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Parent, Teacher, and Principal Perspectives of Parent Engagement in a Title 1 Elementary School

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2018

Abstract

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Valerie Anne Krage

MS, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2012

BS, The University of Wisconsin-Stout 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Parent engagement in education benefits a child academically and socially, regardless of a family's socioeconomic status. It is critical for school personnel to use effective outreach approaches to engage and support families in their children's learning. The purpose of this qualitative bounded single case study was to explore parent and school personnel perspectives of school engagement in preschool and kindergarten programs in an urban, midwestern Title 1 PK-5 school. The research questions focused on participants' definitions of parent engagement, parental motivation to participate in a child's learning, and the factors that may deter parental engagement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent involvement and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory framed this study. A purposeful sample of 14 parents and 5 teachers of 4-year-old kindergarten and kindergarten students and 1 principal, volunteered and participated in semi-structured interviews. Interview data were analyzed thematically using open and thematic coding strategies. Participants defined engagement as meeting a child's basic needs, supporting learning at home and school, participating in school-based activities, and home-school communication. Findings indicated that parent capacity to support learning, school climate, and the value of education are key to a child's academic and social future, volunteerism, and home-school communication. Recommendations for action include administrative formation of a parent engagement committee to create a comprehensive parent involvement policy to ensure that parent engagement efforts address the needs and interests of families. These endeavors may contribute to positive social change when administrators provide strategies and shared leadership among school personnel and parents to increase parent engagement in student learning.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Dan, who never wavered in his support or doubted that I could achieve this dream. I couldn't imagine having anyone else by my side during this process. Your blind faith in my ability to do this was an inspiration and kept me going through the ups and downs. A special shout-out to my wonderful children, Andy, Bridget, and Lauren, who supported me every step of the way and never questioned why their old mom was undertaking this crazy journey!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Parent engagement in learning benefits a child academically and socially (Wilder, 2014), and serves as a valuable resource for schools (Sharkey, Clavijo Olarte, & Ramírez, 2016). Parent/family engagement can be defined as a family-centered and strengths-based approach in which schools and families partner in making decisions, setting goals, and attaining academic outcomes (National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement [NAFSCE], 2016). According to the NAFSCE, parent engagement is collaborative, involves cultural competency, focuses on improving children's learning, and takes place wherever children learn. I explored the concept of parent engagement in children's education at home and school from the perspectives of both parents of 4-year old kindergarten (4k) and kindergarten students and 4k and kindergarten school personnel in a Title I school to provide valuable insights into how parents and school personnel in this setting perceive the school-family connection. It is hoped that the results of this study will enable school personnel to better understand and meet the needs of the families in their school. This study also addressed a gap in the literature regarding parent and faculty engagement by examining both parent and school personnel perspectives on this topic. Chapter 1 will provide an overview of the background of parent involvement in education, the problem upon which this study is based, the purpose, the questions and conceptual frameworks that ground the research, the nature of the study, and the scope and delimitations of this study on parent engagement in a low-income school.

Background

Formal parent involvement in education can be traced back to the formation in 1897 of the National Congress of Mothers, the predecessor to the Parent Teacher Association (Watson, Sanders- Lawson, & McNeal, 2012). Since that time, parent involvement has evolved to include the enactment of Project Head Start in 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Handicap Act of 1974, all of which mandated parent involvement in school activities. In 2001, No Child Left Behind, reauthorized in 2015 as the Every Student Succeeds Act, addressed the role that families should play in children's education. The new policy tied federal funding to school initiatives to involve families in the educational process (Watson et al., 2012). The impetus for each of these policies was a foundational understanding of the value of the family in supporting children's education.

Research on the topic of family engagement points to the positive influence it has on student learning, but much of this research is founded on a traditional and middle-class concept of what involvement should entail, with little regard to culture or family context, and focuses largely on the relationship between home and school (Greene, 2013; Ule, Živoder & du Bois-Reymond, 2015). By viewing involvement through this lens, school personnel may conclude that parents who do not attend school events do not care about their children's learning, without understanding the cultural factors at play (Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014). Recent immigrants to the United States, for example, typically value education to a better life for their children but may not feel equipped to demonstrate their support by participating in school activities, instead encouraging home-

based learning such as homework (Tang, 2015). Many African-American families, conversely, support their children's learning by teaching them to be independent and holding high expectations for their academic achievement (Greene, 2013).

In addition to differing expectations regarding school involvement, barriers may exist that prevent families from participating in school activities. Yoder and Lopez (2013) determined that families with low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds face many barriers to participating in school events, including financial constraints, lack of transportation, little access to technology, and language or cultural obstacles. Williams and Sanchez (2013) also identified these as well as other barriers, including time poverty and lack of awareness, as factors that prevent families from participating in school-based opportunities for involvement. Hampden-Thomas and Galindo (2017) found a positive correlation between school-family interactions, family satisfaction with the school, and subsequent family involvement. Considering the significant issues concerning families of low socioeconomic backgrounds and their relationships with schools and teachers, future research is necessary to more closely examine how these families view their relationships with their children's school personnel.

This study examined the perspectives of families and early childhood school personnel in a low-income school regarding school engagement, with the intent of more clearly understanding how families perceive school involvement. The factors that motivate families to participate in a child's learning, as well as those which prevent them from doing so, were explored as well. Because the behaviors and attitudes of school personnel also play a role in the extent of a family's involvement school faculty and

administration were interviewed to gather greater insights into their perspectives as well (Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degnan, & McRoy, 2015). This study is important to understanding the perspectives of families and personnel in a low-income school regarding involvement in children's education. For simplicity, the term parent is used to describe anyone fulfilling the caregiving role in a child's life.

Problem Statement

Family engagement in a child's learning is consistently associated with greater academic achievement (See & Gorard, 2015; Wilder, 2014) and social/emotional development, particularly among children of low SES (McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor, & McClowry, 2013; Watkins & Howard, 2015). Families from backgrounds of low SES, however, are less likely than their middle-class peers to be engaged in their child's education (Wang, Deng, & Yang, 2016). The degree of family engagement in local schools is consistent with research that documents low levels of educational involvement among families of low socioeconomic status, and efforts to engage these families have been met with sporadic success. At River Elementary School (pseudonym), a Title 1 school where 80% of students qualify for the subsidized lunch program, nearly all families participate in required parent-teacher conferences twice each year. The degree of engagement in the school beyond that, however, according to school administration, is significantly lower than 80%, and many families communicate with school personnel only in times of crisis, rather than connecting in a proactive manner (S. Michaels, personal communication, February 20, 2017). According to Ule and du Bois-Reymond (2015), schools tend to have very definite expectations for how families should be

involved, but these ideas are built around middle-class values, and thereby discount such factors as culture, language, and socioeconomic conditions. The authors therefore recommended further investigation into the complex relationships between schools and families to acquire insights into their respective viewpoints, which was the intent of this study.

Research on the relationship between family involvement in a child's education and academic achievement is abundant, but there is still much to be discovered. Jefferson (2015) recommended further qualitative study into the barriers that institutions create, albeit inadvertently, to dissuade family involvement, consequently inhibiting the home-school connection. He proposed that, rather than simply increasing the number of activities available to families, schools should strive to understand the perspectives of families and their impact on engagement. Family perspectives of barriers may contribute to feelings of inefficacy, which in turn further discourage involvement, creating a cycle that hinders engagement (Wang et al., 2016). In their investigation into the experiences of families of low socioeconomic backgrounds in Scotland, Sime and Sheridan (2014) determined that although most families recognized the value of school involvement and desired to participate in some capacity, they often felt limited in their ability to do so. The authors therefore advocated for further conversations concerning the challenges faced by parents and caregivers in relation to school engagement. Culture and SES impact a family's pattern of involvement, meaning that a family may be very involved at home in supporting a child's school work, but not physically present in the school (Daniel, 2015). Pemberton and Miller (2015) suggested an expanded examination of the types of

involvement offered by schools, their purpose, and to whom they are directed, as traditional methods of family involvement may not be conducive to engaging families of low SES or building the level of trust that is foundational to engagement.

In initial conversations about parent engagement, the principal of River Elementary School indicated that school personnel desired to learn how they could more effectively connect with parents, as well as to discover how receptive parents and caregivers might be to increased involvement in their children's education at home or at school. Understanding the perspectives of both families and school personnel is an important step in achieving this goal. A qualitative case study was undertaken to explore the perspectives of families with children in the 4-year old kindergarten (4K) and kindergarten programs, as well as the perspectives of school personnel about family engagement in children's education. Included in the study was an investigation of the understandings of both families and school personnel of the role of the family and school attempts to engage families, to provide valuable insights into how to most effectively involve and support families in a manner that strengthens their capacity for home-school engagement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of both families and school personnel from a low-income school pertaining to family engagement in a student's education at the 4k and kindergarten levels. Interviews with parents of 4k and kindergarten students and school personnel revealed their perspectives regarding school involvement and the barriers that prevent them from engaging in the educational

process and may assist school personnel in determining what they can do to encourage authentic family engagement. According to Avvisati, Gurgand, Guyon, and Maurin (2014), schools have a considerable influence on families' involvement in children's education. If school personnel are to engage families, it is important to acquire insights into family and school attitudes and behaviors in relation to this, including barriers to participation and beliefs about the family's role in a child's education, and perspectives regarding school climate and efforts to welcome families as partners. Qualitative interviews with caregivers and school personnel provided rich data to answer the research questions related to these topics.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do parents, teachers, and administrators involved with children in a low-income preschool and kindergarten define family engagement in a child's education?

*RQ2:*What are parents and caregivers' perspectives of their roles in supporting their preschool or kindergarten children's education at home and school?

RQ3: What are preschool and kindergarten school personnel's perspectives of the roles of parents and caregivers in supporting children's education at home and school?

RQ4: What are preschool and kindergarten administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers' perspectives of barriers to family engagement in children's education at home and school?

RQ5: How do preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators in a Title I school engage families at home and school?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks for this study were Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory of development as well as Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework for parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner's description of the complex layers of environmental factors that influence a child's development served as an excellent background for understanding the role that family, school, and the larger community play in a child's growth and learning, as it provides the context within which a family operates, influencing their behaviors and attitudes. Recognizing the context in which families from low socioeconomic backgrounds operate was critical to the goal of acquiring a deep and authentic understanding of the parents' experiences and perspectives. The research questions were informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory by reflecting the influence of the environment within which a family operates, its impact on attitudes and behaviors, and the function of the school in supporting the role of the family. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) described three major constructs that affect a parent's degree of participation in a child's education.: First, a parent's role construction refers to his or her beliefs about the role a parent or caregiver should play in supporting a child's education. A parent's sense of efficacy, secondly, influences how capable he or she feels in supporting a child's learning, and general invitations describe parent perspectives regarding the desire of the school to have families involved. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model informed the research by providing a framework for identifying motivations behind family engagement, guiding development of interview questions, and offering a lens through which data were analyzed. Gathering insights to better understand

how to engage families in the school environment, consequently affecting children's overall school experience, was an important impetus for this study. These conceptual frameworks and their role in framing this study will be further addressed in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study employed individual interviews to explore the perspectives of both families and school personnel in regard to school engagement in a Title 1 school. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with eight parents, five teachers and the school principal using an interview protocol created to answer the research questions. A case study focuses on "an individual, small group, or individuals within a group and documents that group's or individual's experience in a specific setting" (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010, p. 35). The social constructivist nature described by Lodico et al., (2010) as common in case study research, aligned with the goal of understanding the perspectives or realities of families and personnel in a Title I school. Social constructivism contends that individuals construct their own reality based on personal experiences, which may be interpreted to have multiple meanings. Criterion sampling was used, and a thematic analysis of the data was undertaken to identify prominent themes. Two coding strategies, open and thematic coding, were used to analyze data. Open coding was used to identify initial ideas and temporary themes related to the research questions. Coding began with a preliminary exploratory analysis of potential themes, progressing to a deeper analysis to identify themes and patterns that aligned with the research questions. Data were analyzed, and text segments were identified and assigned a code. Codes were grouped and eventually synthesized into the following

primary themes using thematic coding: Supporting learning, parent capacity, school climate, education as a key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. This case study enabled me to collect rich data to answer the research questions, which will be described in Chapter 2.

Definitions

Deficit Perspective: A view that individuals from some cultural groups lack the ability to achieve just because of their cultural background (Silverman, 2011).

Family Engagement: A collaborative, culturally competent process focused on improving children's learning. Family engagement takes place wherever children learn (NAFSCE, 2017).

Socioeconomic Status (SES): The social standing or class of an individual or group as determined by a combination of education, occupation, and income (APA, 2017).

Assumptions

For this study, it was assumed that the parents and school personnel who were interviewed were honest and forthright in answering the interview questions. It was also assumed that school personnel would accurately depict their attitudes and perspectives regarding the families in the school, as well as previous and current efforts to engage them in the school environment. For this study of parent and faculty perspectives of school engagement, it was imperative that their interview responses were assumed to be honest and accurate because their answers served as the data for analysis. This was also critical to the integrity of my study. Ely et al. (1991) defined academic integrity as the

researcher's "concerns for the quality, for the value, for the honesty of their work" (p. 219). Since I was to explore and understand the thoughts and experiences of parents and school personnel, it was imperative that the data thoroughly and precisely represented their perspectives to ensure that findings accurately answered the research questions.

Scope and Delimitations

The participants of this study were families and teachers of students in 4K and kindergarten as well as the principal of River Elementary. This study addressed their perspectives regarding family engagement in that setting only. Excluded from the study were any parents who were also teachers or spouses of teachers of the school, since they would fit the role of both parent and school personnel, and the purpose of this study was to explore each perspective individually. This site was selected for a case study because it has the highest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch in the school district, and the context of this setting provided a unique forum for exploring parent engagement. The 4K and kindergarten programs were selected because parent involvement often declines as children move up through the grades (Murray, McFarland-Piazza, & Harrison, 2015) and I wanted to explore the experiences of parents in their earliest years of involvement. Detailed descriptions of participant experiences and perspectives will allow those outside of the study to assess whether the findings are relevant to their setting.

Limitations

This qualitative case study was limited to eight families of children in 4K and kindergarten at River Elementary, as well as five early childhood teachers and one school

principal. Because the focus of this study was on a relatively small number of parents and school personnel at a Title I school, the results were representative of these individuals only. While the results of this study are not transferrable to other early childhood programs or schools, they may offer valuable insights into personnel from other low-income schools. The data were solely derived from parent, faculty, and administrator interviews, and relied on the authenticity of their interview responses, as well as the efficacy of the interview questions in answering the research questions. Because this researcher was the sole collector of data, it was imperative that I was consistent in my interview approaches with participants. Interview protocols for both parents and school personnel (see Appendices E and F) helped to ensure that interviews were consistent and data recorded accurately. There was also the risk that researcher bias could influence data coding and interpretation, and it was therefore imperative that I objectively reviewed the data throughout the entire analysis process as patterns and themes emerged. Because I am well-versed in the research about the barriers and motivations for parent involvement, I needed to be careful not to look for responses that supported research while overlooking others that offered new information.

Significance

This study addressed a gap in research and practice regarding how to effectively support an elementary school which has a high number of families from low SES backgrounds. School endeavors to engage families are associated with greater involvement and higher academic achievement in students (González & Jackson, 2013), but it is important to understand exactly what measures effectively encourage family

participation. If families are to be involved, parents must have a clear understanding of their roles as well as the resources with which to do so (Shiffman, 2013). At River Elementary School parent participation in school activities remains relatively low. It is hoped that the results of this study provide school personnel at River Elementary with additional strategies for effectively engaging parents with their children's learning at home and at school. This insight into the perspectives of staff and parents furthermore may provide a foundation for improved communication based on greater understanding among faculty for how to best facilitate enhanced parent-school partnerships. The recommended creation of a parent engagement committee comprised of parents and faculty, furthermore, would potentially enhance parent engagement at River Elementary. When families are engaged in their children's learning, students, teachers, and the school as a whole benefit (Sharkey et al., 2016). Understanding the barriers and incentives for participation in a Title I school contributes new information to the field on the topic of family participation in the school environment, with the local research site providing an opportunity to advance the issue at the local level.

Summary

The first chapter of this study includes a definition of the problem of limited family engagement in a Title 1 school, as well as a brief description of the history of parent involvement in U.S. schools. Also described are the purpose and nature of the study, conceptual framework, research questions, assumptions, and scope of the study. The purpose of this study was to acquire insights and understandings from the perspectives of families, teachers and the school principal regarding school engagement.

This was achieved through qualitative interviews with both family members and school faculty and administration to acquire their perspectives of the role of family in children's education. Chapter 2 will describe the literature review and themes related to parent engagement that emerged from this process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Family engagement in education provides many benefits to a child academically as well as socially and emotionally, but families of low SES are less likely to be engaged in their children's education (McCormick et al., 2013, Watkins & Howard, 2015). Faculty at the school indicated that the families at River Elementary were not engaged beyond mandatory parent teacher conferences, and many reached out only in times of crisis. School personnel desired to better understand the perspectives of parents regarding school involvement, in order to better meet their needs and increase involvement. This qualitative case study explored the perspectives of families and school personnel in a low-income school regarding family engagement in children's education, with the intent of contributing new information to the field on the topic of family engagement in education.

The value of family engagement is emphasized by the Family Engagement in Education Act (2015), which asserted that "positive benefits for children, youth, families, and schools are maximized through effective family engagement that . . . is continuous across a child's life from birth through young adulthood" (Section 3). Family engagement in student learning in and out of school contributes to better school attendance (McConnell & Kubina, 2014), stronger academic performance and increased learning outcomes (Wilder, 2014), and increased pro-social behaviors (McCormick et al., 2013). On a more global level, McNeal (2015) proposed that strong connections between home and school strengthen a child's sense of community in both areas. From the school

perspective, family involvement improves motivation and morale, and contributes to a positive school climate as well (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

A common definition of parent and family involvement describes family-school interactions that include volunteering, communication, and attendance at school events (Gestwicki, 2016). Baird (2015) characterized parent involvement as the observable practices that occur within a school. When measured in this way, it appears that families of low-SES backgrounds are less likely than their middle-class counterparts to be involved in their children's school (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). It is possible, however, that families are choosing not to participate in school-based activities for a number of reasons, including personal and institutional barriers, or cultural beliefs about the role they play in their children's education (Andrews, 2013). Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) defined parent involvement as parents' investment in their children's education, in and outside of school, including home-based activities.

The literature offers many perspectives on the degree to which families of diverse backgrounds are involved in their children's learning, as well as common barriers faced by many. This chapter will describe what the research has revealed with regard to parent and family involvement in children's learning, as well as the relationship between parent involvement and school performance. Patterns of parent and family involvement will be explored, as well as educator and parent perspectives regarding school involvement. Finally, best practices for engaging families, as described in the literature, will be addressed. From this point on, the term parent will be used to represent any adult

caretaker of a child or children, including biological or foster parents, grandparents, or other adults responsible for the well-being of a minor child.

Literature Search Strategy

A search of the literature was conducted regarding parent involvement in schools and related topics to examine peer-reviewed articles and books written in the previous 5 years, as well as seminal resources relating to the topic of parent involvement. The Walden and Viterbo University online libraries were used to access the following databases: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), SAGE Journals, ProQuest, SocIndex, Google Scholar, and Education Research Complete. Keywords searched in each of these databases included variations of *parent*, *involvement*, *engagement*, *home-school relationships*, *school involvement and low-income families*, *barriers to school involvement, school personnel and family involvement, family-school partnerships,* and *school-home communication*. Approximately 240 scholarly articles were reviewed, and 109 were determined to be germane to this study.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

Bioecological Systems Theory

This research was framed by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) framework of parent involvement. Bronfenbrenner (1979) posited that child growth and development must be considered within the context of the child's environment, which consists of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the environment within which a child and his family functions is an ecosystem of

continuous interactions and influences that significantly impact a child. Most relevant to this study were the micro- and mesosystems that surround a child and family. The microsystem is a child's direct environment, which includes family, friends, teachers, and school, while the mesosystem includes the child's neighborhood and community. An individual's exosystem, which includes school conditions, parents' employment, and community resources (Woolfolk, 2013), is also relevant to a study on perspectives of parent engagement. These environmental factors influence not only the child and his direct environment, but the degree to which parents are engaged with the school as well.

Hampden-Thomas and Galindo (2017) used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory as a framework for studying the relationship between school-family relationships, parents' school satisfaction, and student achievement. Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (Department for Education, 2011) which involved interviews of 15,770 secondary students over 7 years, the authors determined that school satisfaction prompted the degree to which parents of the students in the study were engaged, which, in turn positively impacted student achievement. School satisfaction was defined as satisfaction with a child's academic progress, classes offered at the school, the teacher's interest in the child, school approaches to discipline, and the student's relationships with peers. Particularly relevant to this study, the authors pointed to the role of SES in student engagement, and the lower degree of school involvement often exhibited by parents of lower SES. Hampden-Thomas and Galindo reiterated the importance of the school in facilitating relationships with families of lower SES who may face multiple barriers to participation, arguing that positive relationships with families

contribute to increased parent satisfaction with the school and, in turn, increased academic achievement among students.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of Family Involvement

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model for family involvement provided an additional foundation for understanding the concept of family engagement in education. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) detailed a five-stage continuum of influences on a family's involvement in education, beginning with fundamental factors including parent role construction, parent sense of efficacy, and general invitations and involvement opportunities. Role construction refers to a parent's belief about the role he or she is supposed to play in a child's education. A parent's sense of efficacy refers to the parent's belief in his or her capacity to support a child's learning. Invitations and involvement opportunities refer to the parent's perception of the degree to which the school wants them involved. Higher on the continuum are logistical factors that affect parent and family involvement in a child's education at home and at school, the influence of involvement on the child, similar expectations for involvement among parents and school personnel, and child academic outcomes. The authors identified three major factors that affect parent involvement: motivational beliefs, perspectives of invitations and opportunities for involvement, and family contextual factors, and argued that efforts to involve families through traditional means, such as school-based activities and volunteer opportunities, will be unsuccessful unless motivational beliefs are addressed.

At the most fundamental level, motivational beliefs include a parent's role construction and feelings of self-efficacy. Role construction involves an individual's

beliefs and attitudes about child-rearing, formed largely from societal values and the significant groups to which a family belongs, and will influence his or her decisions as far as parenting, and, subsequently, school involvement. Positive role construction, according to the authors, is a critical factor in school involvement. Research points to many factors that may influence role construction, including SES and culture, and there is evidence to suggest that school efforts may have a positive effect on an individual's role construction (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). In environments where family and school beliefs and expectations for involvement align, school involvement programs are likely to be stronger, but when expectations are different, conflict may occur (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

A sense of efficacy is another element of an individual's motivational beliefs and refers to one's confidence in his or her abilities, in this case to support a child's learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Parents with high feelings of self-efficacy regard themselves as capable of supporting and impacting a child's academic achievement and are therefore more likely to become involved in school activities. Caregivers with low feelings of self-efficacy, on the other hand, may believe themselves to be inadequate and unable to contribute anything through school involvement. Some research suggests a link between low-income, low-education, and low self-efficacy, a point to consider over the course of this study (Tekin, 2011).

General invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement on the part of the school and the child is the final component of the initial stage of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of family involvement (1995, 1997). The authors suggested that various

factors related to this, including child academic performance, developmental level, temperament, and learning style, may influence the degree to which a parent opts to become involved in learning activities. Invitations from the teacher and school, as well as factors related to the climate of the school, also appear to influence the degree to which families become involved. This construct, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler argued, was less significant than role construction and self-efficacy in influencing family involvement

Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2007) continued their research on the validity of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model with an investigation of the ability to predict patterns of involvement based on the parenting constructs identified in earlier research, including motivational beliefs, role construction and self-efficacy, invitations from the teacher and school, and perceived capacity for involvement. The authors determined that child-invitations for engagement, adult feelings of efficacy, and perspectives of time and energy for involvement all influence a family's home-based involvement. The same factors, in addition to teacher invitations for involvement, influenced school-based involvement, invitations from teachers having the largest influence, highlighting the importance of teacher-home relationships in engaging families. The authors found that these factors were strong predictors of involvement regardless of SES. In a similar study, Walker, Ice, and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) found specific invitations from teachers to be the strongest predictors of family engagement in school, and invitations from students to have the strongest influence on family involvement at home, reiterating the importance of school-based initiatives for family engagement. Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's research (1995, 1997) offers valuable

insight and a strong foundation for my study of family and school perspectives of parent and family engagement.

Parent Involvement History

Research points to the positive effects of parent involvement on student achievement, and, as a result, many state and federal initiatives over the past 50 years have sought to compel schools to encourage parent involvement. Most recently, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, recently reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act, includes a requirement for meaningful parent participation in school activities (NCLB, 20 U.S.C. 6301, Sec. 1001 [12]), stipulating that schools cannot receive Title 1 funding reserved for disadvantaged students without a written agreement to facilitate the involvement of parents. While schools across the nation strive to implement various efforts to involve parents, the focus is typically narrow and tends to emphasize the impact of the home on academic achievement, with school performance a primary incentive for involving families. Jefferson (2015) stated that educators must shift their thinking away from a perception of families as compliant and cooperative partners whose purpose is to help the school attain its goals, primarily related to student achievement, to a more critical understanding of the interactions between families and schools. The National Association for The Education of Young Children (NAEYC), in their position statement on quality Early Childhood Program Standards, emphasized the importance of collaborative family-teacher relationships that are sensitive to all cultures and backgrounds (National Association for the Education [NAEYC], 2005), supporting the critical importance of authentic, reciprocal school-home relationships.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) broadly characterized parent involvement as home-based and school based. Home based activities are those that focus on learning behavior outside of school, such as helping a child study for a test or monitoring homework. School based activities include parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, and attending school functions. Also important is the impetus for the involvement, specifically whether it is to enhance a student's educational experience, or a reaction to a problem situation (Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2013). More recently, parent involvement has evolved to encompass the idea of "engagement." Goodall and Montgomery (2014) described parent engagement as an on-going process, to be approached each year as a new cohort of parents enters the school. They described engagement as going beyond participation in an activity, to having a sense of ownership and a greater sense of commitment than simple involvement offers

Models of Parent Involvement

Multi-dimensional Framework

Various models of parent involvement have emerged in recent decades, many focusing on the role of parents in influencing a child's academic achievement, through home-based and school-based activities. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) were on the forefront of efforts to investigate a multi-dimensional conceptualization of parent involvement, defining it as a dedication of resources towards a child's welfare in any number of domains, including educational or social domains. The authors created a framework that delineated three areas of parent involvement related to education, those being behaviors connected to school, the child's perception of parent support and

resources, and opportunities to access learning resources outside of school. The authors also determined that the student plays a significant role in constructing his or her school experiences.

Epstein's Framework

Epstein's (2010) framework for parent involvement focuses on the combination of family, school, and community as influencers in a parent's degree of participation in a child's learning. Epstein described six types of parent involvement: Parenting, which involves supporting families in their parenting skills; communication between school and home, which encompasses parent-teacher conferences as well as face to face and electronic methods of communication; volunteering or parent participation in supporting school activities; learning at home; family participation in decision making in regards to school practices and policies; and collaborating with the community for the benefit of the school and the student (Gestwicki, 2016). Epstein's framework faces some criticism for ignoring the diverse perspectives of non-white middle-class families (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012; Emerson et al., 2012).

Six-Point Model of Parent Engagement

Based on a review of the research, Goodall (2013) created a six-point model for parental engagement in a child's education. In this model, an authoritative parenting style is the overarching domain, with authoritative parents striking a balance between limits and age-appropriate independence. Other components of the model include offering learning activities at home, engagement early on that continues and evolves as a child moves through school, high aspirations for children, and taking an active interest in a

child's learning. Goodall argued that schools must support parents in their efforts to engage children and families in these ways.

Parent Involvement Continuum

Goodall and Montgomery (2014) used Emirbayer and Miches's (1998) concept of agency as a framework for creating a continuum from parent involvement in the school to parent engagement in child's learning. In this case, agency describes a parent's ability to support a child's learning, placing the focus squarely on the parent and his or her role as co-educator, which is similar to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) concept of motivating factors for parent involvement, those being role-construction and self-efficacy. While Goodall pointed to the importance and benefit of home-based parent engagement in a child's learning, evidence suggests that many parents lack confidence in their ability to serve in this role and that teachers continue to perceive parent involvement as largely focused on efforts to support the school (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Theory of Planned Behavior

Alghanzo (2015) created a framework based on Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior, encompassing the cultural context of parent involvement, particularly in regard to families of low-SES backgrounds. According to the theory of planned behavior, intentional behaviors, in this case parent involvement in school, are determined by a combination of attitudes and behaviors, subjective norms, and perceived control. Subjective norms, such as parents' culture and peer role models, are particularly impactful in regard to parent involvement, according to Alghanzo, and must be considered when striving to understand parent perspectives on school involvement. The

author went on to recommend parent involvement as a moderator against the academic consequences of low-SES. Perry and Langley (2013), also used the theory of planned behavior as a basis to investigate and explain paternal involvement in school, specifically the intentions and follow-through demonstrated by fathers of low SES. This research is relevant to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) model, because, like Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, Perry and Langley cited a low degree of self-efficacy as one of the factors correlating to low paternal involvement. Their approach was unique because, according to the authors, previous theories of paternal involvement were more descriptive of behaviors, rather than explanatory in nature. In the case of this study, the authors used data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study (2008) to investigate the intentional nature of father involvement as well as the fathers' ability to act on their intentions. The authors determined that several factors supported a father's ability to act on his intentions, including a positive relationship with the mother, his belief that the mother wanted him involved, and the father's positive attitude towards involvement

Parent Voice and Parent Presence

Describing parent engagement to encompass parent voice and parent presence, McKenna and Millen (2013), used a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to create what they described as a more comprehensive model of parent engagement, stemming from a parent's authentic wish to be involved in a child's education. The authors suggested that many models of involvement are based on educator assumptions that parents must be trained in how to participate in a child's education, supporting Jeynes' (2011) assertion that parent perspectives have value and must be more carefully

considered. McKenna and Millen argued that parent voice and parent presence combine to create an inclusive model of parent engagement. Parent voice encompasses facets of a child's life about which a parent shares information, those being child, self, family, teacher, and school. Parent presence includes the domains of both home and school, and includes providing for basic needs, modeling appropriate behavior, and teaching about culture. The parents in the study expressed an interest in greater involvement in their children's education but did not always perceive appropriate avenues for doing so. Like my study, this investigation focused on a small group of parents over a relatively short period of time, however the descriptions gathered in creating this model were rich and insightful.

Dual Capacity Building Framework

The United States Department of Education commissioned the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) for the creation of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2014), a model currently used by several school districts (U.S Department of Education, 2017). This framework describes the challenges and conditions necessary for effective family engagement, as well as potential goals and outcomes of school-family partnerships. The authors of the framework referenced a 2012 Met Life Survey (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2012) in which teachers and school administrators described efforts to engage families as their most challenging task, despite an authentic desire to do so. The authors described the absence of social and cultural capital faced by many families, as well, citing the lack of capacity on the part of both school and family, coupled with a lack of opportunity, as a

significant contributor to limited family engagement. The Dual-Capacity framework, subsequently, outlines not only the challenges, but the opportunity conditions, policy and program goals, and potential family and school outcomes that may result when engagement efforts are carefully considered and purposeful. Opportunity conditions include process and organizational conditions and must be linked to learning, relationship-building, empowering for families, collaborative, and interactive. Organizational conditions must be considered, as well, and must be systemic and integrated across the organization, and sustainable. Using the Dual-Capacity framework as a guide, schools can endeavor to empower the four "Cs" for families, those being capabilities, connections, cognition, and confidence (Mapp & Kuttner, 2014). This approach is consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) framework which emphasized family empowerment and self-efficacy.

Torres and Murphy Contemporary Framework

Torres and Murphy (2016) asserted that the traditional models of parent involvement are founded on outdated ideologies and educational principles that largely focused on institutional bureaucracy, reliance on experts, and school-directed efforts to involve parents. These models, the authors argued, are not adequate for meeting the needs of 21st-Century schools and their students. Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, and Hernandez (2013) argued that parent involvement models such as Epstein's (2010) framework are not only school-centric, with an emphasis on the school's agenda, but are founded on white, middle-class values. Torres and Murphy (2016) created what they proposed to be a more relevant model of community engagement for contemporary parents. This

framework encompasses five elements that the authors argued are foundational to engaging families, as opposed to traditional school-directed efforts that focus on parent involvement in school activities. The components outlined by Torres and Murphy reflect a reciprocal home-school relationship and include care and respect, trust, shared vision, authentic membership, and collective work.

The Relationship Between Family Engagement and School Success

Research indicates that students benefit in many ways when their families are involved in their education. In their review of the literature, McConnell and Kubina (2014) determined that school efforts to involve parents in enforcing school attendance resulted in more consistent attendance and improved punctuality. Wilder (2014), in a meta-analysis of literature addressing the effect of parent involvement on school performance, determined that parent expectations had the greatest influence on a child's academic habits and school work, regardless of grade level or cultural background. McCormick, Capella, O'Connor and McClowry, (2013) used an ecological approach to study the impact of parent involvement on student behavior and determined that school-based volunteer activities correlated with lower levels of student behavior problems, although the researchers also discovered a positive relationship between home-school communication and increased behavioral problems among the kindergarten students in the study.

The type of involvement is significant, as well. In their meta-analysis of 37 studies across grade levels, Castro et al, (2015) determined that, while supervision of homework and attendance at school activities are commonly associated with student

achievement, parental expectations, parent-child communication regarding school activities, and reading to children are the parenting behaviors that have the greatest influence on academic performance. Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, and Lipmann (2013), using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as a framework to investigate the impact of parent involvement on literacy skills for children in 21 countries, determined that parent supervision of homework in response to poor school performance was negatively correlated with school achievement. The authors determined that social and cultural communication between parents and children has the greatest positive effect on student literacy skills.

There is considerable research on the relationship of parent involvement to academic performance among children of low-SES backgrounds, who often enter kindergarten significantly behind their peers both academically and socially (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Research suggests that parents can serve as moderators against the effects of poverty on cognitive development (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Ansari and Gershoff (2016) investigated the strategies employed by Head Start that contributed to parent involvement and the effect of that involvement on child learning. Using longitudinal data from the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES 2006; see http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/ project/head-start-family-and-child-experiencessurvey-faces), the researchers linked school involvement to an increase in positive parenting behaviors, including the support of learning at home and a consequent increase in children's cognitive skills. Training staff on concepts of parent involvement was strongly linked to greater parent participation.

In a review of the literature on factors that influence school achievement among children of low-SES backgrounds, Watkins and Howard (2015) found some correlation between parenting and school achievement, particularly related to home-based involvement. Of the 30 studies reviewed, 16 found that parent-child communication, including high expectations, homework assistance, and reading to children, was positively correlated with academic performance. School-based parent involvement, however, was not found to affect academic achievement significantly.

Gonzalez and Jackson (2013) built on Epstein's (2010) framework to investigate whether school efforts to engage families of low SES backgrounds affected student achievement. Using data from the U.S. Department of Education Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (U.S. Department of Education, 2000), the authors analyzed reading scores for 9,564 kindergarten students and mathematics and for 11,608 kindergarten students from schools for which they had data on engagement methods based on Epstein's categories of promoting parenting, volunteering, communicating, and decision making. SES was averaged for each school in the study as well. Schools of lower SES were found to be more proactive in engaging families in decision making and in facilitating more frequent parenting activities. Communication efforts were associated with slightly higher reading achievement and volunteer opportunities were associated with slightly higher achievement in mathematics, although increased parenting services were associated with a decrease in mathematics achievement.

Wang, Deng, and Yang (2016) investigated school involvement in China among families of low-SES backgrounds, seeking to understand the relationship between income and school involvement. Using bioecological theory as a framework, the authors surveyed parents from 53 schools in an urban area in China to understand the impact of financial constraints on parent participation in a child's school, and to collect parent perspectives of barriers to involvement. It is significant that, in general, parents in China are more active in their child's education than are parents in the United States, particularly in regard to home-based involvement (Pomerantz, Ng, Cheung, & Qu, 2014). The authors determined that the families in the study, in general, had low expectations for their child's academic attainment and described barriers to school involvement that included time constraints, communication issues, and lack of knowledge. More highly-educated mothers perceived low income as a barrier to involvement to a greater degree than did those with less education.

Research on the relationship between family involvement and school achievement among recent immigrants to the United States points to multiple benefits to students, as well. O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) studied the effect of a family involvement initiative targeted at Latino families on both family participation and student achievement. The authors assessed home and school-based involvement before and after family participation in the 10-week family involvement classes by surveying participants. Involvement was calculated using the Parent–Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1991). While parents reported considerable home-based involvement both before and after participation in the program,

school-based involvement increased as a consequence of the project. The students in the study demonstrated greater work effort, social skills, English language arts scores, and grades at the end of the project. While the authors identified a causal relationship between participation in the project and student achievement, because there was not a control group for comparison, it is unclear whether other factors may have played a role in student growth. In their study of the role that parent involvement plays in the value a child places on education, finally, Cheung and Pomerantz (2015) concluded that when a child observes his parents being involved in his education, he develops a sense of the value for education and school achievement, as well.

Castillo and Camelo Gamez (2013) participated in an action research study to explore the outcomes of a parent involvement program intended to help non-English speaking parents support their child's efforts to learn English as a second language in an elementary school in Colombia. The impetus for the study was dissatisfaction on the part of students, parents, and teachers at the lack of success students were having in mastering English. Parent inability to support their children was suspected to be one factor contributing to the lack of student success. Parents then participated in a program that provided them with specific skills and strategies for assisting their children in learning the course content. At the culmination of the 18-month program, student work was significantly improved, as was communication between teachers, parents, and students.

Patterns of Parent Engagement

Social and Cultural Capital

Sime and Sheridan (2014) used the concept of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001) as a framework for conducting a qualitative study on the perspectives of families of low-SES regarding school involvement, specifically among parents of children ages 4 to 7. Social and cultural capital theory asserts that when individuals have access to resources over time, their capacity to acquire additional resources increases, the ability to do so being significantly influenced by one's social ties and networks. Therefore, families who are involved in the school environment benefit from the information acquired as far as school policies and practices from the social networks that develop as a result of such involvement. Unlike families of low SES backgrounds, middle-class families typically possess the social capital required to be involved in school at the decision-making level (Chrispeels, 2012). Sime and Sheridan determined that, while the parents in the study had a strong desire to become involved in their children's schooling, they did not believe they had the capacity do to so, lacking the knowledge and resources necessary to overcome the barriers they faced.

Robinson and Volpé (2015) used Epstein's (2010) framework of parent involvement, as well as the theory of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2001) to investigate the parent involvement experiences of families of low socioeconomic backgrounds in impoverished rural communities using a collective case study approach. Consistent with the findings of McKenna and Millin (2013), the authors determined that, while parents were cognizant of the potential benefits of parent

involvement and desired to be involved in their children's school, they experienced various barriers to involvement, including time and work conflicts. The authors also discovered a level of hierarchy established among the parents, as those who were more physically present in the school marginalized those who were not, perceiving themselves as "better" than the other parents, connecting their commitment as parents to their involvement. Kroger (2014) also identified the practice of marginalization by active parents against inactive parents, citing parent-teacher organizations in particular as advantageous to European American and middle-class parents more so than minority parents and those from low-SES backgrounds.

Involvement Across Grade Levels

Daniels (2015) used Epstein's (2010) framework to investigate patterns of parent involvement as children move through elementary school. Using data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), Daniels measured parent involvement at home, school, and in the community across three years. In the first year, 96 % of families were involved in their child's learning in some capacity. In year three, 91 % of families were involved, with a decline in each area of involvement. While families of low SES backgrounds demonstrated similar levels of involvement in year 1, the decrease was greater than for middle-class families, suggesting a need for schools to continue to engage these families as their children progress through school.

Parent-teacher Communication

School-family communication plays an important role in parent and family engagement, and some research points to a relationship between levels of communication

and family circumstances. Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015) used the concepts of Social Capital and Cultural Capital (Bourdieu, 1986) as a framework for an analysis of longitudinal data of patterns of parent engagement from pre-k through the early school years, arguing that educators do not support families of lower educational levels in becoming involved in school activities to the degree that they do more highly educated parents. The authors determined that teachers used fewer strategies to involve parents with lower levels of education, although at the same time, these families assessed teacher communication more highly than did higher-income families. Murray et al. determined that, while involvement remained relatively stable from pre-school into the formal school setting, the types of communication employed by teachers changed, from more face-to-face and informal conversations to formal parent-teacher meetings in the school setting as children progressed up through grade levels. Teachers in the prek settings were viewed by parents as being more effective at communicating about the child's school performance and in providing suggestions for at-home learning activities. Like in the U.S., Australian schools are expected to make efforts to engage families, the parameters of which are outlined in a framework called the National Family School Partnerships Framework (DEEWR, 2008). Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, and Easton (2010) asserted that a trusting relationship between school and family can increase a family's access to social capital, ultimately influencing family engagement.

In another Australian study, Daniels (2016), used Epstein's (2010) framework to investigate parent perspectives of teacher efforts to initiate involvement. Unlike Murray et al., (2015) he found no difference in teacher outreach efforts to families of low SES

backgrounds and middle-class families but did determine that teachers made fewer attempts to engage families of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The parents in this longitudinal study also reported that teacher outreach decreased as children moved up grade levels.

Technology

Technology is a tool that many teachers and schools use to communicate with families. In her qualitative study on the use of technology for engaging with parents, Olmsted (2013) determined that both teachers and parents perceived technology as an effective tool for communicating between school and home, but there was a disconnect between the strategies preferred by each party. Teachers preferred social media platforms such as Twitter, while parents desired the instant access that text messaging offers. Websites were also described as a valuable source of information, but since teacher websites were often not up-to-date, parents utilized school websites more frequently. Robinson and Volpé (2015), in their qualitative study of parents experiencing high poverty in an Appalachian school district, determined that, while parents were motivated to be involved in school, lack of internet access was a significant barrier to online information for many parents. Pakter and Chen (2013) conducted a mixed-methods investigation into whether text messaging with a cell phone increased parent involvement with the school and subsequent student learning. The researchers discovered that there was no overall improvement in academic performance or school attendance resulting from frequent text updates and determined that for school engagement to have a

significant impact, it must be a combined effort of the entire school, rather than the efforts of one individual teacher.

Parent Perspectives of School Involvement

Research describes multiple parent perspectives in regard to involvement in a child's education. Olmstead (2013), for example, used the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995,1997) and Epstein (2010) frameworks to investigate parent perspectives of school involvement, categorizing parent involvement activities as either reactive, which includes attending meetings, family activities, and volunteering, or proactive, meaning activities intended to engage families, such as parent-teacher communication, helping children with homework, and staying abreast of student progress. Parents in this mixed-methods study appraised open house-types of events as being the most valuable reactive activities, and rated PTA and other types of parent meetings as the least valuable. There was also a difference in how parents defined parent involvement. Those who were not employed outside of the home defined involvement as including reactive types of behaviors such as volunteering in the classroom, while parents who worked outside of the home described engagement types of activities such as talking about the school day and overseeing homework. Teachers also viewed proactive activities as more helpful and valuable to a child's learning, which is consistent with Watkins and Howard's (2015) findings that school-based parent involvement does not affect student academic achievement. Teachers and parents alike viewed busy schedules as the greatest barrier to involvement. Hispanic parents also perceived an unwelcoming school atmosphere and language differences as barriers. Cunha, Rosario, Macedo, Nunes, Fuentes, Pinto, and Suarez (2015), in a

phenomenographic study of parent beliefs regarding homework, found that parents view their involvement in a child's homework as an important and beneficial component of school involvement. The 32 parents in the study believed that supporting their child's efforts to complete homework facilitated learning by encouraging autonomy, enabling the child to take control of his learning, and offering emotional reinforcement.

Beauregard, Petrakos, and Dupont (2014) used Epstein's (2010) framework to study parent involvement among 28 recent immigrants to Canada. The authors used semi-structured interviews to investigate parent understandings of their role in the school, their perspectives of their involvement, and the influences on their attitudes about school involvement. Examination of the data indicated that despite some feelings of helplessness in the face of cultural differences, parents perceived their role as one of supporting the efforts of the teacher. Parent trust in the school evolved over time because of positive experiences. Of Epstein's six domains, parents perceived home-school communication as the most critical. The authors noted an interconnection between practices across all domains. Finally, involved parents expressed many reasons for their participation, including a need to advocate for their child, a desire to understand the school system, and a desire to represent immigrant families in the school

Culture also plays a role in shaping parent beliefs and attitudes about school engagement. McWayne, Melzi, Schick, Kennedy, and Mundt (2013), used a mixed-methods approach to investigate how families from Latino backgrounds with children enrolled in Head Start conceptualize family engagement. The families described their involvement as encompassing the domains of child development and parent

responsibilities and behaviors, consistent with Epstein's (2010) framework outlining multiple layers of parent engagement. Parents expressed an explicit desire to support their child's development and to promote school readiness skills and were involved in both school- and community-based activities. The authors also identified dimensions of engagement unique to the Latino culture, this being the concept of educación, which encompasses both the academic and social/emotional learning that takes place in the home (Okagaki & Bingham, 2010), as well as the importance of the Latino culture. The authors determined that this provided a deeper, more authentic picture of the role that Latino families play in their children's learning. Vera, Israel, Coyle, Cross, Knight-Lynn, Moallem, Bartucci and Goldberger (2012), additionally, determined that, while immigrant families were very likely to be involved in home-based learning activities with their children, these activities were often not perceived as school involvement by teachers.

Stacer and Perrucci (2013) analyzed data from the Parent and Family Involvement Survey (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003) to investigate parent perspectives of school involvement across three domains: home, school, and in the larger community, as well as the influence of race and culture on this involvement. The authors asserted that parents develop a sense of agency based on culture, personal experience, and social and economic restraints, consequently affecting the likelihood that they will become involved in a child's educational experience. Stacer and Perrucci also suggested that parent attitudes towards school are influenced by socioeconomic conditions and time resources. The authors discovered that the level of involvement at school and at home increased

with parent education, and that income was positively correlated with school and community involvement for white and Latino families. White families were more involved in the school than were black or Latino parents. Increased work hours were correlated with decreased school involvement for white and Latino parents. School outreach efforts were determined to increase parent involvement across all domains for all parents, although school satisfaction was correlated with decreased home involvement. All of the family groups reported a greater degree of home involvement with girls and with children in the lower grades. Like Daniel (2015), the authors determined that parent involvement decreased as children moved up through the grades.

Calzada, Huang, Hernandez, Soriano, Acra, Dawson-McClure, Kamboukos, and Brotman (2015) used Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (1995, 1997) framework to investigate predictors of school involvement among Afro-Caribbean and Latino immigrants with children transitioning from pre-school to kindergarten in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The authors categorized family characteristics into three domains suspected to be particularly relevant to this population; socioeconomic factors, parent cultural traits, and language competence. Results indicated that teacher efforts to engage parents were associated with greater parent involvement both at home and at school, while school-level efforts did not appear to influence involvement. Both the Afro-Caribbean and Latino parents were more involved with home-based than school-based learning. Parent education was positively associated with involvement for both groups, while lower SES was linked to decreased home-based involvement for Latino families and single-parent status was associated with decreased

home-based involvement for Afro-Caribbean families. As far as culture, the authors determined that maintaining a connection to both a family's home culture and U.S. mainstream culture was associated with the greatest degree of both home- and school-based involvement in a child's education.

Okeke (2014), in a descriptive case study of 30 parents of elementary school children in the London area, learned that, while parents are interested in their children's education and desire to become involved, they do not necessarily understand how to do so. Okeke used a cultural capital framework to explain the degree to which parents are involved in schools, arguing that alignment between a family's cultural capital and what is expected by the school contributes to involvement. The authors suggested that a comprehensive parent welcoming policy, parent input in regard to the timing of family events, childcare for siblings, home visits, and improved parent-teacher organizations are all effective measures for enhancing parent involvement. This final point is inconsistent with the research of Watkins and Howard (2015) indicating that parent-teacher organizations do not increase involvement significantly, as well as Olmstead's (2013) study, in which parents found little value in school-based parent organizations.

Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) used Role Theory as a framework to investigate how parents of low-socioeconomic backgrounds construct their roles as far as school involvement, explaining that individuals use their past experiences in forming opinions regarding both their own roles and expectations for others. Social expectations are another factor, including school and student invitations for involvement, school expectations, and school climate. Three hundred forty-eight parents from two schools

answered survey questions addressing their perspectives of invitations to involvement, school climate, and their attitude towards the school. Results indicated that parent perspectives of school expectations, climate, and student invitations predicted parent ideas about their role in supporting a child's education. Existing attitudes were also found to be more influential than past experiences. The authors asserted that the results of the research indicate the critical role that schools play in promoting parent involvement in education.

Educator Paradigms of Family Involvement

Teacher and Principal Attitudes and Behaviors

The attitudes that school faculty and administration maintain about families can have a significant influence on efforts to engage them. In a qualitative study of Australian parents, Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) discovered that parents view the attitudes, behaviors, and communication strategies of school administrators as critical to developing quality relationships. The authors conducted 22 focus groups comprising 174 parents from various public and parochial elementary and secondary schools, facilitating discussion around parent involvement with schools, experiences communicating with schools, and the elements that prompted their involvement. The consensus of the groups was that school climate is created from the 'top-down,' with the school principal setting the tone for whether or not the atmosphere is welcoming to parents, as well as whether trust is created between parents and school personnel. For marginalized parents, the role of the school principal as a community builder was extremely critical.

Pemberton and Miller (2015) conducted qualitative interviews in a Title I school to understand parent and teacher perspectives of school involvement, as well as to determine the effects of a training program to empower parents to tutor their children. The authors discovered that school personnel had more concerns regarding families than the families expressed towards the school, suggesting a disconnect between attitudes regarding home-school relations. School personnel believed strongly in a causal relationship between family involvement and student commitment to learning and academic performance, inferring that if parents cared about a child's learning, they would participate in school–based activities. School staff did not perceive the barriers faced by parents as insurmountable. According to Pemberton and Miller, this was a deficit perspective that placed significant responsibility for achievement squarely on the shoulders of the parents, as teachers blamed parents for student's low achievement. This perspective infers that if parents care about their child's learning, they will involve themselves in school activities, assigning the blame for limited involvement to the values held by parents. The authors determined that because of the training program, not only did student literacy skills improve, but teacher perspectives shifted away from a deficit perspective of parents and towards a greater understanding of the value of home-based involvement. Pemberton and Miller emphasized the importance for school personnel to reconsider the traditional definition of parent involvement as a significant amount of school-based activity.

School leadership can have a tremendous effect on parent engagement. In a study in the United Kingdom that included schools with a high proportion of minority students

as well as those of low SES backgrounds, Mleczko and Kington (2013) investigated strategies for how principals might encourage greater parental involvement. Based on the idea that both formal and informal methods of parent involvement are valuable and critical to a student's success, as well as the idea that the success of a school goes beyond the principal alone, Mleczko and Kingston argued that the principles of parent involvement must be entrenched in the vision of the school, and that leadership must be shared among all school faculty. The researchers used a mixed method approach to study multiple perspectives of school engagement, including those from school faculty and administration, representatives of local government, and family members. Data were gathered from multiple sources and highlighted the importance for school leadership to clearly articulate a positive vision of family engagement.

In a survey of principals and parent organization presidents in 1233 Australian schools, Povey, et al, (2016) discovered that principals perceived work commitments and caring responsibilities, as well as the timing of events, as significant barriers to parent participation in school. Principals also identified family commitments and lack of parent efficacy as barriers, although a much smaller number of parent organization presidents perceived these factors as significant barriers to parent involvement. Principals from lower-resource schools identified transportation problems, lack of parent interest, lack of trust, and lack of efficacy as barriers to a larger degree than did principals from more affluent schools. Poza, Brooks, and Valdés (2014), in their qualitative study, determined that school personnel often mistakenly perceive non-English speaking parents as uninterested in engaging with their child's school. By interviewing Latino parents, Poza

et al, determined that in reality, this group of parents engaged in three common behaviors: Asking questions about school, augmenting a child's classroom learning, and attending education-related events, though not those sponsored by the school. Baird (2015), in a research review of 31 studies related to parent involvement with English learner families, used a counter-story theoretical framework, describing it as the opposite of majoritarian storytelling (Yosso, 2006), which uses a deficit perspective to describe behaviors of minority populations who may not behave in a mainstream manner. Counter-stories, on the other hand, offer an authentic portrayal of the lived experiences of minority groups with traditions and experiences that are different from the majority. Baird determined that parent involvement among this population of parents is a very dynamic process, involving relationships between parents and the schools, between parents and children, and between families, although in less obvious ways than traditionally defined.

Ihmeideh and Oliemat (2015) investigated the perspectives of principals in relation to family engagement in an early childhood setting in Jordan. The researchers created a research-based survey which was distributed to a random sample of 320 teachers and 105 principals from private and public kindergartens in two cities, to gather data on both teacher and principal perspectives in regard to the effectiveness of parent involvement in five domains of school functioning: planning, implementation, evaluation, extra-curricular activities, and communication, although the definition of "effectiveness" was not clearly delineated. Principles reported that families were most involved in student extra-curricular activities, and least involved in curricular planning. Teachers

reported that parents were most involved in extra-curricular activities, moderately involved in communication, and least involved in planning, implementation, and program evaluation, reporting these as less effective than did the principals. Teachers in public schools and those who attended parent involvement training rated parent involvement in communication at a significantly higher level. The researchers argued that training parents to become involved in the functioning of the school program is one way to encourage greater participation, citing research by Sharrock, Dollard, Armstrong, and Rotrer (2013) which emphasizes the value of educating and supporting parents to become involved in a child's learning.

School Climate

The climate or character of a school reflects the experiences of individuals in that setting, and is based on the norms, relationships, values and behaviors within the organization (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, p. 182). Climate describes not only the physical features of a building, but demographics, rules and expectations, interactions, and collective beliefs and values (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013) According to Thapa et al, school climate includes five dimensions: Safety, teaching and learning, relationships, institutional environment, and the school improvement process. Sanders and Galindo (2014), furthermore, determined that a welcoming atmosphere is highly correlated to school success, because parents feeling welcomed at the school contributes to reciprocal communication, enabling them to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence to support learning at home.

Goldkind and Farmer (2013) investigated the relationship between school size and parent perspectives of school safety, respect, and invitations to participate in school activities. Using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model as a framework, the authors analyzed data from the 2008 New York City Department of Education's Learning Environment Survey (LES), which included families with children in middle and high school. Results indicated that parent perspectives of school safety were mediated by enrollment size, influencing parent engagement as a result. The authors suggested further study to determine strategies for moderating the effects of enrollment on parent perspectives of safety and consequent school involvement.

Teacher views on school climate and its bearing on engagement can vary, as well. In an analysis of teacher perspectives of their students and school environment, Miller, Kuykendall, and Thomas (2013) investigated the individual and institutional factors affecting teacher perspectives. The authors determined that teachers who teach in higher grades, as well as those in schools with high levels of impoverishment have, in general, lower perspectives of both their students and of the school community, with teachers of upper grades perceiving lower quality parent-teacher relationships, as well. Teachers with more education were found to have lower views of the role they play in the school and community. Minority and experienced teachers, finally, reported more positive perspectives of parent involvement in supporting homework. These factors may all influence the ability to form and maintain effective parent engagement

Barriers to Engagement

Jefferson (2015) used social and ecological frameworks to conduct an ethnographic study of parent perspectives and school policies that inhibit family involvement in two school districts with high turnover. The author identified several practices that prevent family involvement, including restriction of family member access to information, particularly for those who did not have access to the Internet. Because school district websites typically contain information pertinent to families, such as schedules, policies and opportunities for involvement, the lack of easy access to this type of information can serve as a significant obstacle for families. Jefferson recommended that, instead of creating additional school-directed activities for involvement, schools should strive to understand family perspectives and generate policies and procedures as a result.

Campbell, Dalley-Trim and Cordukes (2016) endeavored to gather parent perspectives through a qualitative case study in Queensland, Australia. 18 parents participated in focus groups centered on the topic of barriers to school participation. The research revealed three primary themes that served as barriers to participation by the parents in the study: Poor communication, inconsistent curriculum across classrooms, and family and work commitments. The authors pointed out that the parents in the study had a desire to become involved, but did not necessarily know how to do so, making an argument for the importance for schools to consider parent perspectives in their efforts to engage them.

Demircan, and Tantekin Erden (2015) gathered data from 279 teachers and 589 parents in Turkey, determining that, while both groups viewed parent involvement as a very important facet of a child's education, parents and teachers had differing perspectives on the barriers faced by parents. The greatest barrier to quality relationships as perceived by teachers was communication, including the reaction of parents upon hearing critical information about their children. Parents, on the other hand, listed childcare needs for other children and job demands as the most significant barriers to involvement. Parents also reported a desire to assist their children with homework, and a willingness to learn how to best do so.

Robinson and Volpe (2015) determined that, while parents experiencing poverty were motivated to participate in their child's school, most recognizing the connection between parent involvement and student achievement, time constraints posed significant barriers to doing so. The authors also identified a practice of marginalization on the part of the active parents towards those who were less engaged. Williams and Sanchez (2013), in their case study of the barriers to school participation faced by African American inner-city parents, identified four categories of obstacles unique to families of low SES: Time poverty, limited access, scarcity of financial resources, and lack of information. The researchers conducted 25 semi-structured interviews of both parents and school personnel, to better understand barriers and contributors to parental involvement. Over half of interview participants expressed the belief that parents desired more involvement in their child's education but faced barriers that prevented this. Some issues of note were lack of school access for parents with disabilities, poor communication caused by

expectations for students to convey messages to parents and/or lack of updated contact information, and the constraints posed by work obligations and inflexible work environments. In a mixed-methods study of the use of technology for school-home communication, parents identified time constraints as a significant barrier to school involvement (Olmstead, 2013). Language was identified as a barrier by the non-English speaking families in the school.

Immigrant families face their own set of unique barriers to school participation. In their qualitative study of the challenges to school involvement face by recent arrivals to the United States, Soutulo, Smith-Bonahue, Sander-Smith, and Navia (2016) used Epstein's (2011) framework to understand how teachers perceive barriers to family-school partnerships. The authors identified three categories of barriers to engaging this group of parents: Language and culture, family resources, and parent undocumented status. Many of these barriers were a consequence of school policies, such as a screening policy for new volunteers, and ineffective communication strategies. Although this study was small, focusing on only 18 educators, it offers relevant insights into at least one group of teachers and parent leaders and provides an impetus for future research on perspectives of various immigrant groups to the United States.

Financial constraints often serve as a substantial barrier to school engagement. Camacho-Thompson, Gillen-O'Neal, Gonzalez, and Fuligni (2016) investigated the influence of financial stress on school involvement among Mexican-American families. The authors surveyed 428 parents of high school students and discovered that financial worries contributed to a lower degree of school-based involvement, while family stress,

such as low levels of education and SES, depressive or somatic disorders, and strained family relationships, were correlated with a lower degree of home-based parent involvement. Wang, Deng and Yang (2016) investigated the effects of financial stress on parent expectations for a child's educational attainment and perceived barriers to involvement among low-income families in China, hypothesizing that high economic stress, coupled with significant perceived barriers would have an adverse effect on educational involvement. The authors noted that, in general, Chinese parents are involved in their child's learning from early childhood onward (Pomerantz, Ng, Cheung, & Qu, 2014). Using a bioecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), the authors surveyed 12,724 parents of seventh and eighth-grade students regarding expectations for their child's educational attainment, and barriers that they face to educational involvement. It was determined that the families of low SES in the study had minimal expectations for their child's educational attainment, and experienced barriers to involvement in their child's schooling, as well, largely due to limited time and resources, lack of knowledge, and communication issues.

Mahmood (2013) used a social exchange theory framework (Homans, 1974) to conduct a qualitative study on the experiences of first-year preschool and kindergarten teachers concerning their efforts to establish reciprocal relationships with parents, specifically the difficulties they faced. Social exchange theory focuses on the trust that develops from a mutually beneficial relationship, and the outcomes of this on the strength of the relationship. All 14 teachers in the study articulated a desire to establish relationships with the parents of their students, but at the same time, each had run into

difficulties with at least one parent. Challenges were grouped into five areas: Absence of reciprocity, difficulties of building relationships, power-dependence, teacher social identity, and unanticipated challenges. Specific difficulties included parents who do not become involved or appeared disinterested, lack of parent response, parental hostility, lack of respect for the role of the teacher, and lack of cultural competence. Many first-year teachers also reported a lack of preparation in their teacher education programs for dealing with parent issues. The authors cautioned that because social exchange theory dictates that individuals must reap some benefit from relationships, if new teachers are unsuccessful in forming reciprocal relationships with parents, they may eventually stop trying to do so.

Best Practices for Engaging Parents

The methods school personnel use to engage families can have a profound effect on the degree to which families participate in a child's learning. Bower (2011) in a study of the effectiveness of the Epstein model as a framework for engaging families, determined that schools and teachers may be ineffective in building relationships in part due to the use of traditional strategies for inviting parents to school activities. These types of efforts do not address the family engagement needs of families of low SES. The author concluded that the Epstein model may not encompass parent involvement of low SES families. Jefferson (2015), furthermore, determined that schools would benefit from understanding how family members experience the school and the policies enforced, to create policies address the needs of diverse families..

Galindo and Sheldon (2012) used Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological theory and Epstein's (2001) framework to examine the effects of school efforts to engage families. Citing previous research that indicates a link between school outreach efforts and parent involvement (Epstein, 2001; Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004) the authors endeavored to determine the connection between school outreach and family involvement. Data from the National Center of Education Statistics Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 was used to investigate the link between family involvement and mathematics and reading scores in kindergarten students, as well as school outreach efforts on mathematics and reading gains. Family involvement was measured through a combination of parent reporting of participation at home and school, as well as a measure of parent expectations of academic performance. School outreach was measured by principal reports of how often activities to which parents were invited or involved took place, such as conferences, home-visits, school-home communication, and performances and events. While the authors found some correlation between school outreach efforts and academic achievement, they did not establish an association between outreach efforts and involvement at home or parent expectations for student achievement. The authors deduced that the manner in which a school reaches out to parents plays a role, and that simply inviting families to passively participate in school-based activities does not have an effect on what takes place in the home.

Sime and Sheridan (2014) used the concepts of social and cultural capital as frameworks for exploring perspectives of parents in an area of low SES in Scotland as far as the effectiveness of school efforts to support them. Qualitative interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, and other school personnel, and parents participated in focus groups as well, where they were asked about their perspectives with regard to the benefits of and opportunities for school involvement. Parents expressed doubt about their ability to offer their children the necessary support because of their lack of resources, including education, income, and social networks. Despite this, parents felt appreciated when they were consulted about an issue with their children or acknowledged for making a difference. These types of situations empowered parents and helped them to see their capacity to work with teachers for the benefit of their child. Parents also expressed a desire to learn more from the teachers about exactly how to reinforce their child's learning. Strong school leadership, reciprocal parent-teacher communication, a positive school climate, and a belief among school personnel about the capacity of parents to support their child's learning were all determined to promote parent involvement. The authors asserted that schools must recognize structural inequalities that limit parents' capacity to become involved and continuing to perpetuate the disadvantage that they face.

When surveyed by Povey, et al (2016) on their perspectives of parent engagement, school principals in Australia indicated that the most effective methods for engaging parents included creating a welcoming and respectful school environment, demonstrating flexibility in accommodating parents, and acknowledging volunteers. Less effective, according to this group of principals, were workshops and trainings for parents,

offering multiple volunteer opportunities, conveying high expectations for involvement, and involving parents in decision making. School principals had little expectation for parents to be involved in school operations. Povey et al. (2016) concluded that the expectations and attitudes of the school principal play an important role in school climate and parent participation in the school.

Whyte and Karabon (2016) used a Funds of Knowledge Approach (Gonzalez, Moll & Amante, 2005) as a framework for establishing home-school connections based on a respect for the diversity of the cultural, social, and intellectual resources present in the homes of students. Pre-kindergarten teachers, all of whom were enrolled in a professional development program, conducted ethnographic home visits to gather information from families, rather than to inform them about their student and school-related practices. At the conclusion of the 2-year study, there was a marked shift in the teachers' perspectives to an asset-based perspective. Teachers were able to redefine the home-school boundary and establish authentic relationships with families.

Consistent with the research of Calzeda et al, (2015), Smith, Sith-Bonahue, and Soutullo (2014) determined that the most effective strategies for engaging families are those in which the teachers make concerted efforts to reach out to establish partnerships. Avvasti, Gurgand, Guyon and Maurin (2013), furthermore, determined that schools can stimulate parent involvement through concerted efforts to do so. The authors undertook a large-scale randomized control trial in 34 Paris-area middle schools with high levels of students of low-SES backgrounds. A sample group of parents were encouraged to attend a series of parent meetings, which focused on how they could play a larger role in their

child's learning. At the culmination of the initiative, families that participated in the project were observed to be more involved in school-associated activities, and students had less instances of truancy, as well.

Citing teacher outreach as the most significant predictor of family engagement, Daniel (2016) investigated parent perspectives of teacher efforts to involve families and how those changed as students progressed through the early school years, as well as perspectives specific to families of low-SES and minority backgrounds. Using data from Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs [FaHCSIA], 2012), Daniel randomly selected a sub-sample of 1760 families using the Teacher Communication Scale to measure parents' views of teacher efforts to engage parents in a child's learning at home, at school, and in the community when children were in grade 1, and again in grade 3. Results indicated a significant decline in teacher outreach efforts between grades 1 and 3, consistent with research that reveals that school involvement decreases as children move through the grades (Borgonovi & Montt, 2012), although there was no difference in outreach efforts reported by families of lower SES backgrounds, suggesting that lower levels of school engagement among families of low SES backgrounds is a result of barriers commonly faced by this population, rather than a difference in engagement efforts on the part of the teacher.

Day (2013) used a focus group approach to investigate effective approaches for engaging parents typically considered hard to reach by school personnel. These parents were already participating in training on how to have structured conversations with their

children, a program intended to build parent confidence and engage them in the learning process. The author sought to discover what strategies the parents found effective for engaging them, as well as how they thought other parents could be active in their child's education. Fourteen parents participated in the focus groups. Consistent with the research of Stacer and Perrucci (2013), results revealed that parents are more likely to engage when they relate to an approachable staff member at the school, when there is reciprocal and frequent communication between school and home, and when they are treated as equal partners in supporting their child's learning. Barriers to participation as described by the focus group members included logistical factors such as transportation, childcare, and inflexible work situations, feelings of isolation, fear of confrontation, and concerns regarding boundaries between school and home. Parent suggestions for engaging activities included fun activities to do with their children and/or other parents, and school-based workshops and events.

Summary and Conclusions

Research clearly points to the benefits of parent engagement in a child's education, which can include both home and school-based activities. There are, however, multiple factors that influence the degree to which a parent or caregiver elects to become involved, including parent efficacy, cultural background, SES, and expectations for involvement. Families of low SES backgrounds may face numerous barriers to school involvement, including time and work constraints, financial difficulties and marginalization. It is therefore critical for school personnel to recognize and address the perspectives of families in the school, as school outreach efforts play a significant role in

parent engagement. Effective measures include frequent communication, a welcoming school environment, and a belief by school personnel in the capability of parents to support their child's learning. It is unclear, however, how teachers perceive the families they wish to engage, as well as if parents perceive teachers and schools as welcoming and inclusive. Understanding parent perspectives in regard to school environment, as well as their perspectives of what involvement entails, will contribute important knowledge that will assist schools in building stronger relationships with families. Chapter 3 will describe my case study specific to parents and school personnel in a Title I school, to better understand their perspectives in regard to parent involvement. The research design and rational will be described, as will the methodology, participant selection and recruitment, instrumentation, and plan for analyzing data.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Parent engagement in a child's education provides many benefits to both the student and the school (See & Gorard, 2015; Wilder, 2014). Students with involved parents typically perform better both academically and socially (Wilder, 2014), and schools benefit from the increased knowledge and resources available when additional adults are invested in education (Sharkey et al., 2016). There are, however, many obstacles that may prevent parents from becoming fully engaged in the educational process, including uncertainty about one's role (Okeke 2014; Campbell, Dalley-Trim & Cordukes, 2016), an unwelcoming school climate (Watkins & Howard, 2015), and barriers including transportation and time constraints (Williams & Sanchez, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore both parent and school personnel perspectives related to school engagement in a Title I elementary school. This study addressed a gap in research and practice on how to effectively support families from a Title I elementary school to be fully engaged in their child's education. This chapter will address the methodology, research questions, context of the study, role of the researcher, population and sample, data collection procedures, data analysis, and methods for ensuring validity and reliability.

Research Design and Rationale

Creswell (2013) described five approaches to qualitative research commonly applied in the social sciences: Narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. While each of the approaches seeks to understand human experiences or realities, there are subtle differences that were considered in selecting the

methodology for this study. Narrative research typically focuses on one individual and multiple episodes of data collection as the individual provides great depth and detail regarding his or her experiences (Lodico et al., 2010). Phenomenology involves uncovering concealed knowledge to understand the meaning behind or consequences of a phenomenon, while grounded theory endeavors to build a theory based on the data collected. Ethnography examines people in their natural environments and typically involves long periods of time in the field observing and interviewing participants (Merriam, 2009; Yi, 2014). Case studies focus on individuals or groups in specific settings. The case study approach aligns with the purpose of this study because of the intent to attain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of parents and school faculty at River Elementary.

A single case study approach was undertaken to explore both parent and staff perspectives of family engagement in a Title I elementary school. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described a case study as a funnel, suggesting that a researcher begins with a broad idea, and gradually narrows in on a specific topic after conducting and reviewing research. The design continues to evolve as the topic is further investigated and data are carefully analyzed. Lodico et al. (2010) described case study as a strategy for acquiring insights and understandings regarding an individual, group, or situation. Yin (2014) identified case study as an effective strategy for exploring in-depth questions of how or why, particularly in a setting over which the researcher has no control. Cases may be intrinsic, instrumental, or collective (Lodico et al, 2010). Intrinsic case studies like this one encompass a specific case that may have unique characteristics. Instrumental case

studies are conducted to acquire understandings that may be relevant to a broader issue. Collective case studies explore and compare multiple cases to acquire greater understanding of an issue. The current study offered an opportunity to delve into the perspectives of the specific case of River Elementary, providing an opportunity to explore and understand the complexities of parent involvement in a Title I school and allowing me to investigate the perspectives of individuals in this unique setting. River Elementary is a bounded system, meaning that there is a finite number of individuals available to participate in a study.

Woodside (2010) said an important purpose of case study research is to acquire an understanding of the mental models. Mental model refers to the unique reality that shapes the behaviors of the research participants. This concept was particularly relevant to my study, as I endeavored to understand the perspectives of parents and school faculty, because a parent's mental model may shape his or her conception of a parent's role in school. A teacher's mental model may influence his or her expectations for engaging parents of various backgrounds as well, as he or she may have lower expectations for involvement among families of low socioeconomic status. Reynolds, et al. (2015) determined that teachers perceived time factors and language differences as significant barriers to engaging families of low SES.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was that of objective observer, as I sought to understand and record the perspectives of parents and personnel at River Elementary. At the time of the study, I was also a faculty member at a university in close partnership

with the research site. While our university education program was in the process of developing a partnership with River Elementary which would involve our students spending significant time in the classrooms there, I was not directly involved in the process nor a faculty member teaching in this program at the research site, and this study was conducted independent of the PDS. I was not employed in any capacity by River Elementary, and consequently had no authority over the school, faculty, or parents, who were not obligated to participate in the study. Prior to the study, I was not acquainted with any of the families at River Elementary.

Because of the nature of qualitative research, it was critical that I endeavored to establish rapport with the parents and staff to facilitate open and honest responses to the interview questions (Lodico et al., 2010). I was sensitive to the potential power imbalance that can occur during interviews and alleviated this by being open and forthright about the process. During data collection, it was critical from both an ethical and methodological standpoint that participants felt safe in candidly sharing their thoughts and experiences. I wanted the individuals I interviewed to feel confident in my ability to accurately capture their responses without judgment or evaluation. I explained the purpose of the study, ensured anonymity, and explained how the results would be used. Bogden and Biklen (2007) described reliability in qualitative research as the fit between the data recorded and what occurs in the setting, or in this case what is stated in an interview. It was critical to ensure reliability and credibility by accurately capturing and reporting the experiences of the participants and avoiding my own interpretation of their descriptions. Creswell (2013) described the danger of establishing rapport with

participants to the point that one loses objectivity and instead sees only the positive side of what participants report, resulting in a skewed depiction of participants' experiences, another reason that an accurate recording of the data was essential for ensuring reliability.

As a faculty member teaching a family and community partnerships course to undergraduates, my knowledge of issues related to family engagement could have biased my interpretation of the data, as I may have anticipated common answers to questions. It was therefore essential for me to be cognizant of my views as I scrutinized the data that I collected, and I was straightforward in recording my reflections and thoughts throughout the interview process. I also had a colleague with expertise in research serve as a peer debriefer who examined my interview notes, asked critical questions, challenged my assumptions, and presented alternative perspectives. While researcher bias is an inevitable consequence of one's experiences and values, I minimized its influence on my study by being reflective and forthright and acknowledging my biases when they surfaced.

Methodology

Creswell (2013) outlined a five-step process for conducting case study research: Determining if the case study is appropriate, identifying the case, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I determined that a single instrumental case study was the best approach for acquiring an in-depth understanding of the views of the parents, teachers, and the principal at River Elementary, the participants in this study. The case in this study was parents and faculty of early childhood students at a Title I elementary school. To collect data to answer the research questions, I conducted semistructured

interviews with eight parents, four with children in the 4K program, and four with children at the kindergarten level. I also interviewed two kindergarten and one 4K teacher, two early childhood special education teachers, and one school principal. In determining the sample size, I considered the purpose of a case study, which is to investigate the case in depth to gain insight into that setting or situation. The intent is not to select and study a sample to generalize the findings to a larger population (Lodico et al., 2010). Rubin and Rubin (2012) said that to ensure credibility in qualitative research, a large number of interviews is not required, but only enough different points of view to portray diverse perspectives. A sample of eight parents and six school district employees was small enough for me to delve deeply into their experiences, but large enough to offer a variety of perspectives. All parents of children in the one 4K class and two sections of kindergarten were invited to participate in the study (see Appendix A) with the goal of recruiting four parents from each level. The principal and teachers agreed to interviews as well. Semistructured interviews with parents/caregivers and school personnel enabled me to collect rich data to answer the research questions, which were as follows:

RQ1: How do parents, teachers, and administrators involved with children in a low-income preschool and kindergarten define family engagement in a child's education?

*RQ2:*What are parents and caregivers' perspectives of their roles in supporting their preschool or kindergarten children's education at home and school?

RQ3: What are preschool and kindergarten school personnel's perspectives of the roles of parents and caregivers in supporting children's education at home and school?

RQ4: What are preschool and kindergarten administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers' perspectives of barriers to family engagement in children's education at home and school?

RQ5: How do preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators in a Title I school engage families at home and school?

Participant Selection

Parents/Caregivers. Participant selection began after IRB approval was obtained from both Walden University and the school district in which I planned to conduct research. Criteria for participation in the study was that family members had a child in either the 4k or kindergarten program at the time of the study and were not employed as a teacher at the school. According to Lodico et al. (2010) "the most important consideration in sampling for any qualitative study is that the individuals have information or experiences related to the research questions that they are willing to share" (p. 163). As parents of children in the school, all potential interview participants met the criteria of having information to share about their experiences, regardless of whether or those experiences included being involved in the school. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parent involvement (1995, 1997) describes a continuum of factors that influence involvement, including role construction and self-efficacy. All potential participants had perspectives regarding the role they play in their child's education and their capacity to do so. The study was open to individuals of any gender, ethnic or cultural background, or family configuration.

Parent participants were recruited through a letter sent home to each family with a child in 4k and kindergarten. The introductory letter invited interested families to contact me via phone, text, or email to volunteer for the study. Consent forms were attached to the invitation letters so that parents could read and sign them prior to the interview if they wished to do so. Families contacted me via email or text, and three of them returned the consent form to the school with their names written on the forms. When the initial invitation did not yield eight volunteers, I sent another invitation, again with informed consent attached, and recruited additional volunteers. I attempted to use snowball sampling Lodico et al. (2010) to recruit additional parent participants, but this was unsuccessful as participants did not have suggestions for additional volunteers.

School District Personnel. Because the intent of this study was to depict the perspectives of school personnel in addition to parents and caregivers, the principal, the one 4k, two kindergarten and two early childhood special education teachers were solicited to participate in interviews, as well. The school principal expressed his willingness to support this study and consented to an interview, as well. The teachers were informed that I would be contacting them prior to my doing so. I emailed the teachers to introduce myself, using the school district website to acquire their contact information, and met with the group at the school to describe my study, its purpose, and what I was requesting of them. All teachers in this sample consented to participate in the study. I set up a time to meet with each of them outside of the school day for the interviews. Criteria for teacher selection was that they were employed as an early childhood teacher (4k, kindergarten and special education) at River Elementary during

the current school year and were willing to spend time in an interview discussing their perspectives regarding parent involvement. I confirmed that they met the criteria at the time of the interview. Criteria for the school administrator was that he had been the school principal for over five years and was willing to spend time in an interview discussing his perspectives regarding parent involvement. Because the goal of case study research is to thoroughly explore a case rather than patterns that may exist outside of the case (Lodico et al, 2010), I was confident that a sample of 8 families, 5 teachers, and the school administrator was an adequate number to portray attitudes and behaviors of families and faculty in the school.

Instrumentation

An interview protocol created by the researcher was used for data collection (Appendixes A & B). I elected to create a protocol after an unsuccessful search for previously published works that would address the specific topic of both parent/caregiver and school staff perspectives. Because my intent was to understand the unique views of parents and school personnel regarding engagement in a child's learning, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of parent involvement, which considers the lens through which one sees the world, was an important foundation for the creation of both the research and interview questions. To create the protocol, I aligned the interview questions with the research questions (Appendix C), which were based on the literature review. My intent was to create questions that participants could understand, to ensure that the data collected answered the research questions. Aligning the interview questions with the research questions helped to ensure content validity, or the degree to which an

instrument answers the research questions (Lodico et al., 2010). The semi-structured format of the interview enabled me to follow up on responses that were related to the research questions but not specifically included on the protocol, allowing for the collection of deep and meaningful data to answer the research questions. A copy of the protocol that included my contact information was distributed to interview participants at the on-set of the interview, providing them with a visual guide to the questions.

Yin (2014) described the following potential weaknesses of interviews as a source of data collection: Poorly worded questions that contribute to bias; response bias, inaccuracies in reporting due to poor recall; the interview subject providing the answer he believes the researcher wants to hear. To avoid these and other issues of dependability, questions were carefully worded, and there was no need for revision through the course of the study. Responses were audio recorded and I transcribed them verbatim immediately after each interview.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews that took place in a private room at the school as well as in a private room at a nearby coffee shop outside of school hours, at the convenience of each participant. I met with teachers in their classrooms after the school day had concluded and met with the principal in his office at the school. Interviews were semi-structured to facilitate a rich dialogue that provided insight into the views and experiences of the participants to answer the research questions. I used effective facilitation techniques including staying on task, keeping within the allotted time, remaining respectful and courteous always, and refraining from reacting or offering advice (Creswell, 2013). Interviews varied in length from 30 to 75

minutes and took place between February 5 and March 16 following IRB approval. Each participant was interviewed once.

Interviews were recorded with my personal audio equipment and saved on a computer jump drive which was then stored in a locked cabinet in my university office. A journal was used to take notes during interviews, in which I recorded not only responses but visual observations, making note of body language and other non-verbal behaviors in the margins of my notes. Behaviors of note included eye contact, body language, and tone of voice. Journal notes were stored separately in a locked cabinet at my home. Yin (2014) described the importance of receiving information through multiple modalities during the interview process, which involves not only listening and documenting answers without bias but capturing the mood and emotions of the interviewee and understanding the context of their experiences, as well. The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed me to use probes to delve into unexpected themes that emerged throughout the process (Bogdan & Bilken, 2017). At the end of the interview process, all participants were provided with an opportunity to ask any questions they had about the study and I explained my plans for completing this dissertation and offered to provide them with a copy of the completed project. Two families, the principal, and all the teachers requested a copy of the completed dissertation. The school district will receive a copy of my completed dissertation as well. At the end of the interviews, participants were presented with a gift card to a local grocery store and provided with my contact information should they think of any additional information that they wished to provide or had additional

questions. Participants were reminded of the confidential nature of the interview and invited to contact me with questions at any time.

Because of the potentially sensitive nature of this research, there was a possibility that participants would experience feelings of guilt or inadequacy. I was careful, therefore, to use facilitation skills that allowed interviewees to speak freely and did not convey judgment towards them or their responses. I achieved this by using effective interview procedures as described by Creswell (2013). I stayed to the questions, was respectful and courteous, and used active listening strategies. No one expressed significant distress, but I was prepared to end any interviews in case that they did, and to refer the individual to the school principal or counselor if appropriate. One participant conveyed mild distress while discussing the stressors she faced but articulated a desire to continue the interview. I debriefed participants at the end of the interview, explaining once again the purpose of the study, offering to share study results, and reminding them of their right to withdraw their consent.

Data Analysis

Data were collected via parent and faculty interviews to understand the perspectives of parent and school personnel in a Title I school in regard to parent engagement in a child's education. An interview protocol based on the research questions provided insight into how parents and school personnel perceived parent engagement in a child's education (Appendix C). Data analysis involved organizing data into manageable units that could be fully examined, synthesized, and scrutinized (Bogden & Biklin, 2007). Data were analyzed in participant groups based on parent or school personnel status, to

identify similarities and differences in perspectives. Prior to data analysis, I manually transcribed audio recordings and journal notes immediately upon completion of each interview. In doing so, I broke the text into paragraphs leaving wide margins for notes, enabling me to record initial observations during this process.

Data analysis began with a search for patterns and themes through a process of coding. Creswell (2013) described coding as an inductive process of making sense of the data by narrowing it into themes. To accomplish this, I used two coding strategies, open coding and thematic coding. I began with a preliminary exploratory analysis by reading through the interview transcripts to acquire an overall sense of the data that were collected, making note of my initial observations and potential themes in the transcript margins. As I continued to review the data, I identified ideas and concepts related to the research questions, highlighting these and creating a tentative list of codes, which I expanded in further reviews. Text segments were identified in the transcripts, indicated with brackets, and assigned a code in the margins. As I continued to review the data, I compiled a list of all code words that emerged during analysis, writing them on post-it notes, creating a concept map by grouping those that were alike and looking for duplications. I identified 98 categories of information, using thematic coding to synthesize these into five primary themes related to the research questions. An important step in data analysis is searching for rival explanations or discrepant data that does not align with general findings (Yin, 2014). A negative case analysis (Lodico, 2010) was performed to identify data that contradicted experiences common to those of others in the study. All data were reexamined for accuracy and for evidence of conflicting

perspectives. Alternative perspectives are reported in my results as exclusive to an individual.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research encompasses several factors: Credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity (Polit & Beck, 2014). Credibility concerns whether the researcher's depiction of a participant's perspective is accurate (Lodico, et al, 2010). I ensured credibility, or confidence in the outcomes of the study, with a consistent interview process, framed by an interview protocol, in which I employed effective interview strategies that delved deeply into the thoughts and experiences of participants, and carefully listened to the answers to interview questions. I ensured accuracy of the data by emailing each participant a copy of the interview transcript, inviting them to review the transcript for accuracy and clarifying or correcting points as necessary. Hagens, Dobrow and Chafe (2009) determined that transcript review provides an opportunity for the interview participant to correct errors and omissions or to add missing details, however no participants suggested any adjustments to the data. I also retained a colleague with expertise in research and no connection to the study to serve as a peer debriefer, to assist me in examining my assumptions or interpretations, and to propose alternatives. Because it is ideal to retain a peer debriefer who is familiar with the setting in which a study is conducted (Lodico et al, 2010), I used a colleague who has spent time at River Elementary in our Professional Development School partnership, and who is therefore familiar with the culture and the climate of the school. This individual signed a confidentiality agreement before reviewing my transcribed data

and codes, appraising with an objective eye for bias. I encouraged her to challenge my assumptions and conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability in qualitative research is interpreted by the reader (Lodico et al., 2010), who determines the relevance of a study's findings to other sites. I have ensured transferability by providing thick descriptions that depict a detailed picture of the perspectives of the parents and school personnel at River Elementary, providing sufficient detail to enable the reader to determine if the research is relevant to them. I provided transcribed excerpts of the interviews to further illuminate the perspectives of the parents and school personnel at River Elementary. By clearly portraying the individuals, their responses and reactions, the setting, the climate, and the thoughts and experiences of parents and school personnel at River Elementary, readers will be able to evaluate the relevance to their own setting (Amankwaa, 2016).

I ensured dependability through an audit trail that includes detailed note-taking and audio recording of my interviews and by establishing uniform interview conditions, ensuring transparency in the research process. Cohen and Crabtree (2006) described an audit trail as a detailed description of all steps taken in the research process. I recorded raw data, my analysis process, correspondence, and all other notes and data related to this study. Triangulation was achieved by collecting three sources of data, providing insights from parents, teachers, and the school principal (Lodico et al., 2010). Data were catalogued using alpha-numeric codes and then available to participants and others in the school district for review.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results of the study reflect the perspectives of the participants, rather than the researcher's interpretation (Amankwaa, 2016). I ensured confirmability by completing an audit trail which includes detailed descriptions of the research process from data collection to reporting findings, ensuring that the data reported is based on participant responses, and is not influenced by researcher bias. I documented the coding process, my thoughts and interpretations of the data, and my rationale for determining themes and patterns. Finally, I maintained a reflexivity journal in which I record my thoughts and responses to the research process.

Ethical Procedures

Avoiding Bias

The nature of qualitative research presents the potential of researcher bias or unethical behavior if careful measures are not put into place from the beginning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). It was critical, therefore, to create a uniform system for collecting and analyzing data that left little room for partiality (Lodico, et al., 2010). To ensure this study was carried out in the most appropriate manner possible, I anticipated ethical matters, including those related to bias and confidentiality, and addressed them beforehand by adhering strictly to clear and consistent research procedures. Weis and Fine (2000) (as cited in Creswell, 2013) presented multiple ethical issues to consider before, during, and after the course of the study. Issues may be related to informed consent, deception, and confidentiality. One important consideration is the research site, which should not have a vested interest in the study. While the principal at River Elementary expressed interest in learning more about the perspectives and opinions of

families and staff at his school, he was not in a position of authority over me during this process, and he did not raise issues of power or control (Appendix D).

Informed Consent

At the commencement of a study, it is imperative that a researcher disclose its purpose to participants, inform them of their role, and ensure that they are freely and willingly providing consent. While I was not engaged with any vulnerable populations, I ensured the protection of human participants by making it clear from the onset of the interview that all answers were acceptable, that responses were strictly confidential, and that participants could opt out of the study at any point. This information was included in the consent form signed by participants, along with my contact information, which was provided in verbal and written form. I ensured that individuals understood that their participation was entirely voluntary and reminded them of their right to opt out at any point without repercussions by reiterating it when obtaining informed consent and immediately preceding the interview. No participants opted out of the interview, but had they done so they would have been respectfully reassured of their right to do so without repercussions and I would have asked permission to use any data collected to that point. I was also cognizant of the various backgrounds represented by participants in the study, demonstrating respect for individuals of all religious, cultural, and lifestyle differences.

While it was possible that during the interviews participants may have revealed something “off the record” with a request that I not document the information, that did not occur. Had I learned, however, of harm being perpetrated on a child or vulnerable individual, my moral and legal obligation to protect that child would have superseded the

promise of confidentiality, and I would have reported the situation to the proper authorities. The interviews also offered the potential to learn of families dealing with adversity such as financial or family issues, and in the instance where this did happen I did not breach confidentiality but encouraged the individual to speak to the school principal or counselor for support. The individual assured me that she was already working with the school social worker.

Prior to commencing with data collection, I acquired the approval of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB # 01-18-18-0505183) and the IRB of the district in which I completed my study. Families and school personnel who participated in an interview were provided with a $10 gift card to a local grocery store, which some research indicates may be an effective way to involve research participants who might otherwise place greater value on their time and energies, or who might believe they do not have anything of value to add, but are influenced by an incentive (Head, 2009). Furthermore, since the families enrolled at River Elementary were likely to be of low SES backgrounds and faced with many constraints on their free time, this was a small way to demonstrate appreciation for their contributions (Grady, 2001).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection is another area in which ethical procedures are critical. Entering the school site without disrupting the learning environment, and disclosing when there may be a disruption, was a priority throughout the duration of this study. I utilized the interview protocol (Appendices A & B) to ensure that the process was consistent across participants and that I did not ask any leading questions, and I refrained from negatively

reacting to responses, as well. Collected data remained secured in a locked location and identifying information was stored in a separate location to which only I have access. All data will be destroyed after five years from the conclusion of the study I have also ensured that data are reported anonymously so that participants cannot be identified. Participants are distinguished in the results with an arbitrary alphanumeric code. At the end of this study, data may be shared with the staff at River Elementary, or in the larger school district as requested, in either written or verbal form, but participants will remain anonymous.

Data analysis presents another opportunity for researcher bias, and it was therefore vital to impartially accept all study results, not just those that reflected my beliefs or expectations. To avoid biases during analysis and reporting, I remained open to data or evidence that were contrary to my expectations based on my review of the research. I tested my openness by documenting extensive field notes that included reflections regarding my subjectivity.

Summary

A single case study at a Title 1 elementary school was undertaken to explore the perspectives of parents and school personnel. Using Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological theory and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) framework of parent involvement, I conducted semi-structured interviews of parents and teachers of children in 4K and kindergarten, as well as the school principal, to acquire thick descriptions of the individuals, school setting, interactions between faculty and parents, and other factors that influence parent engagement. Understanding the perspectives that

may influence parent engagement can provide valuable data to school personnel, potentially enabling them to better accommodate the needs of the parents of their students. Chapter 4 will describe the findings of this study in detail. Chapter 5 will include a synthesis of the results and description of their importance.

Chapter 4: Results

A qualitative single case study was conducted to explore parent and school personnel perspectives of parent engagement in a Title I elementary school. Eight parents/caregivers, five teachers, and one school principal were interviewed to acquire an understanding of how they defined parent engagement, their expectations for parent engagement, barriers to parent involvement and engagement, and school efforts to engage families. Chapter 4 describes the process of data collection and analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and discrepancies. The major topics of investigation are listed along with a description of the themes and patterns that emerged.

Setting

The setting for this study was a Title I elementary school comprised of grades pre-K-5 in an urban midwestern city. River Elementary operates on a year-round schedule of 9-week sessions and 3-week intercessions. The student population at River Elementary is relatively diverse compared to other schools in the area: 46% of the students are Caucasian, 21% are two or more races, 13% are Asian- American, 12% are African-American, and 6.5% are Hispanic or Latino. In addition, 17% of students have a disability, and 11% are English-language learners. Over 70% of the families in the school are economically disadvantaged, and all students receive free or reduced meals. River Elementary is committed to supporting families, many of whom face difficult circumstances.

Data Collection

Eight parents, two kindergarten teachers, one 4k teacher, two early childhood special education teachers, and one school principal were interviewed for this study. The principal was contacted for permission to conduct the study. After receiving the principal's permission, as well as school district and Walden Institutional Review Board approval (IRB #01-18-18-0505183), I met with the faculty to describe the study; all five teachers and the principal consented to an interview. I contacted each teacher via email to schedule the interviews. Parents were recruited through a letter that was sent inviting them to contact me via phone or email. Five parents indicated their interest in participating by returning the signed informed consent form. Since this was not the intent, I had not included a place for contact information, and I had to obtain parent phone numbers from the school. Three parents who returned the informed consent form did not respond to my phone calls and emails. It was critical when contacting potential participants that I very clearly explained the parameters of the study to those individuals with whom I made contact, to ensure that they understood for what they were volunteering.

Eight parents consented to participate in the study: four with children in the 4K program and four with children in kindergarten. The group of parent participants included a single father, a single mom, a married dad, a married mom, a stepdad, a parent of color, and a grandmother raising her grandson, resulting in a diverse sample (see Table 1). The teachers were all Caucasian females, and the school principal was a Caucasian male.

Table 1

Parent/Caregiver Participants

Participant	Role	Gender	Marital Status	Ethnicity
P1	Parent	Male	Divorced	Bi-racial
P2	Parent	Female	Married	Caucasian
P3	Grandparent	Female	Married	Caucasian
P4	Parent	Female	Married	Caucasian
P5	Step-Parent	Male	Married	Black
P6	Parent	Male	Married	Caucasian
P7	Parent	Female	Married	Caucasian
P8	Parent	Female	Single	Caucasian

One-on-one interviews took place between February 5 and March 16, 2018 and ranged in length from 30-75 minutes. An interview protocol was used to ensure that interviews were consistent (see Appendices A and B). Data were recorded on a personal recording device and journal notes were taken as well. Recordings and notes were manually transcribed immediately following each interview, allowing me to acquire an initial sense of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine and organize data. I began with a preliminary exploratory analysis by first reading through the transcriptions of parent interviews followed by teacher and principal interviews, respectively, to acquire an

overall sense of the data collected, making note of my initial observations and potential themes in the transcript margins. I used direct interpretation to analyze the data, looking for meaning in the patterns that emerged in the coding process. I created a description of the case based on the data, identifying common issues or concerns.

The process of coding as described by Creswell was used to aggregate and label the data. I used open coding in the first and subsequent reviews to identify ideas and themes related to the research questions, highlighting these and creating a tentative list of codes based on participant responses which I expanded as I continued to rereview the data. Text segments were identified in the transcripts, indicated with brackets, and assigned a code in the margins. As I continued to review the data, I made a list of all code words and phrases that emerged during analysis, writing them on post-it notes, grouping those that were alike and looking for duplicates. I created approximately 110-115 categories of identified 98 concepts (see Appendix E). I used thematic coding to combine and synthesize these categories, identifying the following primary themes related to parent engagement: Supporting learning, parent efficacy, school climate, education as a key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. Supporting learning was eventually combined with parent efficacy and renamed parent capacity to support learning, as the importance of a parent's belief in his or her capacity to support a child's learning became increasingly evident to me as I analyzed the data.

Results

Participants were asked questions to generate their opinions and ideas on parent involvement and engagement in their children's learning. Individuals were identified with

alphanumeric codes in interview transcripts and results. The study site is referred to by a pseudonym. This section will present results based on the research questions and describe emerging themes. Themes will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

RQ1: Definitions of Family Engagement

RQ1: How do parents, teachers, and administrators involved with children in a low-income preschool and kindergarten define family engagement in a child's education?

Parents and faculty were questioned about what they considered to be parent involvement or engagement. Themes that emerged were supporting learning, home-school communication, and volunteerism.

Supporting Learning. Parent and faculty descriptions of involvement included supporting children's learning at home, largely through reading and helping with schoolwork, and volunteering in the classroom. P3 defined involvement as "helping guide your children, sitting down with your kid and helping them do their homework, or being part of what's going on at school." Participants also described being involved in their children's life as parent involvement in education. P4 said parent involvement in education was "basically being involved in your kids' lives inside and outside of school." P8 described involvement as "being present and knowing what is going on currently in the classroom and how my children are doing individually as well as their strengths and weaknesses." P7 described the value of volunteering in the school for supporting learning at home, stating "[volunteering] gives parents the tools to really help their child at home, and to make connections to what they're learning in everyday life." Faculty addressed activities at home as well. P5 said, "Everything you do at home, whether it's talking

about things, providing language and providing opportunities, and just basic needs, those are all pieces of parent involvement, for little kids that is their education."

Home-school Communication. Communication was cited as a key element of parent engagement. All parents described the importance of communicating with their children's teachers to support their learning, citing child drop-off and pick-up times as an important contributor to open communication, as teachers are present to engage in conversation. P6 said "I see her [the teacher] every morning and talk to her every morning and every afternoon when we pick her up, just kind of asking how the day's gone." P1 stated, "when you drop her off you see her teacher every day, I will more often than not ask is everything good…I'm that one that's very interactive with her." P4 stated, "I take my kids to school, I drop them off, I pick them up, so I always know what happens throughout the day, and if I can't talk to the teacher I will call her." Faculty emphasized efforts to communicate with families, citing classroom newsletters, Facebook, email, and text messaging as some of their strategies for contacting parents.

In addition to supporting learning at home, communicating, and volunteering, four of the teachers and the administrator at River Elementary described caring for basic needs as an important element of parent engagement. Said F1, "What I prefer is that they take the daily responsibility of getting them to school prepared, so well-rested, fed, clothed, bathed, backpack, coat." F2 reiterated this definition, stating, "It can be making sure your kid has everything they need at school, it can mean you feed them before they come to school if they're hungry." Faculty also considered basic tasks such as calling school when a child will be absent and responding to telephone calls to be parent

involvement. F2 explained that expectations for parent involvement vary depending on what a family is capable of, stating "My job is to see what their involvement is, and just like you have a child grow, you want that involvement to grow too." Only F3 emphasized the volunteer aspect of parent involvement, defining it as "The level to which a parent is willing to participate in activities throughout the school, and how willing the teacher is to let the parents in." She went on to state that while some teachers are not comfortable with parent volunteers in the classroom, the early childhood team provides volunteer forms at the beginning of the year with a clear expectation that parents complete and return them. F1 described parent involvement as a continuum, ranging from returning papers, to parents who work at the school as volunteers and tutors 3 to 4 hours a day, and stated that a basic expectation is that a parent be present for a child's education.

In summary, parents and school faculty defined parent engagement in a child's education as including both home and school-based activities. Definitions of activities crossed a spectrum from meeting basic needs to volunteering in the classroom. The folders that teachers send home are a significant strategy for involving parents in what is happening in the classroom, as is communicating when dropping off and picking up children. Consistent with Galindo and Sheldon (2012), both parents and faculty suggested that the way in which school personnel reach out to families likely influences a parent's probability of involvement.

RQ2 and 3: The Role of Parents in Supporting Learning

RQ2: What are parents and caregivers' perspectives of their roles in supporting their preschool or kindergarten children's education at home and school? *RQ3*: What are

preschool and kindergarten school personnel's perspectives of the roles of parents and caregivers in supporting children's education at home and school?

Parents and faculty described parent activities for supporting children's learning at home and at school. Themes that emerged were: Supporting learning, communication, volunteering, and education as key to the future.

Supporting Learning. All parents viewed education as the key to a successful future for their children and saw their role as an important contributor to that success. Said P7, "To me, I see it as one of my main jobs. Education is key to everything, that's where it starts." All parents stated that they read to their children and supported learning with activities such as helping with homework, and faculty described efforts to encourage these as activities, as well. P1 explained her role as "being physically present at times, by asking my child after school what they've done and helping them do things, and also by being involved with the parent committees and things after school." P6 had a similar view of his role in supporting learning, stating that he does so by "reading with both kids every night, and looking over what comes home in their folders, and making sure we set enough time at night so that they're actually doing what is required of them outside the classroom." Parents demonstrated cognizance of the role they can play in a child's learning outside of the classroom, as evidenced by P8, who stated that her role included "continuing the work from what they are learning in the classroom at home whenever possible." Teachers described take-home bags, reading to children, and maintaining communication with the teacher as important strategies for supporting a child's learning at home and at school.

Two of the fathers in the study emphasized the athletic activities that they engaged in with their children to be involved with them. P5 stated “I’ll read with them every once in a while, she [his wife] mainly does that unless they ask me, but sports and stuff that I liked to do when I was a kid, that’s how I like to get involved.” P1 described how he showed his daughter how to skate, saying “It’s something we can do together, because I played hockey as a kid and so we go to the park every day.”

In addition to at-home learning activities, teachers cited basic care needs as the primary role of parents in supporting a child’s learning at home and at school. Said F5:

> For me the biggest is basic care, but I think also that language piece is so critical, whether it’s reading to kids or just talking to them about things, providing them that vocabulary, listening to them and showing them how to have a conversation.

F1 stated, “What I would like to see is reading nightly, engaging in conversation. . .while you’re driving, when you’re at the grocery store, building that vocabulary, building those conversation skills, and then again sitting down and reading every night.” F3 reiterated that expectation, stating, “just being in involved in reading to their kid, begin part of their life, asking them about things that interest them.” F4 also addressed the literacy topic by saying:

> Parents are their child’s first teacher, and they have the potential to learn more at home than they do at school because the parents spend a lot more time with them, and there are many things in daily living that children

> learn from…kids really learn better from incidental experiences that they have all day long if they're provided with language-rich opportunities.

F2 adapts her expectations to fit each individual parent:

> First of all, we have to work with basic needs being met, that's their biggest goal, are you able to do that? And if they're not able to do that, is that something we need to help with? And then, if you're capable of that, then what else, can you read to your child at home, is that something you're capable of doing? How much time could you commit to that? Or, if I send a book the class made, and a little game, is that something that your family would be able to do?

She went on to explain, "You can't tell someone who might have a reading difficulty 'I want you to read 20 minutes a night, that's your parent involvement' because it defeats them feeling good about being a parent and what they can do" She described the importance of giving parents choices and options in order to encourage success, emphasizing the value of empowering parents to play a role in their child's learning. This attitude is consistent with Povey's (2016) research which determined that a teacher's flexibility in meeting the needs of parents is an effective strategy for engaging them in their child's learning.

Home-school Communication. Communication was another area of involvement addressed by all participants in the study. F3 stated that parents can support learning by "talking to me if there is a problem, being comfortable having a dialogue with me, picking up a phone call, emails, anything like that." F2 described communication efforts

stating, “Parents drop off and pick up, so I have that opportunity to talk to someone every day if I need to touch base.” Parents concurred that the daily opportunity to talk with teachers was instrumental in developing relationships. Stated P1, “The daily communication does help. You build rapport with that teacher and there’s some trust.” F5 described the importance of communicating to build teacher-parent relationships right from the start, stating, “We do a lot of asking families what their preferred method of communication is.” F1 said that in her experience, parents are reluctant to discuss concerns related to their children because of a fear of child protective services being called.

Volunteerism. With the exception of F3, teachers did not place emphasis on the role of parents in the classroom, but at the same time four parents in the study desired more volunteer opportunities. F1 explained, “We don’t ask for a lot of [involvement], when we do it’s just can you come along for a field trip here and there. We don’t ask for a lot of involvement because we don’t get a lot of involvement.” P2, conversely, said, “I often have to approach the teacher to see if I can help in the classroom.” F2 described how participation is dependent on a family’s situation, stating:

> I have a couple of well-educated parents who come in and do demonstrations of things they like to do, so that is very different than something I would ask a parent who is struggling and maybe feels they don’t have skills or that isn’t their comfort zone.

Education as Key to the Future. Many of the parents described a desire to do better than their own parents as impetus for their involvement. Stated P1,” Unlike my dad

or my mom, I'm gonna be more involved. Neither of my parents were very involved in my schooling and it showed." P4 shared a similar sentiment, explaining "I never had an open relationship with my mother, so I want my kids to be open and to be able to tell me a lot of things, even if it's something (about school) that they know they're going to get into trouble (for)." One of the teachers described her efforts to convey to parents the value of education for a child's future, stating, "I'll say to families, if your kids loves school, if this is their place, chances are they might be a teacher."

RQ4: Barriers to Engagement

RQ4: What are preschool and kindergarten administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers' perspectives of barriers to family engagement in children's education at home and school?

Participants described the barriers that they perceived as preventing the parents at River Elementary from engaging in their child's learning at home and at school. Themes that emerged were: Volunteerism and parent capacity to support learning.

Volunteerism. Parents were asked what factors influenced whether they were as involved in their child's education as they would like to be. Four of the parents in the study were satisfied with the degree of involvement they had with their child's learning in and outside of school, and four expressed a desire to be more engaged. Time constraints, feeling overwhelmed, and depression were cited as barriers to greater participation. P3 described the challenges she faces in staying on top of school information in the face of a reading disability:

> Sitting down and reading all the paperwork that comes home is a struggle. I want to be more involved, I was with my children, but now I'm a working parent and I get up at 3 in the morning. When we get home I'm tired, and I want to come to more of the activities, but I don't.

When discussing influences on the degree of participation, P8 stated, "A huge factor is my work schedule. I work Monday through Friday, and it is hard to get to after school activities with the kids when the activities are set for the middle of the day. I wish this could change because I want to participate more." P5 stated "I asked if I could volunteer on one of the [field] trips, and they never told me anything, so when the day came, I said 'I'll pay for the trip or I'll follow you' nope, we've got this." P2, who expressed that she wasn't as involved as she would like to be, stated,

> I often have to approach the teacher to see if I can help in the classroom. They are always open to it, but I have thought 'what if they did set up a thing where parents sign up to come in and help,' and I don't know how that would go over, it's possible it's been tried, but I've thought if there were a sign-up right now, even though my life feels crazy, if there were a sign up that said can you come every Tuesday afternoon, then I would probably say 'yeah, I'll come every Tuesday afternoon,' but because there's not, I just don't.

P7 stated, "It's so important to never turn away volunteers, but to find an appropriate area for them to serve and to utilize them as very best as possible." She described a previous

experience of volunteering with a teacher outside of this study, during which the teacher gave her small tasks to perform rather than allowing her to engage with the children.

Among the four parents who articulated satisfaction with their level of involvement, three expressed opinions about those they viewed as less involved. When referencing seemingly uninvolved parents, P1 said," It's obvious some parents just don't give…and some do but are too busy being a parent that they don't have time to devote." P4 stated, "Some parents are like 'this is my break, I drop them off, I don't need to see them.' Not me, I love my boys." P6 stated "I wish some parents would get more involved, but we're all busy and have schedules to maintain."

School policies were perceived as a barrier to participation by a number of parents and faculty, consistent with research by Soutulo, Smith-Bonahue, Sander-Smith, and Navia (2016), which found that school policies were a deterrent to parent involvement at school. F1 and F3 mentioned the background check required of all volunteers as a barrier, since many parents don't pass it. Said F3, "Just them having to go through the background check, if they have a felony, they know automatically they can't participate, so that puts a barrier up to parent involvement, although I understand." F2 described school policies, such as children not being allowed in the school hallways before the school day, as not family friendly. She explained, "There are just so many rules for parents. I get it, but they are not conducive to building relationships."

Those parents who were satisfied with their level of engagement cited time as a contributing factor. P7 stated, "Financially, we are able to allow for me to volunteer, and that means that I have the time to do it because I'm not saddled with a full-time job." PI

made a career change because his previous job made it difficult to care for his daughter, stating, “I wanna be that parent, I can be that parent that, no matter what, I can make sure you get to school, I will make sure your clothes are clean, I will make sure you do your homework.” When asked what, if anything, inhibits their participation, parents cited stress and fatigue, time commitments, work, lack of interest in school-based activities, and feelings of inefficacy.

Parent Capacity to Support Learning. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) described several factors that influence the degree to which parents are involved in a child’s education, including involvement opportunities, role construction, and a parent’s belief in his or her capacity to support a child’s learning, or self-efficacy. Tekin (2011) suggested a link between low-income, low-education, and low self-efficacy. Consistent with this, school personnel viewed the challenges associated with poverty as a barrier to family engagement in learning. F1 described the complexity of the situation, stating “A lot of [parents]don’t necessarily know what to do to support their student’s learning. Even though we say ‘read’ at conferences, a parent will say things like, ‘when are you going to start sending home homework?’ I’m not sure some parents are educated enough to be able to read to a student, and how can that parent sit down and read a book with their child if they can’t read?” F4 stated “I don’t think that many of my parents are able, either for mental health reasons or socioeconomic background, or culture, I think there are many things that hinder their ability to interact and provide positive stimulation for their children” She commented on one reason for lack of engagement explaining, “I think that a lot of our parents are more worried about their day to day sustenance than worried

about interacting with their children." Her attitude is consistent with research by Yoder and Lopez (2013), who identified barriers to involvement as including financial constraints and transportation issues. F2 estimated that half of the parents at River Elementary are not able participate to the degree they would like. She stated, "Even our parents who struggle do know that they could do more, but for some reason, is it mental illness, is it depression, what is it that inhibits them?" F2 described the parents who are uncomfortable in a school setting, saying, "They didn't like school maybe, or they never felt comfortable, and now their kids are starting 4k, and it's all new to them, and all those feelings of not liking it return." F3 stated that "the majority do what they are capable of" and F5 reiterated this sentiment, stating "In general, my basic underlying premise is that parents do the best that they can, whether or not this is really good enough for the child."

RQ5: Efforts to Engage Parents

RQ5: How do preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators in a Title I school engage families at home and school?

Parent and faculty described their perceptions of school efforts to involve parents in their child's learning. Emerging themes were: Communication, volunteerism/participation in school events, climate, and parent capacity to support learning.

Communication. Teacher-parent communication was cited by all of participants as critical to a parent's feeling involved in their child's education, and findings were consistent with research by Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015), who determined that parents view teachers at the youngest grade levels as effective in

communicating about a child's progress and in sharing at-home learning activities. P1 said, "That daily communication, it does help. You build rapport with that teacher and there's some trust." He added, "They have a bulletin board inside the school right when you walk in so that's another way of staying informed." Stated P2, "She [the teacher] is great at sending home a monthly introduction of what's going on so we can ask questions. She also sends home benchmarks, like, these are things you can do with your kids to help them." P6 stated that his primary form of communication with the teacher was at drop off and pick up time, and that he was satisfied with that. He went on to say,

> If there is a need with either one of our children when it comes to their education, I hope, and have expressed to their teachers, to let us know about it so we can help out with it, so it's not solely on their shoulders. Teachers have enough responsibility as it is.

While parents were satisfied with the level of communication between school and home, three of those in the study did not feel connected to other parents in the school. P3 said, "I don't live in this neighborhood, so I don't associate with any other parents. I'm not connected with them. I only really see them at drop off and pick up." P6 described his interactions with other parents as "a lot of just 'good morning' and 'how are you doing' type of thing. They're very basic relationships right now."

The faculty at River Elementary also valued communication for building reciprocal relationships with families, all faculty describing this as an important foundation. F2 described her focus on families:

> There's more to education when you're working with this population. My job is to support you in however you need. If you're at the point where you need educational support, I'm here. What kind of books do you want, or what intimates you about reading to your kids, what feels icky when you do it? You really have to have the conversation about what it is that you want them to do, and why.

F1 stated "Relationships are critical. We build these by absolutely suspending judgment. A parent's history is not my business, nor is how they look, smell, behave. My job is to make them feel genuinely welcomed. After some time, a comfort level develops." F3 discussed the importance of honest communication with parents, saying "As I've taught I've gotten better at that, and I've found that I've gotten more out of parents when I am real with them, when I'm honest and tell them what's up."

Volunteerism. Regarding school efforts to engage families, three families referenced the family night events, but only two had attended these in the past. P2 described this event, saying, "The teachers give some extra time and talk about the favorite meals that they make in a crock pot. And then you get a little recipe book with a crockpot when you leave." This parent went on to say, "What I see is they do a lot of after school activities, probably every two months, they have an after-school activity where people come and be involved with others and it teaches them life skills." P6 described the events as fun but said that "a lot of parents stand in the corner and do their own thing." He stated that his family has only attended a couple of the events, explaining "I like seeing that programs like that are available. I wish I could make it to more, but the

time schedule doesn't permit it." P7 described the events as "A little chaotic, and more programmatic than conversational." P1 stated, "You're talking about those nights that I can never get to because they are nights I have to work."

Family nights were identified by all six faculty as important family engagement events. F3 shared a common sentiment in her description:

> Family nights are awesome. They're getting better and better. Every month we do something different. They get a pizza night or a cooking night, and every time they get to take things with them. So, we, in order to get them to come, we give them free things.

F1 also described these events, saying "We have once a month family night. We feed families and give them something for free to try to get them to come here and that's where we work on building things like playing games and interacting with your children."

There was not an emphasis by faculty to recruit parent volunteers into the classroom, as articulated by F1 who stated,

> The families that I think would be awesome volunteers in the classroom are moms that have great jobs, and I'm certainly not going to ask them to miss a day of work to come in and volunteer in the classroom, because around here working in a good job is sought after. A lot of parents who don't have jobs have either kids that they need to take care of at home, or they have a record where they're unable to volunteer in the classroom.

She went on to say, “If you can get your child to bed every night, you can read them a story and you can check their folder and send their backpack to school every day, I’m calling it a win.” A grant-funded reading program, however, that utilizes parents to read to students was cited by three of the faculty as a positive engagement activity. Stated F4, “I can think of a couple of parents that [reading program] has reached who did not have positive experiences at school. Now school is a more positive place.”

F3 described the orientation event that takes place at the beginning of the year for families as an effort to start off on the right foot with families, as well as the challenge involved in engaging families.

> The clientele that we work with here, school and learning in general has not been a fun experience for them, and we know that, so we try to make it as comfortable as we can. We tell them right away at orientation about the background check and tell them ‘We’d love for you to be in the classroom helping us,’ but just them having to go through the background check, if they have a felony, they know automatically they can’t participate, so that puts a barrier up to parent involvement.

The topic of volunteers generated two negative responses. P7 stated, “There needs to be more appreciation and notice for the volunteers, some type of affirmation, giving us a voice, creating that space for us to talk.” Povey, et al (2016) determined that acknowledging volunteers was key to engaging parents. P7 went on to say that there were not a lot of active parent volunteers in the school, explaining “the teachers can’t seek them out. They are happy if parents get their children to school.” P4 described her

involvement, stating, “They [the teachers] try to involve me as much as possible, except for volunteers and stuff like that, that’s something I think the school should be a little more open about is having more volunteers come in or go on field trips

Climate. A positive school climate influences parent involvement in a school (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). All study participants communicated some degree of understanding of this concept and believed that the school made concerted attempts to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Teachers and the school administrator were all viewed as approachable and trust-worthy. School imposed rules were perceived as one factor impeding a positive climate, however, particularly the mandatory background check for volunteers and school rules about being in the building before school. Only one parent in the study had anything negative to say about the climate of the school. F7 explained:

> There have been times I’ve had to call and say I can’t get the kids out of the door right now, I’m really struggling, we’re going to be late, and [the response contained] just a little bit of judgment, specifically with parents that are known to have their act together.

All other comments about the climate of the school were positive, such as that of P1 who stated, “I’ve never had a question, but if I did I could walk into that office and say, ‘hey I have a question.” P5 stated “When you walk in [to the school] somebody always says ‘hi’ even if it’s the secretary.”

All parents and faculty stated that the school principal is approachable, and he was unanimously described as well-regarded. P2 provided an example of his approachability:

> Every time I've talked to him, I have not felt judged. Even though my kids have different issues than other kids, and sometimes I feel like, well, my kids should be fine…there are some kids in this school who really have hard home lives, and my kids don't, but he has made it very clear that my kids, anything they are dealing with is important. He's not looking at me and thinking 'why are you even worried about this?' Everything is important to him.

P6 described the principal as going above and beyond to ensure that their child received the educational support he needed. He said, "He's really, really good and all the kids love him." P4 stated "He's always available… and if he's not available at that time, he will find the time to call you, or he knows that one of us is coming in, so he will take the time to find us." F8 stated that she had only had one interaction with the principal when her child was being bullied, and that "he made me feel as if my concerns were his concerns."

Parent Capacity to Support Learning. Many themes and patterns emerged on the topic of parent capacity to support learning. According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) a parent's belief in his or her ability to support a child's learning influences his or her likelihood of involvement, potentially presenting a barrier for parents lacking confidence in their abilities. The parent participants in this study felt capable of supporting their child's learning, while recognizing that there were likely

parents in the school who were not as confident in their abilities. The faculty at River Elementary described efforts to increase parent capacity by scaffolding parents in their attempts to support child learning at home. Strategies for doing so included efforts to reduce barriers and explicitly telling parents what they are doing well.

Empowering families is a goal of faculty outreach efforts. F6 stated,

> Parents doubt their abilities, so we must tell them 'you can do this.' There is a lot of doubt in the culture of poverty. They are used to being told 'you can't.' We coach them by saying 'yes you can.'

Three faculty members expressed concern that parents are too dependent on the school. F3 stated, "My colleagues say, and I agree, we can't just give and give and give, we need to expect more, we just give too much, they just take too much, and there needs to be a more give and take situation." F2 stated:

> I sometimes think we do so much for our families, me included, that they are super dependent on us. They assume we will give their kids hats and mittens every day, and we do, so there is no responsibility for some families anymore. They assume their kids will be fed or we will send food home with them, or to the doctor if needed. Sometimes I think we enable our parents to be dependent on us to a point where our jaws are on the floor when they ask for something, but we have led them to believe that we will take care of many of these things, and we do.

F4 reiterated this concern, stating “I think we just put a band-aid on instead of getting down deeper and helping them figure out how to resolve their own problems when they come up.”

Themes

In this section, I will further detail the themes that emerged from my research. Major themes were: Parent capacity to support learning, school climate, education as key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. Potential improvements will be addressed as well. This section will be organized by major themes and subthemes.

Parent Capacity to Support Learning

Faculty Expectations. According to Ule, et al., (2015), schools tend to have very definite expectations for how families should be involved, but these ideas are built around middle-class values, and thereby discount such factors as culture, language, and socioeconomic conditions. This did not appear to be the case at River Elementary, and in fact the teachers in general expected little school involvement from families, seemingly adapting their expectations because most families in the school were of low SES backgrounds. While a number of faculty identified traditional forms of involvement, such as volunteering in the classroom, all of them described some type of accommodation of expectations based on what a family was capable of doing, such as F2 who stated, “Parent involvement is a lot lower here because of the demographic.” This appears consistent with Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015), who determined that teachers used fewer strategies to involve parents with lower levels of education or SES. Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degnan, and McRoy (2015), furthermore, determined that a

teacher's beliefs may influence his or her expectations for engaging parents of various backgrounds. The faculty in the study did not have high expectations for parent engagement because of the backgrounds of the families they served.

Parent Self-Efficacy. Parent self-efficacy describes a parent's confidence in his or her abilities to perform the tasks of parenting, in this case to support a child's learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). All parents in the study, with the exception of the grandmother with a reading disability, perceived themselves as competent enough to support their child's learning. Examples of their efforts to do so included communicating with their child's teacher about educational expectations, checking student folders, and reading to their children. Even the grandmother with a learning disability had a desire to become involved, attending a Parent-Teacher Organization meeting on one occasion, but her work schedule and the challenges of raising a grandchild prevented her from becoming more involved.

Barriers. Robinson and Volpé (2015) investigated the parent involvement experiences of families of low socioeconomic backgrounds, determining that while parents recognized the benefits of parent involvement and desired to be involved in their children's school, time and work conflicts were significant barriers to participation. The families in this study cited several barriers to participating in school-initiated activities, time being the primary constraint. Two parents specifically stated that attending evening events is not an option for them. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) identified general invitations and opportunities for involvement as important influences on a parent's involvement in a child's education Among the four parents in my study who

wish to be more involved, all felt restricted by a lack of time, and two felt confined by barriers established by the school, specifically the lack of openness to parent volunteers. The parents who wished to volunteer more frequently did not feel empowered to make this happen. Communicating with parents to determine their availability for school activities could potentially increase involvement in school-directed involvement.

School Climate

All participants in the study described the school principal as welcoming and approachable. Barr and Saltmarsh (2014), in their qualitative study in Australia, determined that parents deemed the attitudes and behaviors of the school administrator as critical to parent engagement. The principal of River Elementary articulates a commitment to inclusivity for all, and this attitude is recognized by all the faculty and parents, each of whom had an example of a positive experience with him. In contrast one parent perceived a judgmental attitude by office personnel answering the telephone.

Parent-teacher relationships were described in positive terms, as well. The teachers all expressed a desire to form quality, reciprocal relationships with the families of their students, and families recognized and appreciated these efforts. Parents valued the opportunity to connect with teachers when dropping off and picking up students, viewing this as a prime opportunity for staying informed of classroom activities. All participants recognized the benefits of the information shared during these informal meetings, believing that it provided a firm foundation for parent engagement in a child's learning at school and at home. All parents stated that they knew how to acquire additional information if necessary, largely by asking their child's teacher. This finding is

consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995,1997) suggestion that positive school -parent relationships influence parent role construction or perception as active participants in the educational process, consequently contributing to increased engagement (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007).

Education as Key to the Future

In describing the reasons for involvement in a child's education, a common theme of the role of education in a child's future emerged. Six parents described education as either a way for their child to achieve more in life than they themselves did, or simply as a path to a successful future. Said one parent, "neither of my parents were very involved in my schooling, and it showed [academically]." Research by Castro et al. (2015) supports the value of parent involvement in home learning activities, determining that parental expectations, parent-child communication in regard to school activities, and reading to children are the parenting behaviors that have the greatest influence on academic performance. Faculty, as well, addressed the important role of parent involvement in a child's success in school and beyond. When considering this finding within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1979), the influence of the environment within which a family operates on attitudes towards education is evident, particularly the influence of the micro- and meso-systems. Not only did the parents' own experiences influence their attitudes and behaviors in regard to the value of education and their role in supporting learning, but the degree which parents felt supported in their role was influenced by their environment, as well.

Volunteerism

Volunteerism is another element of parent involvement described by both faculty and parents, although parents placed more emphasis on this than did the faculty. Consistent with the research of Olmsted (2013), teachers and administration stressed proactive involvement activities, such as reading and talking to children over reactive activities like volunteering in the classroom. Teachers cited the factors associated with poverty, such as time barriers, inflexible work schedules, and financial constraints as a reason for their low expectations for school-based involvement. This attitude is consistent with the research of Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015), who determined that teachers do not encourage families of low SES backgrounds to be involved in school activities to the degree they do middle-class families. At the same time, the teachers described themselves as welcoming to classroom volunteers but not all parents shared this understanding. One parent expressed a desire to volunteer more and another said his offer to volunteer was ignored. Povey (2016) did not find that conveying high expectations for volunteers or offering multiple volunteer opportunities were effective methods for engaging parents, but determined that acknowledging volunteers, demonstrating flexibility in meeting the needs of parents, and a welcoming environment are crucial. The inconsistent messages regarding the role of parents in the school appears to be a deterrent to involvement among at least three parents in the study, supporting Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) assertion that differing expectations for parent involvement among faculty and parents may adversely affect school-involvement programs. Regardless of their degree of school-based involvement, all parent participants

defined involvement as volunteering and attending school events and felt comfortable participating in activities if they elected to do so.

Supporting Learning Outside of School

All participants in the study recognized the importance of supporting a child's learning outside of school and had various approaches to doing so. All parents reported reading to their children, including the grandmother with a reading disability. Daniel (2015) determined that SES impacts a family's pattern of involvement, meaning that a family may be very involved at home in supporting a child's school work, though not physically present in the school. This appears to be the case for the families at River Elementary, who all reported engaging with their children outside of school, through learning and recreational activities. Faculty were described as encouraging and supportive of at-home learning activities, as well. While all families were involved at home to some degree, at least three desired to be more involved in the school environment. These findings support Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995,1997) framework for parent involvement which indicates that parents are more likely to respond to explicit, rather than general, invitations to participate in school activities.

Teacher Outreach Efforts

Daniel (2016) investigated parent perspectives of teacher efforts to involve families and found no difference in outreach efforts reported by families of lower SES backgrounds, suggesting that lower levels of school engagement among families of low SES backgrounds is a result of barriers commonly faced by this population, rather than a difference in engagement efforts on the part of the teacher. At River Elementary,

however, the teachers engaged in some outreach efforts, but explicitly stated that they did not expect significant participation from parents, and two parents claimed that their efforts to volunteer were discouraged. Walker, Ice, and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) found specific invitations from teachers to be the strongest predictors of family engagement in school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sander (1995, 1997), furthermore, described the influence of general invitations and opportunities for involvement on a parent's involvement in learning activities, suggesting that the low expectations for participation among the faculty at River Elementary may be inadvertently inhibiting parent involvement.

Communication

Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015) determined that teachers in early childhood settings, specifically pre-k, were viewed by parents as being more effective than teachers in higher grades at communicating about the child's school performance and in providing suggestions for at-home learning activities. Teachers used fewer strategies to involve parents with lower levels of education, although at the same time, these families assessed teacher communication more highly than did higher-income families. All parents in this study indicated that their child's teacher communicated effectively with them, with pick-up and drop-off time being a prime opportunity for conversation. The experiences of the parents in this study were consistent with Day's (2013) conclusion that parents were more likely to engage when they were connected with an approachable staff member at the school, when there is reciprocal and frequent communication between school and home, and when they are treated as equal partners in the educational process. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995,1997) framework

describes the importance of general invitations and a welcoming environment to encouraging parent involvement. The faculty at River Elementary appear to be committed to communicating openly with parents, as evidenced by comments such as that of F2, who stated "we try to reach parents in as many ways as possible."

Potential Improvements

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory provides a foundation for considering improvements in family engagement at River Elementary. Bronfenbrenner suggested that the context within which a child and family operate affects their attitudes and behaviors, including home-school interactions. School personnel describe an awareness of the unique needs of their students and families and make deliberate efforts to accommodate them. All faculty at River Elementary professed to be satisfied with their efforts to engage parents. Stated F3 "I think we're pretty good at involving parents with the reading program, with the family nights, with our food bags. I think parents really trust us because we have so many things to give them." Faculty used various methods to communicate with parents, including social media, notes, email, phone calls, and personal conversations; however, there were several ideas for improvement. An area for families to congregate before and after school hours was suggested by three faculty. F2 asserted, "I have a family that comes at 7:15, we start at 8, we don't have a spot for them, other than the chairs where they sit, and the moms are on their phones and the kids are digging stuff out of their backpacks." F5 addressed the importance of engaging families in order to find out what they need and want, stating, "I think white middle class teachers are the ones who are trying to come up with the ideas, and I think if the ideas came from

the people who are going to use them, it would happen." Ule et al. (2015) determined that schools have expectations for involvement based on middle-class values, but inconsistent with the actual practice of expecting little parent involvement. F6 stated that more accuracy is needed in determining what families need. "We need to drill down and see if our perception of needs is what the parents really want or need. Is there a mismatch between what our families want and what we offer?"

Discrepancies

Volunteerism

Data analysis revealed discrepancies in parent and faculty attitudes towards volunteering. With the exception of F3, faculty articulated little expectation for parents to volunteer in classroom activities outside of field trips, and instead focused on the need for parents to meet their child's basic needs. At the same time, despite little expectation for significant family involvement, all faculty stated that they welcomed volunteers into their classrooms, and F1 stated that she thought she could make a greater effort to encourage families to come into the classroom. Not all parents experienced the feeling of welcome described by faculty, however. P4 stated that she wished the school was more open to volunteers, and P5 stated that his offer to accompany a field trip was ignored. P2 stated that she would volunteer more often if she was asked. These findings support Hoover Dempsey and Sandler's (1995,1997) assertion that when family and school beliefs and expectations for involvement are different, conflict may occur (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

As far as school-directed activities, faculty placed emphasis on the Family Night events hosted regularly at the school for the purpose of engaging families, but the value of these events was down-played by the parents in the study. Only two of the families had attended a Family Night. Time and schedule was the primary barrier to attendance for families, although P6 stated that the topics addressed were not always of interest to his family. This parent perspective is consistent with Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, and Hernandez' (2013) assertion that traditional parent involvement activities are school-centric, emphasize the school's agenda, and are founded on white middle-class values. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995,1997) framework for involvement suggests that parent motivational beliefs be considered to effectively encourage engagement.

School Climate

All parents with the exception of one indicated that the school climate is always welcoming and the staff approachable. P7 stated that she had perceived annoyance on several occasions when calling the school to say her child would be late or absent, and believed that parents who are typically on top of things were held to a higher standard than other parents. She maintained that all parents need permission to call and ask for assistance without feeling that they are being a bother. P7's experiences contradict those of the other parents in the study, who described the school as accommodating and helpful. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995,1997) asserted that school climate is an important influence on a family's likelihood of involvement. Because only one parent out of eight perceived the environment as unwelcoming, which by her own account did not

inhibit her involvement, This may not be a reason for lack of parent engagement at River Elementary but may warrant further consideration.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research encompasses several factors: Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity (Polit & Beck, 2014). I have ensured credibility by employing an interview protocol and a consistent interview process. I recorded interviews and transcribed them immediately. I ensured accuracy of the data by inviting participants to review the transcript for accuracy and clarifying or correcting points as necessary. No participants volunteered any clarifications or corrections to the transcript. I retained a peer debriefer to assist me in examining my assumptions and interpretations, and to propose alternatives. This individual reviewed the interview transcripts including my notes, as well as my journal entries. We discussed my data collection as well as the coding process and my interpretation of the data. The debriefer asked me questions and I was able to describe my process of analysis to her satisfaction.

I have ensured transferability by providing thick descriptions that depict a detailed picture of the perspectives of the parents and school personnel at River Elementary, enabling the reader to determine any connections between this study and their own experiences. These descriptions provide the detail to depict the voices, feelings, actions and meanings conveyed by the speaker, providing a detailed account of the experiences and perspectives of the interview participants I recorded the interviews and took notes throughout, to capture the essence of participant responses. While describing the

responses of participants, I endeavored to use words and phrases that captured the essence of the individual perspectives of each participant. (Ponterotto, 2006). Descriptions were individually recorded, then compiled and grouped together to identify major themes.

I have ensured dependability with an audit trail that includes detailed note-taking and audio recording of my interviews and by establishing uniform interview conditions, ensuring transparency in the research process. This audit trail consists of documentation from the initial stages of this research project to data analysis. Documents include notes from my initial meeting with the school principal, email correspondence with teachers, raw interview data, interview notes, instrumentation, and a hard copy of the concept map used to identify themes and patterns. Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from three sources, providing perspectives from parents, teachers, and the school (Lodico et al., 2010). I asked the same questions of all participants and compiled and examined data from all three sources to identify themes and patterns (Creswell, 2012).

I have ensured confirmability by completing an audit trail which includes detailed descriptions of the research process from data collection to reporting findings, confirming that the data reported are based on participant responses, and not influenced by researcher bias. I documented the coding process, my thoughts and interpretations of the data, and my rationale for determining themes and patterns. Finally, I have maintained a reflexivity journal in which I recorded my thoughts and responses to the research process. On-going reflection on my role in the study as I collected data enabled me to recognize and avoid researcher bias based on my preconceptions and assumptions.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to examine parent and faculty perspectives of parent engagement in a low-income elementary school. Eight parents/caregivers, five teachers, and the school administrator were interviewed to acquire insights into their perspectives of parent engagement. Data were coded and separated into five primary categories: Parent capacity to support learning, school climate, education as key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. Parents and faculty had similar definitions of parent involvement and valued the school-family relationships that have developed. Faculty described various efforts to involve parents in their child's learning, and parents for the most part agreed that teachers effectively encourage involvement. Definitions of parent involvement crossed a continuum from reading to children to volunteering in the classroom, although teachers had little expectation for parent participation in school-based activities. School climate was described as generally positive, and parents felt welcomed and valued. Education was important to a child's future by parents and faculty, and parents were viewed as playing a critical role in a child's educational success. Parents emphasized school-based participation more than school faculty, who had minimal expectations for parent involvement in the school. All participants valued the role of home-school communication in supporting learning. Discrepancies included perspectives on volunteerism and school climate. Chapter 5 will address my conclusions and interpretation of study results, implications for social change, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

A qualitative single case study was undertaken to explore parent and faculty perspectives of parent engagement in a low-income elementary school. Eight parents/caregivers, five teachers, and one school administrator at a Title I elementary school in a midwestern city were interviewed to acquire insights into their perspectives regarding parent engagement. Data were examined and sorted, and five major themes emerged: Parent capacity to support learning, school climate, education as key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. Parents and faculty had similar definitions of parent involvement and recognized school and faculty efforts to engage families. Faculty focused largely on basic needs as their goal for family involvement, while some parents desired to be more physically present in the school. Lack of time and school policies were identified by many as barriers to greater involvement. This chapter will include my interpretations of the data, study limitations, recommendations for further study, and implications for social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Conceptual Frameworks

This study was framed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework for parent involvement in education and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) described several influences on parents' involvement in their children's education. The motivational beliefs of role construction and self-efficacy, as well as parent perceptions of invitations to participate in school activities comprise the foundational level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework. A

parent's role construction explains his or her beliefs about child-rearing and subsequently the role he or she should play in supporting a child's education. Schools can positively influence a parent's view of his or her capacity to contribute to a child's learning at home and at school by inviting and encouraging participation (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). Faculty and parents in this study, however, acknowledged the difficult task that school personnel face in their efforts to engage parents. Faculty described many factors, including communication challenges and lack of responsiveness to calls that impeded their ability to connect with families. They also cited the barriers that often accompany poverty, such as work schedules and lack of transportation, as serving as challenges to engagement.

While the parent participants in the study conveyed an understanding of their role in supporting children's learning at home and school and recognized the efforts of school personnel to engage them in this process, there was acknowledgement among participants in the study that not all parents have the capacity to be involved. This was attributed to a variety of factors including the effects of poverty, not caring, and time constraints. Faculty articulated a desire to empower families to be actively engaged in their children's learning. Said F6, "Parents doubt their abilities, so we must tell them 'you can do this.'" Participants described less involved parents as too busy or choosing other priorities.

The final construct of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's foundation for understanding parent perceptions of involvement, general invitations, means the parents' perceptions of a school's desire to have them involved. There was a discrepancy between faculty and parent perceptions regarding faculty's welcoming attitude towards volunteers.

While all faculty stated that volunteers were welcome, F1 stated that she was uncomfortable soliciting volunteers because families are so busy. F2 and F3 stated that several families do not pass the required criminal background check, creating a barrier regardless of the individual's offense. P3 stated that she would volunteer more regularly if she was explicitly asked, and P4 stated that she believed the school should be more welcoming to volunteers. P5 described an occasion when he attempted to volunteer and was discounted. This parent stated that he offered to attend a field trip with his child's class, and his offer was simply ignored, with no teacher response. According to Avvisati et al. (2014), schools have a considerable influence on families' involvement in children's education. When the environment is welcoming and the faculty open to participation, parents are more likely to become involved. While the expectation that parents support learning at home appears to have promoted those behaviors, inconsistent expectations among teachers for volunteers at the school site or explicit invitations to participate appear to have deterred parents from participating at school.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory of development also framed this study on perspectives of parent engagement. Bronfenbrenner's framework describing the influence of a family's environment on how they function informed the research questions intended to uncover a deeper understanding of the environment within which a family operates, its influence on parent attitudes and behaviors regarding school involvement, and the role of the school in supporting a family's engagement. All families in the study supported their children's learning to some degree, and for two of the families, this was a deliberate effort to give their children a different experience than they

themselves had. The school environment played a role in parent engagement as well. All participants described the climate of the school as welcoming to all, although one parent stated that she felt some judgment from office personnel. Faculty without exception made deliberate efforts to engage parents through ongoing communication. Study participants demonstrated cognizance of the influences of family environment on parent involvement in children's learning.

Review of Themes

Five major themes emerged from this research on perspectives of parent engagement: Parent capacity to support learning, school climate, education as key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. Study participants all recognized and valued the role that a parent plays in supporting a child's learning at home and at school. The parents in the study felt capable of supporting their children's learning and faculty described concerted efforts to support parents as their children's first and foremost teachers. Faculty had few expectations for parent involvement in school-based activities but encouraged parent involvement at home.

The school climate was described by all participants as warm and welcoming and the staff was viewed as approachable, although four parents expressed a desire to be more involved in school activities. Lack of time to participate in educational efforts, and inflexible work schedules were indicated to be significant barriers to participation. There was some judgment among parents in the study towards those parents who were less involved in school activities than the parent participants in the study.

Participants in the study articulated an understanding of the role of education in a child's future success. Two parents made explicit efforts to be more effective in supporting their children's education than their own parents had, while one strived to emulate his parents. The kindergarten faculty described the active role that students must take to ensure that their parents review information that comes home from the school, thus requiring the students to play a role in facilitating engagement,

Volunteerism was described by all participants as a facet of parent engagement, but there was inconsistency in responses. Faculty perceived themselves as welcoming to volunteers but had little expectation for parent participation in school-based activities, largely based on the low SES background of most of the families in the school. Two parents stated that they would like to be more involved and another said that she would volunteer if asked. A fourth parent stated that volunteers needed more recognition. All participants recognized the important role that parents play in supporting the teacher by encouraging learning at home and made concerted efforts to make this happen.

Home-school communication emerged as a theme. Consistent with the research of Day (2013), all participants articulated the importance of home school communication and quality parent-teacher communication for a child's success. All parents in this study indicated that their child's teacher communicated effectively with them, with pick-up and drop-off time being a prime opportunity for conversation. Teachers described concerted efforts to maintain on-going communication with families.

Limitations of the Study

I endeavored to ensure trustworthiness through a consistent interview process based on an interview protocol. Transcript review was a limitation, potentially compromising trustworthiness, although no individuals offered clarification of the data. Two parent interviews took place at the school, and the remainder were held in a private room at a local coffeeshop. The faculty interviews took place in the individual teacher classrooms after school hours, and another staff member entered and exited the rooms on occasion. When this happened, interviews were halted until the individual exited. The administrator was interviewed in his private office. The study was limited to those individuals who elected to participate, restricting the data to their perspectives. Data collection was limited to the perspectives of the 14 individuals in the study shared during one interview over a limited time.

Recommendations for Further Research

Parent involvement is an important aspect of a child's education, but many parents face barriers to participation including time poverty, lack of access to the school, and lack of information about school matters (Williams & Sanchez, 2013). Parents who are less visible in the school, furthermore, are often marginalized by those who are more active, who connect a parent's presence in the school to their commitment to their children, potentially exacerbating the lack of confidence and inefficacy that parents feel (McKenna & Millin, 2013). Individuals need to possess the social capital that may develop from connections with other parents and adults in the school, however the parents at River Elementary assert that they are not connected to other parents. Focused

efforts to engage parents not only with their children but with each other may result in increased social capital and parent efficacy. Understanding the most effective approaches to facilitating connections and consequently empowering parents through the development of social capital could lend valuable knowledge to the study of parent engagement. Research that investigates the influence of subjective norms, including parents' culture and peer role models, on parent attitudes and behaviors in regard to involvement in a child's learning could provide insights on how to increase parent capacity to support learning and to engage families in a child's learning at home and at school (Alghanzo, 2015).

Areas for additional research based on this study include investigation into the role that parents desire to play in the school environment, as uncertainty remains about whether they would like to be more involved in school-based activities. The effect of faculty attitudes and behaviors on parent involvement, particularly their expectations, and strategies for engaging parents in a Title I school also warrant further investigation, as there are questions about whether school supports effectively engage parents or simply create dependence on the institution. Phenomenological or ethnographic research that seeks a deeper understanding of these issues may provide insights that further the field of study on this topic.

The families and faculty at River Elementary identified multiple barriers to participation in the school, including time, emotional, and logistical constraints. Institutionally-imposed barriers exist at River Elementary, influencing whether families feel welcome as volunteers. School policies including the required criminal background

check required of all volunteers, and rules regulating what time children could be in the school hallways are challenges that prevent many families from feeling fully welcome in the school. A phenomenological study of the institutionally-imposed barriers to volunteerism, including school policies that deter family participation, could provide valuable insights into how to welcome and integrate all families into the school environment

Family nights were described by all faculty at River Elementary as a prominent parent involvement activity. While the parents in the study were all aware that these events occurred, only two had ever attended and both depicted the events as rather chaotic, one parent using the term ‘free for all’ to describe the experience. Research indicates that school-directed events are less engaging than activities that facilitate learning at home and have the smallest impact on student learning (Watkins & Howard, 2015). School-sponsored events that include parents in the planning may give them the voice they need to feel engaged in the educational process (McKenna & Millen, 2013). The parents and faculty at River Elementary viewed education as the means to a successful future for the children. Additional case study investigation into definitions of engagement and parent goals for children among the families at River Elementary might help to clarify expectations for involvement among administration, teachers, and parents, enabling schools to determine how to most effectively facilitate events both at home and at school for the greatest benefit to parents and students.

Implications for Social Change

This section will describe the positive social change derived from this study. I will describe the recommended change, who will provide the change, who will benefit, what the benefits are, and how the change addresses the problem.

Recommendations for positive social change at River Elementary begin with the formation of a parent engagement committee comprised of parents and faculty. This committee would be charged with the creation of a comprehensive parent-engagement policy which would subsequently lead to engagement efforts based on parent needs and interests. Resources available from the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement may prove valuable in identifying program goals and strategies for achieving them. Many parents at River Elementary are eager for an opportunity to become more engaged, while others are more difficult to reach.

School personnel and parents would work together to create and implement a policy to increase parent voice and presence in the school, providing greater opportunity for authentic parent engagement. This committee could investigate influences on parent engagement at River Elementary, including school climate and school-imposed barriers to participation. Okeke (2014) determined that a comprehensive parent involvement policy that seeks parent input about family events is an effective engagement strategy. Efforts to engage families with each other, furthermore, may increase social capital and support parent efficacy (McKenna & Millen, 2013).

It is recommended that school administration facilitate the creation of a parent engagement committee to investigate the needs and interests of parents in the school and

subsequently implement various engagement strategies and activities. This recommendation is based on the research of Mleczko and Kington (2013) who asserted that the school principal must promote both informal and formal means of parent involvement, leadership for these endeavors must be equally shared among all stakeholders in the school. A parent engagement committee will lead to the creation of a shared vision of parent engagement throughout the school.

A parent engagement committee would benefit school faculty and parents alike, by providing an informed, systematic approach to parent engagement. The policy and practices implemented by this group would recognize and address the perspectives of both parents and faculty, giving each a voice in parent engagement activities in the school. As the committee continues to develop and evolve, the potential may arise for reaching out to the community, benefitting community members who wish to be engaged with the school, as well.

The faculty at River Elementary work diligently to connect with the families in their school, striving to treat each family uniquely and to accommodate their needs and capabilities to the extent possible. In general, the school climate is reported to be positive, and the principal and teachers approachable. There are parents waiting for an explicit invitation to be more involved however, and teachers have very little expectation for family participation in the school. Those parents who do volunteer, furthermore, do not consistently feel appreciated. Povey et al. (2016) determined that welcoming and acknowledging volunteers was an important step in parent engagement. Jefferson (2015) stated that educators must modify their perception of families as compliant and

cooperative partners, to a more critical understanding of the interactions between families and schools. A clear and consistent parent engagement policy would ensure that those parents who wish to be more involved in the school understand the process for doing so, and have clearly defined responsibilities for their time in the school. The formation of a parent engagement committee, furthermore, would be an initial step in facilitating the parent connections that are currently lacking in the school.

Time constraints were consistently named by the parents at River Elementary as a significant barrier to involvement. At the same time, parents expressed a desire to be involved in their child's learning. A comprehensive parent engagement policy would allow parents to provide input into the timing and types of events offered, identify potential solutions to barriers, and determine other means of being involved, consequently increasing engagement. Potential solutions and enhancements could include childcare for siblings, a place for parents and children to congregate before and after school, and school-sponsored events that attract and meet the needs of families. Revisiting this policy each year when a new group of students enter the school as recommended by Goodall and Montgomery (2014) and continuing to seek a diverse group of parents for representation on the committee, will ensure that policies and procedures meet the unique needs and interests of each cohort of families.

Conclusion

Parent engagement in a child's education benefits the child academically and socially (Wilder, 2014), and provides a valuable resource to the school, as well (Sharkey, Clavijo, Olarte, & Ramírez, 2016). This study of parents and faculty at a Title I school

revealed several themes related to parent engagement: Parent capacity to support learning, school climate, education as key to the future, volunteerism, and communication. These factors played a role in parent and faculty perspectives of parent engagement in a child's learning. The establishment of a parent engagement committee comprised of parents and faculty was recommended as a method for instigating positive social change. Such a committee would examine the issues surrounding parent engagement at River Elementary, implement a comprehensive parent engagement policy, offer parents the opportunities they seek to support learning at home and at school, and potentially reach those parents who are less engaged. The purpose of this study is perhaps best summed up in the following quote: "At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents." (Hull, n.d). Many people at River Elementary are determined to make that happen.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol—Parents/Caregivers

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today in this interview. My name is Val Krage, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University, conducting a study on parent involvement, to partially fulfill the requirements for my degree. This interview today will take no longer than one hour and will include several questions regarding your experiences as a parent/guardian of a student at this school. I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you share. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or discontinue the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Withdrawing from the study will not impact your current relationship with the school. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to develop a better understanding of how you and other parents view parent involvement at this school.

I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator of the study: Perspectives of Parent Engagement in a Title 1 Elementary School. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Interview questions for parents/caregivers:

1. How do you define parent/family involvement in education?
2. What do you see as your role in supporting your child's learning at home and at school?
3. What factors influence whether or not you are able to be as in engaged in your child's learning as much as you would like to?
4. What efforts does your child's teacher make to involve you in his or her learning at home and at school?
5. What efforts does the school principal make to involve you in your child's learning at home and at school?
6. How could your child's teacher and principal improve efforts to involve you at home and at school?

Potential follow up questions will include variations of the following:

- Can you tell me more about …
- What do you mean by…
- Help me understand…
- What happened when…
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol, School Personnel

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today in this interview. My name is Val Krage, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University, conducting a study on parent involvement, to partially fulfill the requirements for my degree. This interview today will take no longer than one hour and will include several questions regarding your experiences and perspectives as a teacher/administrator in this school. I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you share. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or discontinue the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to develop a better understanding of how you and your colleagues view parent involvement at this school.

I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator of the study: Perspectives of Parent Engagement in a Title 1 Elementary School. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. You will receive one copy and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Interview questions for school personnel:

1. How do you define parent/family involvement in education?
2. What do you see as a parent's role in supporting their child's learning at home and at school?
3. Do you believe that the parents of your students are able to support their child's learning to the degree that they would like to at home and at school? What factors influence whether they can do so?
4. What efforts do you (teachers) make to involve parents in their child's learning at home and at school?
5. What efforts does the school principal make to involve parents in their child's learning at home and at school?
6. What improvements could you make to further involve parents at home and at school?
7. How could the school in general improve its efforts to involve parents at home and at school?

Potential follow up questions will include variations of the following:

- Can you tell me more about …
- What do you mean by…
- Help me understand…
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C: Research and Interview Question Alignment

Research Question	Interview Questions
How do caregivers, teachers, and administrators of children in a low-income preschool and kindergarten define family engagement in a child's education?	How do you (parent and school personnel) define parent/family involvement in education? How do you (parent and school personnel) define parent/family engagement at home? How are the parents in your school involved in their children's learning at home and at school? How are you (parent) involved in your child's learning at home and at school?
What are parent's and caregiver's perspectives in regard to their role in supporting their preschool or kindergarten child's education both at home and at school?	What do you see as your role in supporting your child's learning both at home and at school? What types of things do you do to be involved in your child's learning at home?
What are preschool and kindergarten school personnel's perspectives in regard to the role of parents and caregivers in supporting a child's education both at home and at school?	What do you see as a parent's role in supporting their child's learning at home and at school? How are the parents in your school involved in their children's learning at home and at school?
What are preschool administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers' perspectives with regard barriers to family engagement in a child's education both at home and at school? a child's education both at home and at school?	What factors influence whether or not you (parent) are able to be as engaged in your child's learning as much as you would like to? In what ways can the parents of your students support their child's learning to the degree that they would like to? What factors influence whether they can do so? What efforts does your child's teacher make to involve you in your child's learning at home and at school?
How do teachers and administrators in a Title 1 school engage families at home and at school?	What efforts does the school principal make to involve you in your child's learning at home and at school? What school-wide efforts might increase parent involvement at home and at school?

Appendix D: Themes Related to Research Questions

RQ1-How do caregivers, teachers, and administrators of children in a low-income preschool and kindergarten define family engagement in a child's education?	RQ2-What are parent and caregiver's perspectives with regard to their roles in supporting their preschool or kindergarten child's education both at home and at school?	RQ3-What are preschool and kindergarten school personnel's perspectives with regard to the role of parents and caregivers in supporting a child's education both at home and at school?	RQ4- What are preschool and kindergarten administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers' perspectives with regard to barriers to family engagement in a child's education both at home and at school?	RQ5-How do preschool and kindergarten teachers and administrators in a Title I school engage families both at home and at school?
Parent Perspectives				
Making sure child gets schoolwork done correctly. Being involved with school committees. Helping kids learn at home. Being physically present at school. Being a part of what is going on at school. Guiding a child's learning. Being involved in a child's life in and outside of school. Attending field trips. Doing things with children. Communicating with teachers. Knowing what is going on at school.	Parent-teacher conferences. Talking to child about school. Attending parent nights. Looking in the child's folder. Helping with homework. Supporting the teacher. Classroom volunteering. Parent-child communication. Knowing what is going on in the classroom. Caring for the family's basic needs. Reading to child. Make sure home work is done.		Low reading ability Time Work commitments Stress level Emotional energy School discourages volunteers Childcare issues	Teacher is present at drop off and pick up time, encouraging communication. Phone calls. Notes home. Folders. Sending home learning activities. Teachers and principal are accessible.

Faculty Perspectives			
Meeting basic needs. Returning papers, signing forms. Family nights. Talking to teachers. Volunteering at school. Checking child's folder, Making sure child has school supplies. Sending child to school with basic needs met. Participating on the class Facebook page. Attending school activities. Reading to children. At home learning activities. Returning phone calls.	Child's first teacher. Providing a language-rich environment. Engaging in conversation. At home learning activities. Looking through folder with child.	Background Check required for volunteering. Addiction. Mental illness. Parent discomfort. Language. Families worried CPS will be called. Parents don't know how to support learning.	Non-judgmental attitude and behavior. Relationships. Trust. Promoting efficacy. Social Media

Appendix E: Codes and Themes

Parent Capacity to Support Learning	School Climate	Education as Key to the Future	Volunteerism	Communication
Communication—parents feel informed	Relationships	Want to parent the 'right' way	Continuum	P-T Conferences
Dialogue at pick up and drop off	Trust is critical	Reading to children is valuable	Volunteers must be utilized wisely	d/o p/u times critical for communication
Determining family needs	Principle is approachable	At home learning activities	Family nights do not promote engagement	Parent-teacher rapport
Emotional Support for teacher	Teachers are approachable	Doing a better job than one's parents did	Parents want to be asked to volunteer	Teacher communicating about school activities
Meeting child's basic needs	Parents are not connected	Keeping kids on the right track	Parent bias against those who aren't involved	Parent-child communication
All parents need to support learning	Some parents held to a higher standard	Setting stage for positive adulthood	Parents would volunteer if asked	Teacher calls parents to keep them informed
Removing barriers—time, economic, mental health, illiteracy, stress	No judgment from principal	'My kids can do better than I did'	Supporting/backing the teachers	Parents want teachers to tell them if they need support
Parent efficacy	Trust is key	'Make sure children on are on the right with their learning'	PTA	Child initiates parent-teacher engagement
Most parents are doing their best	Bias towards 'with-it' parents		Being engaged=children who are having issues at school	Conferences aren't adequate for deep conversation
Families are given too much help	Consistent rules for all parents and students		Time/work schedules are a barrier	Trust must be developed
Meeting family basic needs	Teachers do not want to offend parents		Staying on top of learning is a parent's job	Engaging the larger community
Acquire tools to help child learn	Value of teacher-student relationships		Teachers may send messages that they don't want/value volunteers	Teacher outreach efforts to meet diverse families

Parents are responsible for helping kids learn	Welcoming school environment	Parents have knowledge to offer	Parent-teacher partnerships
Parents worried about CPS being called	Students like the principal	Family nights are more programmatic than conversational	Seeing parents on their terms
Doubt in the culture of poverty	Parents may not be comfortable in the school environment	Learning at home can fill a void	Talking with parents about working together to meet student needs
Faculty must tell parents what they are doing well.	Rules are a necessary evil	Give volunteers a voice	Conveying information to parents in a positive manner
Parents are over-dependent on school services	Rules are arbitrary	Parents must be involved in making decisions	Not all parents look in folders
"Help me understand"	Explain things in order to make parents comfortable	Teachers say all volunteers are welcome.	Dialogue
Expectations for parents are different	Background check is a barrier	Teachers don't expect involvement, so they don't ask for it	Students are responsible for relaying info to parents
What are parents capable of?	Honesty	We can't expect more from parents	Parent orientation
Give parents choices that make them successful	School provides food and resources to families		Talk to parents at their level
Barriers keep parents from doing what they would like to.	The school can help parents become more comfortable		Dialogues at pick up time lead to better relationships
Parents have good intentions			The school must not alienate families
Support for parents goes beyond educational topics			Relationship building
"I have to tell you how smart your kid is"			
Problems are fixed for parents preventing them from solving issues			
Families are struggling			