teachers maintained that parents can be valuable resources for offering additional support for their children. Teachers should see parents and families as willing and able partners and assets in the successful education of students (Ratcliff and Hunt, 2009). Confirming this idea, Baum and Swick (2008) stated that teachers should perceive parents as knowledgeable with opinions that contribute to the education process.

Subtheme 3: Working as a Team with Parents and Other Teachers

Because of the teachers' childhood experiences with, and positive esteem for, high parental involvement, they stressed the need to work collaboratively with parents and other teachers. It is fundamental for teachers to act as facilitators in the relationship building team which consists of parents, teachers, and other school staff (Reece et al., 2013). Current literature supports the significant role teachers have in the development of home-school relationships which are foundational in parental involvement programs (Kurtines-Becker, 2008).

Ratcliff and Hunt (2009) suggested that teachers should see parents and families as willing and able partners and assets in the successful education of students. To engender such a working partnership, the teachers have worked actively to assist parents

with increasing their role in the educational process. This effort of the teachers in my study is consistent with the research findings of Reece et al. (2013), which analyzed the benefit of teachers helping parents by teaching parents skills that could increase their strengths in self-efficacy, and thereby, enable parents to have a role in supporting their children's education.

Theme 2: Fostering Open and Positive Communication with Parents

It is important to note that teachers believe in and encourage parental involvement despite new challenges that teachers face today when communicating with parents. Some challenges include communication barriers in the form of non-English speaking parents and nonworking telephone numbers. Additionally, teachers realize they have to be very opened minded when communicating with parents. Teachers do not want to prejudge parents based on the parents' lack of initiative in reaching out to teachers. Teachers want to believe that all parents have some sort of vested interest in their children's education; therefore, teachers are willing to take the first step in opening the lines of communication.

Based upon their experiences and perceptions concerning the importance of parental involvement in education, the teachers strive to promote open and positive communication with their students' parents. This is consistent with research study findings that specified the relevance of communication between home and school (Hammack et al., 2012; Hindman & Morrison, 2011). Further, the teachers in this study noted the importance of approaching parents in a nonjudgmental way. Teachers emphasized that teachers should strive to remain respectful of parents. The aspects of teachers approaching parents in a nonjudgmental way (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009) and

remaining respectful of parents (Baum & Swick, 2008; Kurtines-Becker, 2008) are consistent in the findings of the literature review of Chapter 2 concerning the facets of teachers having a positive approach to relationship building with parents and a positive regard for parents. For the betterment of their students, teachers are obligated to eliminate barriers and opinions in an effort to build relationships between themselves and the families of their students (Hammack et al., 2012).

Subtheme 4: Ongoing Challenges Related to Communication Barriers

Despite successful parental involvement strategies, several teachers did acknowledge that persistent communication barriers have the potential to undermine their efforts. Primarily, the teachers noted that they encountered difficulty when trying to reach parents to discuss issues with their children. The teachers' awareness of the importance of communication with parents is consistent with the research findings of Reece et al. (2013), that indicated school staff should provide communication opportunities to encourage the activities necessary for successful parental involvement programs. It is also important for teachers to facilitate ongoing communication with parents to encourage parental involvement (Hammack et al., 2012). Additionally, many teachers discussed the difficulty they faced when communicating with parents whose first language is not English. These challenges are consistent with findings that indicated many teachers have not been provided the necessary training to work with families from diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Hammack et al., 2012).

Theme 3: Teacher-Parent Relationship-Building

According to the findings of this study, teachers have encountered new security regulations which limit parents' time and access to the classroom which hinders teachers' access to parents. However, despite these challenges teachers have adapted and found other avenues and resources to work with parents because teachers have formed the opinion that parental involvement produces positive results in a child's education (Dearing et al., 2006; Hammack et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2005; Rapp & Duncan, 2012; Reece et al., 2013). Several teachers believe in building positive relationships with the families of their students despite the teachers' inability to plan additional school events beyond school sponsored events due to security regulations.

Building positive working relationships with parents was emphasized by several teachers as a successful strategy in engendering parental school involvement. Building positive relationships with schools is an integral part of engaging parents and families in activities which promote and foster parental involvement programs for the academic and emotional growth of students (Kurtines-Becker, 2008; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Further, by creating positive working relationships with parents, teachers felt able to enlist parents as allies and avoid the combativeness that can result when parents feel disconnected from the educational process. This is consistent with research study findings that specified the importance of a successful parent-teacher relationship that is built on mutual respect between parent and teacher where both parties value the contribution of the other and collaborate for the success of the student (McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012). Additionally,

teachers felt more valued when they were encouraged and listened to by parents (McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012).

Subtheme 5: It Takes a Community

Teachers acknowledged that a "community" of support is often necessary to achieve positive academic outcomes. This community may include extended family members, family friends, and other adults in the neighborhood. By using the time and talents of a wide network of caring individuals, parents are better able to meet the needs of their children. The teachers' acknowledgements are consistent with the findings of the phenomenological study of McFarland-Piazza et al. (2012) which indicated the development and academic success of children is influenced by factors such as family, culture, and community. Hindman and Morrison (2011) also admitted the relationship between home and school may come in many forms and the key is in finding what will bring success to a chosen parental involvement program.

Subtheme 6: Assisting Parents with Getting Necessary Resources to Support Their Children

To support parents in taking an active role in their children's education, the teachers discussed their efforts to assist parents with getting the resources they need to contribute to their children's education. By supplying parents with the resources they need, the teachers were able to empower the parents to take a more active role in their children's education. Parental involvement can include various types of interactions including parents exchanging information among one another as well as parents and teachers exchanging information to strengthen parents' understanding of their role as

advocate for their children's educational success (Ratcliff and Hunt, 2009). Relationship building through healthy communication should assist with problems that a student may incur during the school year and build a SST consisting of parents and schools (Baum & Swick, 2008; Kurtines-Becker, 2008). Parent-teacher conferences provide an example of healthy communication as a valuable resource for relationship building and an opportunity for the meaningful exchange of information that is beneficial for family-school partnerships and the betterment of students (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009).

Subtheme 7: Planning School-Based Activities

The teachers reported that a number of school-based strategies have been successful in increasing parental involvement in the school. Several teachers discussed the implementation of a school-based activity such as "curriculum night" that has contributed to higher parent turnout. These results are consistent with the research findings of Dearing et al. (2006) and Jeynes (2005) that indicated voluntary or required parent activities, in schools, improve parental involvement and student achievement.

Conceptual Framework Related to Findings

The conceptual framework for this study was Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Bandura's (1999) self-efficacy theory. Social cognitive theory addresses human motivation and behavior and the cognitive and environmental factors, which influence them, including experiences (Bandura, 1986). Social cognitive theory defines the causal relationship between an individual's experiences and learning (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy is the fundamental root of human agency and is an individual's belief that they can effect change through their actions (Bandura, 1999; Holzberger, Philipp, &

Kunter, 2013). Bandura's social cognitive theory was relevant to this study when examining the task of parental involvement and the teacher's perspective through experiences and learned behavior.

Social Cognitive Theory and Learned Behavior

Social cognitive theory addresses human motivation and behavior and the cognitive and environmental factors, which influence them, including experiences (Bandura, 1986). Social learning, which is an aspect of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, is described as an individual acquiring knowledge by watching others in their environment rather than receiving specific detailed instruction (Heyes, 2012). Therefore, social learning is a concept which may be explained by learning through indirect instructional communication rather than direct instructional communication like other forms of learning (Heyes, 2012). Bandura (1999) stated social learning provides an individual with information needed to discern the appropriate behavior for given situations and social interactions. Bandura's social learning theory may clarify the possible impact teachers' lived experiences have on their opinion of parental involvement.

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory is evident in the following themes and subthemes which emerged from the data analysis of this study: (a) history of high parental involvement, (b) planning school-based activities, and (c) ongoing challenges related to communication barriers. Most of the teachers reported that their own parents had been greatly involved in their education. As such, they became acclimatized to a high level of parental involvement in the educational process. From their own childhood

experiences emerged a personal philosophy regarding the importance of parental participation in education. Some teachers discussed the specifics of how their own parents had been actively involved in school-based activities such as the PTA and the Parent Center. The teachers came to appreciate the importance of parental support in guiding a child's education.

Teachers recalled that their own parents were very involved and they always wanted to know how they were doing academically and behaviorally in school; therefore, teachers expected to have little difficulty communication with their students' parents. However, several teachers did admit that persistent communication barriers have undermined their efforts in reaching parents. The single most troublesome factor was making contact with parents when primary phone numbers are out of service. Because the teachers grew up in households that practiced active participation, they developed an ingrained belief in the importance of parental involvement in education. The theory of social learning was instrumental in this research study because it correlated to the teacher's ability to learn from environmental experiences which may also be considered their background through prior experiences. These prior experiences may affect teachers' willingness, motivation, or choice to complete the tasks necessary to implement and sustain parental involvement programs.

Self-efficacy and Learned Behavior

Self-efficacy is the fundamental root of human agency and is an individual's belief that they can effect change through their actions (Bandura, 1999; Holzberger et al., 2013). Garvis and Pendergast (2010) applied the theory of self-efficacy to teachers when

they discussed the teacher's belief that they could influence and effect student performance. A teacher's self-efficacy is considered vital to the effectiveness of schools because without self-motivated teachers, school programs are not as successful and thus student performance is lowered (Calik et al., 2012).

Based upon the teachers' high esteem for the role of parents in education, the teachers have striven to develop open and positive communication with their students' parents. Due to their personal perceptions concerning parental involvement, the teachers emphasized the necessity of working collaboratively with parents and other teachers, and tried actively to do so. Many teachers recalled having the support of extended family and friends during their childhood education. Teachers acknowledged that a "community" of support is often necessary to achieve positive academic outcomes. To empower parents to take a more active role in their children's education, the teachers endeavor to assist parents with getting the resources they need to participate in their children's education. Building positive working relationships with parents was emphasized as a key strategy in encouraging parental school involvement.

The teachers affirmed that parental involvement was positively related to student achievement. When parents play an active role in the educational process, it can serve as a source of personal motivation for students. Students are more likely to take their studies seriously when they know that their parents are working in accordance with their teachers to ensure their academic success. The teachers suggested that students take a vested interest in their studies when they know that their parents are invested in the educational process. Behavioral gains were also supported as a positive offshoot of high parental

involvement. Through the active participation of parents in the educational process, substantial improvements in academic achievement can be attained.

Holzberger et al. (2013) discussed the theory of self-efficacy and the effects on teaching and proposed that a teacher's self-efficacy may determine student achievement. Self-efficacy is considered an important factor in how a teacher influences student outcome because self-efficacy is related to how individuals perform tasks (Holzberger et al., 2013).The research of Calik et al. (2012) implies self-efficacy is an important teacher trait which could improve student performance through school programs. Parental involvement programs may be an example of these programs where parents are encouraged to participate in school sponsored functions.

Limitations of the Study

This research study was limited to a small sample of 10 teachers which is a representative sample and did not include the majority of teachers in the school district located in Southeast Texas. This study represented only primary public school grades Prekindergarten through 4th and did not represent how the issue of parental involvement is experienced in higher grade levels through grade 12. Therefore, this study is limited by the small sample size and perspective of primary public school teachers.

Due to my role as a school counselor in the district where the research was conducted, I brought some bias to this study in the form of known district expectations and policies regarding parental involvement. Additionally, I was biased due to experiences that shaped my perceptions and expectations of parents and teachers who engage in parental involvement programs. I took iterative measures to continually

maintain an open mind and limit the influence of my individual biases in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. I did so by employing Edmund Husserl's (1982) concept of epoché, often referred to as bracketing. Bracketing signifies the setting aside of one's personal experiences and views in order to examine the phenomenon from an objective and novel perspective (Moustakas, 1994). I used memoing (note-taking) as a bracketing method to document personal observations (Rhodes, Dawson, Kelly, & Renshall, 2013). Memoing permits the researcher to inspect their feelings about the research and lead to deeper insights about the data (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Prior to data collection, I used another bracketing method known as reflexive journaling. Reflexive journaling was used to record my preconceptions for the purpose of increasing self-awareness and limiting the influence of my subjectivity on the data itself (Dowden, Gunby, Warren, & Boston, 2014; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Member checking was also used to verify the accuracy of the participants' perspective. Therefore, personal biases and experiences were set aside as much as possible, to examine the data from a more objective and unbiased perspective. As an educator in the public school system, I had a bias that many teachers predominately focused on helping the parents who take the initiative and reach out to the teacher. However by bracketing my bias and approaching each interview with an open mind, I discovered teachers who not only reach out to parents but declare it their duty to forge relationships that build parental involvement in their classrooms.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research study was conducted to address the identified gap in the literature regarding how teachers' lived experiences influence their facilitation of parental involvement. The study was conducted with a sample of 10 primary school teachers in a school district located in Southeast Texas. All participants were actively employed as teachers and had a minimum of 5 years of experience as a teacher. Specifically, participants' years of teaching experience ranged 5 to 35 years. All of the participants were women. Within the sample, six participants had one or more children and four participants had no children. The teachers contributed vital insight into their experiences and perceptions concerning parental involvement, and the effect that these experiences and perceptions have on their facilitation of parental involvement and academic achievement among their own students.

Given the participants in this study were employed as primary school teachers, further research could address the limitations of this study by examining how the issue of parental involvement is experienced in higher grade levels through grade 12. This study could provide a broader understanding of the types of family involvement strategies teachers use to produce optimal student achievement. Based on the participant requirement of this study that teachers have a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience, further research could be conducted with teaching participants having only 1 year of teaching experience. Such a research study may give insight into the perceptions of first year teachers before they gain additional years of experience with parental involvement. Additionally, future studies could focus on a more diverse sample of

participants than what was represented in this study. For example, this could include bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) teachers in public schools. Research in this area could provide the perspectives of teachers who work with students and parents whose first language is not English.

A phenomenological study conducted with parents as participants would provide insight into the parents' perspective on parental involvement. Parent perceptions regarding parental involvement could be vital in aiding understanding of what parents believe is their role in the academic achievement of their students. Another area for further study can be to study teachers in schools other than public which could include private or charter schools. This study could provide an insight into the types of support and resources that are given to teachers, to assist with parental involvement, depending upon the school setting and guidelines.

Implications

Implications for Positive Social Change

The findings from this study could result in positive social change by highlighting the influence of teachers' experiences and perceptions toward parental involvement. Further, this study has implications for positive social change by increasing the awareness for promoting parental involvement through school-based activities for parents, supporting teachers in their endeavor to build positive relationships with parents and students, and promoting student achievement. Data collection and analysis resulted in significant themes regarding how the teachers' lived experiences concerning parental

involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education.

Jeynes (2005) suggested additional research is needed to determine if teachers perceive parental involvement as a benefit to their students and if so, how is it of benefit. Teachers who participated in this study affirmed that parental involvement was positively related to student achievement; therefore, the findings in this study could reinforce the need for Family or Parent Centers on individual school campuses to reinforce the parent-teacher relationship and encourage parents' involvement in their children's education. School administration and staff could also use these findings to promote the need for more school-based activities where parents are invited to attend and interact in a learning environment with staff and their children.

Theoretical Implications

According to Ratcliff and Hunt (2009), teachers promoted parental involvement in schools and communities by influencing parent-teacher, parent-school, and parent-child relationships, which are keys to developing life-long learners. The teachers in this study emphasized building positive working relationships with parents as a key strategy in encouraging parental school involvement. Understanding the lived experiences of teachers contributes to the promotion of positive working relationships with parents, students, school staff, and the community. Additionally this could lead to school administrators supporting teachers in their continuing endeavor to build these positive relationships.

Recommendations for Practice

Dearing et al. (2006) suggested future research that explores the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement. Given teachers in this study believe parental involvement results in better overall academic outcomes for students, this study could contribute to a positive social change by providing school administration, staff, and the community with an understanding of how to support and improve parental involvement and student achievement. Through this understanding, school administrators could grasp the importance of teachers' in-service and professional development programs in parental involvement.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study was conducted to explore how the teachers' lived experiences concerning parental involvement and student achievement inform their facilitation of parental involvement in education. The goal of this study was to explore and describe teachers' experiences with parental involvement in education and to ascertain their perceptions of the connection between parental involvement and student success. Valuable insights emerged from the study including teachers in the study believe parental support is important in guiding a child's education, teachers strive to develop open and positive communication with their students' parents, teachers use school-based programs and activities to encourage parents to become more active in the school, teachers value school administration support in parental involvement endeavors, and teachers affirmed that parental involvement was positively related to student achievement. An area of concern for teachers was communication with parents. Several

teachers admitted that persistent communication barriers have undermined their efforts with parental involvement. This included communicating with parents whose first language is not English. Importantly, in this study teachers stated that from their own childhood experiences emerged a personal philosophy regarding the importance of parental participation in education. Understanding how teachers' opinions, beliefs, and prior experiences form a teacher's background and how they view parental involvement offered insight into the relevance of teacher personal experience on parental involvement and student achievement. This creates awareness of the impact teachers have on parental involvement programs and how the teacher's influence further affects relationships between parents, school staff, students, and community members. If teachers rely solely on their personal experiences with parental involvement without training, it affects the teachers' motivation for promoting parental involvement programs which has a direct effect on student achievement. Student achievement may be viewed as having a far-reaching global impact when we consider education as universal. This relevance indicates the need for teachers to have additional support in the form of professional development and teacher preparation programs, as well as the support of school administration. The increased knowledge from this study will help teachers fulfill their potential as a resource when advocating for parental involvement and student success.

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Appendix A: Invitation Flyer

Would you like to tell your story about your experience working with parents?

You May Be Eligible For This Study If:

- You are currently employed as a teacher in a public school

- You have at least five years of experience as a teacher

- You have an awareness of parental involvement

The purpose of the study is to describe teacher experience with parental involvement. The study will focus primarily on your personal experiences; the challenges you faced and the strategies you used to work with students and their families.

What You Will Be Asked To Do:

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in one recorded interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. You will also be asked to review the interview transcript. The interview will be an interactive discussion about your experience as a teacher working with parents. The interview will be conducted at a time and location convenient for you.

All information will be confidential and used solely for the purpose of understanding the experiences of teachers.

This research project is part of a dissertation study conducted by Crecenra Boyd a Walden University doctoral candidate.

If you are interested, please contact Crecenra Boyd at XXXXXXXXX.

Appendix B: Guiding Interview Questions

1. How would you describe parental involvement?

2. When you were a child, were your parents involved in your education?

3. Do you believe your parents contributed to your educational achievement? Can you give me some examples?

4. Are parents capable of helping their children learn? Can you give me some examples of how they can get involved?

5. Tell me about your experiences with parental involvement.

6. How do you guide parents so they can help their children learn? Please explain. Do you believe it supports student learning?

7. Describe the strategies you use when you communicate with parents.

8. What major challenges or barriers did you face when communicating with parents? How did you overcome them?

9. What factors do you believe motivate you to encourage parental involvement?

10. Were there resources or support to assist you with parental involvement? Please explain. If so, can you give me some examples? Please describe resources or support available to you to assist with parental involvement.

11. Do you believe parental involvement increases student achievement? Please explain.

12. Describe your idea of an effective parent-teacher relationship. How does this relationship contribute to student achievement?

13. Is there anything you can share that would provide additional information regarding teachers and parental involvement?

14. What advice would you give teachers who are similarly faced with the task of

promoting parental involvement?

Appendix C: Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Potential Research Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study of the role of teachers in parental involvement. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently employed as a teacher with a minimum of five years experience and have an awareness of parental involvement. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand the study before deciding whether to participate.

This study is being conducted by Crecenra Boyd, a doctoral candidate at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of the study is to describe teacher experience with parental involvement. The study will focus primarily on your personal experiences; the challenges you faced and the strategies you used to work with students and their families.

Specific Participant Criteria:
- Currently employed as a teacher in a public school
- Have at least five years of experience as a teacher
- Have an awareness of parental involvement

Procedures:
If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in one audio recorded interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be an interactive discussion about your experience as a teacher. The interview will be conducted at a time and location convenient for you. Participants will be debriefed following the completion of the interview to inform them of the objectives of the study and to answer any questions they may have regarding the research. I will utilize member checking whereby participants will be provided with a copy of the transcript of their interview. The participant will be asked to read the transcript and verify that it presents an accurate depiction of what they intended to express. Participants will be given my contact information to address any future questions or concerns they may have concerning the study.

Here are some sample questions:
_____ How would you describe parental involvement?
_____ Tell me about your experiences with parental involvement.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time during the study and may refuse to answer any question at any time. Declining or discontinuing

participation will not negatively impact the participant's relationship with the researcher or (if applicable) the participant's access to services.

Potential Conflict(s) of Interest
As a school counselor in the district where this study is being conducted, I may be known tangentially to prospective participants. However, my role as researcher in this study is separate from my school counselor role and I do not have a supervisory relationship with any of the participants who may be included in the study. As such, no power differentials are expected to influence the conduct of this study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
There are no known physical or emotional risks associated with participation. The potential benefit would be that your answers will help create awareness of the impact teachers have on parental involvement and student achievement.

Compensation:
There is no monetary or gift compensation for participation.

Confidentiality:
All information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be used for any purpose outside of this research project. I will not include your name or any other information that could identify you in any reports of the study. All data will be kept securely for a period of 5 years from the completion of the study and will be destroyed at the end of that time.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. A copy of this form will be provided to you. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via telephone at XXXXXXXXX or email at XXXXXXXXX. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call XXXXXXXXX. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is XXXXXXXXX. Walden University's approval number for this study is **04-29-15-0164110** and it expires on **April 29, 2016.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and understand the terms well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant　　　　　　　　_____

Date of consent   _____

Participant's Signature   _____

Researcher's Signature   _____

Appendix D: Letter of Confidentiality

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "The Role of Teacher Perceptions in Parental Involvement" I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to

comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix E: Theme Endorsements

Table E1

Theme Endorsement – Themes 1, 2, and 3

	History of high parental involvement	Fostering open and positive communication with parents	Teacher-parent relationship-building
Participant 1	X	X	X
Participant 2	X		
Participant 3	X	X	X
Participant 4	X		
Participant 5	X	X	X
Participant 6	X	X	X
Participant 7		X	X
Participant 8	X	X	X
Participant 9	X	X	
Participant 10	X	X	X

Note. X indicates that the participant expressed explicit or implicit endorsement of the identified theme.

Table E2

Theme Endorsement – Subthemes of 1

	Importance of parental guidance	Parents can reinforce learning	Working as a team with parents and other teachers
Participant 1			X
Participant 2			
Participant 3	X	X	X
Participant 4			
Participant 5	X		
Participant 6	X	X	X
Participant 7	X		X
Participant 8	X	X	X
Participant 9	X	X	
Participant 10	X		

Note. X indicates that the participant expressed explicit or implicit endorsement of the identified theme.

Table E3

Theme Endorsement – Subtheme of 2

	Ongoing challenges related to communication barriers
Participant 1	X
Participant 2	
Participant 3	X
Participant 4	
Participant 5	X
Participant 6	X
Participant 7	X
Participant 8	X
Participant 9	X
Participant 10	X

Note. X indicates that the participant expressed explicit or implicit endorsement of the identified theme.

Table E4

Theme Endorsement – Subthemes of 3

	It takes a community	Assisting parents with getting necessary resources to support their children	Planning school-based activities
Participant 1	X	X	
Participant 2			
Participant 3		X	X
Participant 4	X	X	
Participant 5			X
Participant 6		X	X
Participant 7	X	X	X
Participant 8	X	X	X
Participant 9		X	X
Participant 10	X	X	X

Note. X indicates that the participant expressed explicit or implicit endorsement of the identified theme.