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by

Judith A. Maima

December 2012

A COMPARISON STUDY OF HOME AND SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES ON PARENT  
ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

A Dissertation Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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December 2012

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*“All things are possible through Christ who strengthens me”*

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### Abstract

Overwhelming evidence has documented the large achievement gaps that persist between children from families that are poor, less educated, immigrants, and members of minority racial groups on one hand, and children from families that are middle or high income, educated, and members of the majority racial and linguistic groups on the other. However, an increasingly sophisticated body of research has documented that parent engagement in their child's education can have a significant impact on student learning. Despite agreement on the importance of parent engagement, home-school partnerships continue to be weakened by varying definitions and perceptions of what constitutes effective parental engagement. Current literature suggests that parent and school perspectives and definitions on parental engagement need to be in concert to strengthen this collaboration. Research that compares the perspectives of teachers and families on parent engagement, based on family engagement frameworks, has shown to be effective in enhancing children's learning and socio-emotional development.

This study examined parent and teacher perceptions regarding the role and engagement of parents in four child care centers. The study also examined parent engagement perceptions differentiated by two demographic variables, ethnicity and gender of the parents' child. The alignment of these perceptions was examined with a research-based parent involvement framework (Hoover Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, 2005).

A mixed method sequential exploratory design employing surveys and focus group interviews was used. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) determined statistically significant differences between teacher and parent perspectives for four of the six motivational variables. Findings also revealed statistical significant differences in parent perspectives by ethnicity for two out of the six motivational variables. No statistical significant differences in parent perspectives by the gender of the parent's child were found. The qualitative analysis resulted in several overall emergent themes including family responsibilities and conflicting work schedules. Both parents and teachers perceived communication as the key to successful partnerships.

The results from this research study provide useful empirical data that suggests the need for conversation between home and school to share one another's thoughts and beliefs. Also suggested is the need for schools to focus on implementing programs that help parents overcome challenges posed by contextual variables.

Significant differences found in perceptions regarding involvement between Blacks and the two other ethnic (Whites and Hispanics) groups suggest that portions of the framework may be useful in identifying the most important constructs for specific populations. The possibility that parental family structure could potentially explain a portion of the low levels of parent involvement is also a topic worth of further study.

This information can be used by schools, teacher education programs, and professional development programs to inform future teachers and current teachers that different perspectives do exist, and that there is value in creating forums for sharing those perspectives. Improving relationships and methods of involving parents will enhance student outcomes.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

One of the major challenges facing the United States and other developed nations around the world is the large and predictable achievement gap that continues to persist between children from families that are poor, less educated, immigrants, and members of minority racial groups on one hand, and children from families that are middle or high income, educated, and members of the majority racial and linguistic groups on the other (Dickinson & Neumann, 2006; Harris & Herrington, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, 2009, 2011). These gaps are not limited to comparisons between inner city and affluent suburbs, but extend to ethnically diverse middle class communities as well (Ferguson, 2002; Noguera, 2008; Ogbu, 2003).

Instructional practice that fosters parental engagement and collaboration with teachers has been identified as a promising avenue for increasing children's social and educational performance and narrowing the achievement gap (Davis-Kean, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007). Parental engagement is defined as consistent two-way communication between parents or family members and teachers or administrators of educational programs (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker, & Ice, 2010; Weiss, Caspe & Lopez, 2006). Fostering collaboration with parents in early childhood programs (e.g., child day care centers) is especially important for long term childhood development (Clements, Reynolds, & Hickey, 2004; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Whitehurst, 2001), with the early childhood years representing a critical developmental time when high quality educational support is crucial. One key ingredient needed to achieve this high quality support in early childhood programs is parental engagement,

which has been strongly associated with better school performance and improved social skills and behavior (Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005). Parental engagement, as a key component in preparing young children for future academic achievement, has been identified by numerous professional associations in the field of early childhood education. (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, NIECDE, 2001; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005). However, increasing parent engagement in early childhood programs continues to be a challenge. One key factor that explains the fragility of collaborative bridges between parents and schools can be attributed to the different definitions and perceptions of parental engagement among stakeholders. Unfortunately, few studies have explored teacher and parent perspectives in early childhood programs, particularly child care centers, with the aim of fostering and enhancing parent engagement early in the child's development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research has shown active parent engagement is important for student success, however, research has also shown that this engagement is difficult to establish in schools due to a number of barriers such as ideological differences between parents and schools (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seitsinger, Felner, Brand, & Burns, 2008), low socioeconomic status (Orozco, 2008; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011), low level of parental education (Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven, 2007; Kohl, Lengua, McMahon, & the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2000), parental time constraints (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005) differing ethnic perspectives (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-

Vance, Ryalls & Nero, 2010; Wong & Hughes, 2006) and bias related to the gender or age of the child (Carranza, You, Chhuon & Hudley, 2009; Stevenson & Baker, 1987).

Multiple research-based frameworks have been used to describe the implementation strategies for greater parental engagement with schools; however, gaps persist in how these individual framework components are applied in specific settings. Understanding and comparing parental and school perceptions of parental engagement, with an established theoretical framework, can help guide schools toward more active and meaningful collaborations with parents.

This study will attempt to fill an overlooked gap in the research literature and articulate the needs of families and schools to work together to provide a unified message of the importance of school and parent collaboration with the eventual aim of raising student achievement in early childhood and beyond.

### **Need for the Study**

Although considerable research suggests that parental and school perspectives and definitions need to be in concert to strengthen the collaboration of teachers and parents, notably absent is research that compares these perspectives and is based on parental engagement frameworks that research has previously shown to be effective in enhancing children's learning and socio-emotional development. Most studies that have examined parent engagement perspectives have looked at either parent or teacher perspectives, but not both, and few studies have compared perspectives at the early childhood level based on an established theoretical model.

This study's conceptual framework about why parents choose to get involved in their child's education was developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) with

updated findings by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). Although this theory tends to be applied generally in most settings, it has been rarely tested or researched in child care settings.

This study will gather the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of child care parents and teachers regarding roles and responsibilities of parent engagement. Data will be analyzed using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) theoretical framework to compare both parent and school perceptions of the parent role. The main intent of the study is to understand underlying values, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of the parents themselves, alongside those of teachers in order to partner with parents for greater participation in their child's education. Examining these attitudes may help families and school staff find common understanding about effective parent engagement. With this data, these essential stakeholders will be better able to support young children's academic and social growth and help close the achievement gap.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were;

Research Question One: *Do differences exist between school staff and parent perceptions regarding parent engagement?*

Research Question Two: *Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to race or ethnicity?*

Research Question Three: *Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to the gender of the parent's child?*

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Very little change has occurred in the historical achievement gap between low income and high income students and between minority and non-minority students in urban schools (Teale, Paciga, & Hoffman, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2006), nor in racial and ethnic disparities in suburban school districts (Ferguson, 2002; Grossman & Aneess, 2004; Ogbu, 2003). African American and Latino students of higher socioeconomic status continue to perform worse than their White and Asian peers, and in some cases, worse than poor White students (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Generally, regardless of socioeconomic status, significant deficits for African American and Hispanic students compared to other ethnic groups are evident in almost every measure of achievement including the National Assessment of Educational Progress math and reading test scores and high school completion rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Early childhood education has gained recognition as a way of mitigating the achievement gap. Early interventions rather than late interventions have proven to be effective both academically and economically (Aos, Lieb, Mayfield, Miller, & Pennucci, 2004; Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Committee for Economic Development, 2004). A thorough review of research on early childhood intervention programs performed by the RAND Corporation (Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005) revealed not only academic and behavioral gains but also economic



returns. Effective programs that were evaluated showed returns that ranged from \$1.80 to \$17.07 for each invested dollar.

### **Parental Engagement and Student Achievement**

One target of investment and intervention in early childhood education is increasing parental engagement. Research has shown a positive relationship between active parental engagement in the child's education and academic benefits for students (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Kreider, Caspe, Kennedy, & Weiss, 2007). This active involvement has been associated with gains in academic self-concept, academic attributes and skills, and self-regulation (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan-Holbein, 2005; Nye, Turner, & Schwarz, 2007; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Greater parental engagement has been found to foster higher achievement in specific subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics (Prelow & Loukas, 2003; Senechal, 2006; Nye, Turner, & Schwarz, 2007), as well as improved social skills and behavior in early childhood programs (Christenson & Havy, 2004; Patrikakou et al., 2005). A number of existing programs (e.g., Head Start) and professional organizations (e.g., The National Association of the Education of Young Children [NAEYC]) that foster parental engagement support this overall conclusion (NAEYC, 2005; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). However, evidence from the Head Start Impact study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010) suggested otherwise with few sustained benefits for three year olds through first grade.

Despite the accumulated evidence that strongly suggests the importance of parental engagement (Sheldon, 2007; Caspe, Lopez, & Wolos, 2007; Weiss, Caspe & Lopez, 2006), it continues to be fragile in early childhood programs (Patrikakou et al,

2005; Weiss, Caspe & Lopez, 2006). This fragility is attributed to different definitions and perspectives on what constitutes effective engagement. These differences are associated with various factors, including demographic characteristics. Demographic characteristics constitute the focus of most research on predictors of parent engagement (e.g., Gu & Yawkey, 2010; Hayes, 2011; Overstreet, Devine, Bevans & Efreom, 2005). These characteristics, which may be considered potential supports for, and barriers to, parent engagement include teacher versus parent perspectives, gender of the child, and the ethnicity of the parents.

### **Parental versus Teacher Perspectives**

Parents have varying perspectives regarding their role in parent-school partnerships (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Several studies have revealed a variety of attitudes, including parents who do not feel capable of influencing the school (Ramirez, 2003; Jacob & Lefgren, 2007), those who perceive their child's learning and academic development as a school responsibility rather than a parent's (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Mann, 2006), and those who consider themselves fully capable of influencing the school and perceive their role in their child's learning as a partnership with the school (Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007). A strong desire for a collaborative relationship between home and school with parents taking an equal partner role is a theme that has emerged in many studies (Barge & Loges, 2003; Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007).

However, parents and teachers have conflicting perceptions about the level of parental engagement. Parents believe they provide support that is often not visible to teachers, and teachers perceive helpful parental actions only if they fit within their ideal

definition of parental engagement (Baker, Denessen, & Brus-Laven, 2007). Miretzky (2004) also reported the likelihood for parents and teachers to have conflicting beliefs on what constitutes effective engagement. Themes that arose in this qualitative study revealed defensiveness and miscommunication as challenges to the desired partnership. Parents and teachers recognized the need for both parties to cultivate a better understanding of how each of them perceives parental engagement.

### **Race/Ethnicity as an Influence on Parent Perspectives**

The increasing diversity of culture and language in schools has been one of the strongest demographic trends in today's society. Ethnicity refers to shared cultural traits such as language, religion, and dress. Ethnic minorities account for about 30% of students across the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007), and certain groups are not prospering within the current educational system. Poor student outcomes within these groups suggest a discontinuity between home cultures and school environments (Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005).

Differing parental patterns of engagement based on ethnicity have been noted (Hill & Craft, 2003; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007; Wong & Hughes, 2006). In one study, Caucasian parents reported greater levels of participation in school-based activities compared to Hispanic, African American and Asian American parents (Wong & Hughes, 2006). In other studies, African American parents indicated higher levels of home-based involvement and more frequent communications with their child than Hispanic parents (Jeynes, 2005; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Out of all groups, Hispanic families ranked student learning as a shared responsibility less often than others (Wong & Hughes, 2006). Asians were the only group who indicated spending more time

on school related issues and child-specific problems when they perceived less school support (Riblatt, Beatty, Cronan, & Ochoa, 2002)

Some studies suggest that African American parents and their child's teacher may perceive their participation differently; for example, African American parents appeared to have lower levels of parent engagement on teacher-report items, but not self-report items (Kohl, et al., 2000). Many African Americans feel that they are unheard when engaging with teachers (Gutman & McLoyd, 2002; Howard & Reynolds, 2008). The mistrust of schools and teachers by many African Americans may be attributed to negative school experiences in their past (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Weatherspoon, 2006).

Latino parents have been reported to be less likely to participate in school matters more out of respect for the teacher authority rather than lack of interest in their children's education (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Hispanic parents are not as likely as others to consider students' learning a shared responsibility (Wong & Hughes, 2006), suggesting that a language barrier may be an influence. Hispanic parents who spoke more English indicated higher levels of shared responsibility than parents who spoke less English (Wong & Hughes, 2006). In a qualitative study of family interactions, Latino parents with lower education levels found that their experiences and interactions with school personnel left them feeling inferior, embarrassed, helpless and shameful (Auerbach, 2002).

### **Gender of Child as an Influence on Parent Perspectives**

Few studies have examined the role the child's gender plays in parental engagement. Achievement gaps between genders, especially among minority groups

where female minority students have outperformed their male counterparts, have been noted. This achievement gap begins in the early years and widens into college years (Brown, Alabi, Huynh, & Masten, 2011; Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, & Cortina, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Looking at parent engagement based on gender of the child may offer some insight into achievement disparities.

Results from Stevenson and Baker's (1987) analysis showed a possible association between the age and gender of the child and the extent of parental engagement activities. Parents of boys focused more on engagement activities when the boys were young, whereas parents of girls remained more involved regardless of age. Several studies discuss this association between gender and parent engagement (Carranza et al., 2009; Lopez, Ehly, & Garcia-Vasquez, 2002). Citing the U.S. Department of Labor's American Time Use Survey, Bertrand and Pan (2011) stated that parents of girls are more likely to have books in the home and read to their children than are parents of boys. They are also more likely to take girls rather than boys to a concert or to sign them up for an extracurricular activity. Family structure correlated strongly with the behavioral deficit of boys, with boys raised outside of a traditional family more likely to perform poorly compared to girls in the same situation (Bertrand & Pan, 2011).

### **Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model to Assess Parent Perspectives**

The complexity of factors that influence parent engagement noted above suggest the need for a framework to organize research questions. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of parent engagement provides such a framework, in which several evidence-based motivational variables help explain why parents become engaged in their child's education and how this engagement influences student learning. According to the

first level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model (2005), there are three factors influencing parents' decisions to be engaged in their children's education. The three factors are (a) personal motivation, which includes both parental role construction for engagement and parental sense of efficacy for helping a child succeed in school, (b) perceptions of contextual invitations to engagement, which include both perceptions of general invitations from the school and specific invitations from the teacher and student, and (c) family life context variables, which include skills, knowledge, time, energy and family culture.

Table 1

*The Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler Model of Parental Engagement (Level 1)*

Personal Motivation		Invitations			Life Context		
Parental Role Construction	Parental Efficacy	General School Invitations	Specific School Invitations	Specific Child Invitations	Knowledge and Skills	Time and Energy	Family Culture

Note: Adapted from Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 2005.

**Personal Motivation.** Parent motivational beliefs are shaped by several individual factors such as parents' understanding and knowledge of child development and child rearing, attitudes about supporting academic achievement, and expectations of important family members (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005).

**Parental role construction.** Parental role construction involves parents' beliefs and expectations about the role they should play in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), influenced by expectations of individuals from the family, school, and community about parental roles (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Auerbach, 2007; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). Role construction has been associated with student achievement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Research

across varied levels has suggested that parent role construction is a motivator for parent engagement and can be influenced by parent support systems (Auerbach, 2007; Drummond & Stipek, 2007) and intervention programs (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001).

Few studies, however, have been conducted examining how Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) conceptualization of parents' role construction is related to parents' decisions about whether and how they should be engaged in their child's education. Within this group of studies, a substantial number have linked this role to parents' home based or school based involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007). In his 2002 study, Sheldon collected survey responses from 195 mothers to investigate beliefs and social connections as predictors of parental engagement. He found that role construction predicted both home and school engagement, and that the bigger the parents' social network was, the more they were involved in both settings.

Most of the available research indicates that parents who hold an active role construction are more likely to participate in home based and school based activities than parents who have a passive role construction (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005; Sheldon, 2002). Active role construction is the belief that parents are responsible for their child's academic achievement and should and do take action to meet these responsibilities (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005). A passive role, in contrast, is a belief that the school is responsible for the child's academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Reed, Jones, Walker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2000) reported the important influence of parental role construction on parental engagement, as reported by parents of

elementary school children, and found that teachers' invitations to get parents involved influenced the parents' role construction. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) supported the earlier findings with a sample of parents of middle school children. Both role construction and parents' perceptions of student invitations emerged as significant factors in predicting parent engagement. In contrast to these studies, other tests of the model have found that role construction has more limited influence on parents' home based involvement activities (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Whether the role is construed as a categorical variable (Anderson & Minke, 2007) or a continuous variable (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007) may explain conflicting results in studies testing the model.

***Parental Self-Efficacy.*** Like role construction, sense of efficacy is related to parents' experiences and influenced by others such as teachers, family members, and other members of the community. According to Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, parental sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school depends on their expectation of good outcomes from their help (Green et al; 2007; Shumow & Lomax, 2002).

Previous research using Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model found that self-efficacy explained small but significant portions of the variance in home based engagement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Sheldon, 2002) demonstrating less strength than predicted by efficacy theory. How well parent efficacy may predict specific forms of parent engagement has been inconsistent with efficacy operating differently in home and school settings (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Sheldon, 2002; Waanders, Mendez, & Downer,



2007). Some methodological features may explain differing dynamics of efficacy, role construction, and home or school based engagement among different ethnic groups. For example, parents who are more involved are also more likely to fill out surveys and return them.

### **Invitations.**

***General School Invitations.*** If school settings approve and encourage parents' and families' engagement in the school and students' learning, the general climate supports involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, Whitaker & Ice, 2010) especially when invitations offer ideas for supporting student learning at home and school. Several studies have emphasized the importance of the school environment for parental engagement (Lopez, Sanchez, & Hamilton, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005; Christenson, 2004), including Griffith (2001) who reported that schools parents described as welcoming recorded more involvement than others. While school climate or general invitations to family involvement play an important role in supporting parental engagement, specific invitations from the teacher and student appear to play an even more important role.

***Specific School Invitations.*** Teachers' invitations for involvement are important predictors of parents' engagement across all grade levels regardless of parental characteristics (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007). Several studies have identified this construct as one of the most effective and stable predictors of both school and home based participation (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000; Green et al., 2007).

Some researchers have found teacher invitations to be more strongly related to parental engagement than role construction or efficacy (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al, 2007; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2000). Parent engagement levels increased when teachers consistently communicated with parents and provided essential learning activities for parents to participate in with their children. However, Green and colleagues (2007) found no evidence of a predictive relationship between teacher invitations and home based involvement.

***Specific child invitations.*** Several studies have confirmed the importance of child invitations in parent engagement activities that promote student learning (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). However, there continues to be limited research that suggests that specific child invitations are significant predictors of parental engagement (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007).

Influenced by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) parent engagement model, Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) examined four psychological constructs of parent engagement which included parents' role construction, parents' self-efficacy, parents' perceptions of teacher invitations, and parents' perceptions of students' invitations to become involved. Survey responses from parents revealed child invitations as a significant predictor of parent engagement. These findings were significant across three middle school grades accounting for approximately 25% of the variance at each grade (Deslandes and Bertrand, 2005).

**Life Context.** Recently, in a review of earlier research, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) added life-context variables as a fourth area. Parent perceptions of life

context variables play an important role in parents' engagement decisions despite being out of the range of the school influence. These variables include knowledge and skills, time and energy, and family culture.

***Knowledge and skills.*** Findings are mixed on the motivational strength of parents' perceived knowledge and skills in engaging in their children's learning. Some research has indicated that parents' knowledge and skills positively predict the types of activities in which they choose to participate (Green et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005), as well as activities managed by others (Garcia Coll, Akiba, Palacios, Bailey, Silver, DiMartino & Bailey, 2002; Weiss, Mayer, Krieder, Vaughan, Dearing & Hencke., 2003). Self-perceived knowledge and skills were positively correlated to outcome variables (home and school based) but did not predict levels of school based or home based engagement (Green et al., 2007).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model suggests that parents' awareness of their knowledge and skills affects their involvement in specific activities. The variability in how teachers communicate with parents suggests that parents may not have knowledge of what their children's teachers expect of them or how they can best be involved in their children's education. This awareness of teacher expectations for parent engagement may be more important for less knowledgeable parents, who may assume their involvement is not needed unless they are asked.

Few studies have been conducted examining differences in the knowledge and skills of parents of different ethnic and socio-economic groups. However, the limited research that has been done reveals differences by suggesting that minority and low income parents may believe they have limited knowledge and skills to be involved with

their children's education (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Lawson, 2003). Lawson's (2003) ethnographic study is one of the few studies examining differences in the knowledge and skills of parents of different ethnic and socio-economic groups. This qualitative study addressed perceptions of 12 teachers and 13 parents from an urban elementary school serving a low income and culturally diverse population. Analyses of ethnographic data identified communication between families and schools as the main barrier to parental engagement. A school-centric view of parent engagement which ignores the needs and perceptions of the parents was also identified in this study.

***Time and Energy.*** Although parents may know about involvement opportunities and possess the skills to be involved, they may lack sufficient time or energy. Parents have reported time constraints to be a major hindrance to their participation (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Weiss et al., 2003). A study examining the perceptions of refugee parents regarding their engagement in Wisconsin public schools revealed that despite positive attitudes toward engagement, parents indicated time was a major barrier to parent engagement (Rah, 2009).

Time constraints may limit how often parents are able to participate, as revealed in a study that looked at the home and school based involvement of a diverse group of parents of first, third, and fifth graders in Maryland (Epstein, 2001). In this study, the frequency of school based engagement was found to be very low. Over seventy percent of the parents reported never having helped in the classroom, chaperoned a field trip, participated in school fundraising, or assisted in any of the school activities due to time barriers.

***Family Culture.*** Family culture plays a significant role in parents' ideas about the ways that they should support their children's learning as well as how they respond when schools request engagement (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Whetsel, Green, Wilkins, & Closson., 2005; Murry, Kotchick, Wallace, Ketchen, Eddings, Heller, & Collier., 2004). Families from cultures that suggest distanced roles for parents in their children's academic learning may be restrained by cultural expectations (Golan & Peterson, 2002). On the contrary, families whose cultures expect direct family engagement in supporting their children's academic learning may offer more active engagement than their children's schools desire or prefer (Keyser, 2007). Cultural challenges were found in a qualitative study in which Turkish families report their trouble understanding the school culture (Isik-Ercan, 2010). Parents discuss how communication with the teachers helps them understand the new school culture. Results indicate that stronger partnerships between home and schools can be achieved through conversations.

### **Significance of Study**

The importance of parent engagement for student learning is documented in a wide range of studies. To strengthen parent-school collaboration, there is need to understand how various families and schools perceive and define parent engagement, especially in the early childhood years (Patrikakou et al., 2005; Reynolds et al., 2001; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

Unfortunately, very limited research that addresses and compares the perspectives of teachers and parents regarding parent engagement in early childhood programs has been conducted. This study will collect and compare both teacher and parent perspectives

regarding parent engagement in four child care centers with diverse student populations. Many child care centers have been not been fully effective in engaging parents mainly due to the varying perspectives and definitions of parent engagement; therefore, this study will attempt to reconcile these differences by examining the various perspectives represented.

This mixed method study will add to the research by using both quantitative and qualitative methods using surveys and focus group interviews to examine both family and school staff perspectives. These perspectives will be analyzed and compared based on Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (2005) framework to understand what motivates parents to be involved in their children's early childhood education. The findings of this study will guide early childhood programs, educators, and policymakers as they strive to understand what motivates parent engagement and disengagement. The goal is to create and support effective, inclusive parental engagement programs, with positive effects on student outcomes and thus helping closing achievement gaps.

The following questions guided this study.

Research Question One: *Do differences exist between school staff and parent perceptions regarding parent engagement?*

Research Question Two: *Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to race or ethnicity?*

Research Question Three: *Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to the gender of the parent's child?*

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

Based on a parental engagement theoretical model (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 2005), this study examined and compared perceptions of parents and school staff regarding parental engagement from five child care centers. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 2005) studied the construct of parent engagement and broke it down into eight distinct categories outlining factors that motivate parents to be involved in their child's education. This study employed six of those eight categories to examine parent and teacher perceptions, and also the extent parent perceptions differ based on ethnicity and gender of the parent's child.

#### **Research Design**

A mixed method sequential explanatory design of surveys and focus group interviews was used for the study. First, quantitative data from survey responses was collected from parents and teachers. Results from the quantitative data analysis helped to shape the questions asked during the focus group interviews, which served as qualitative data. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data helped ensure data reliability (Hesse-Biber & Crofts, 2008).

**Participants.** Participants were from a sample of 58 teachers and 81 parents or guardians of children from child care centers in a county in southeast Texas. Five child care centers that cater to low to middle income diverse populations and serve children in ages ranging from 0-5 years old were used.

**Sampling Procedure.** Phase 1: The five child care centers were invited to participate with invitations sent by e-mail and telephone to the directors. Invitation letters

included details about study purpose, benefits, and a confidentiality statement. Once directors agreed to participate and after the University of Houston's human subject's board approval, an application was sent out to the San Jacinto College human subject's office requesting permission to conduct a research study at each of the child care centers. After obtaining approval, cover letters with information about the study, consent letters, and surveys were distributed to parents of the children. Also in the letters, participants were invited to a focus group interview that took place at one of the child care centers four weeks after the surveys were returned. Those participants who volunteered to participate were asked to provide a phone number and e-mail address in a space provided on a form on the last page of the survey.

Phase 2: Parents and teachers who indicated their willingness to participate in the focus group interviews were contacted by e-mail and telephone and given details of the venue and time. There were two separate focus groups, one for teachers and one for parents. Each group included six participants. Since more than six parent participants and more than six teacher participants had indicated their willingness to participate in the focus group, there was a random selection of six parent participants and six teacher participants.

### **Instruments**

The study used four instruments for data collection: a parent engagement survey for parents to record their perceptions on parent engagement, a parent engagement survey for teachers to record their perceptions on parent engagement, a parent demographic questionnaire, and a teacher demographic questionnaire. The parent demographic questionnaire asked parents to provide their background information and family



characteristics. The teacher demographic questionnaire required teachers to provide information on background characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and work status.

Table 2

*Study Instruments*

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Parent Involvement Survey (Appendix A)	Parents/Guardians	Measures parent perceptions on parent involvement
Parent Demographic Survey (Appendix B)	Parents/Guardians	Records parent background information including age, marital status, income level, education level, and gender of parent's child.
Teacher Perceptions Survey (Appendix C)	Teachers	Records teacher perceptions on parent involvement
Teacher Demographic Survey (Appendix D)	Teachers	Records teacher background information including age, education level, and years of teaching experience

**Parent Involvement Survey.** Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) developed their theoretical model of the parental engagement based on three central questions: *Why* do parents become involved in children's' education? *What* do they do when they're involved, that is, what mechanisms of influence do they engage when they are involved? *How* does their involvement, once engaged, influence student outcomes?

This instrument assesses eight domains for which Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) developed corresponding scales. These scales, with the exception of perceptions of child invitations, was used in this study to assess parents' beliefs and perceptions of their involvement in their children's education. (See Appendix A for specific items).

The above measures were developed and refined during a three-year study of the parental involvement process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Walker et al., 2005)

and have alpha reliabilities ranging from .78 to .83. In addition, scale items have been associated with hypothesized constructs providing evidence for construct validity.

**Parent Demographic Survey.** A demographic survey, included 10 questions: 1) Gender of Focus Child, 2) Parent Occupation, 3) Parent Income, 4) Number of Children, 5) Parent Ethnicity, 6) Parent Education, 7) Native Language, 8) Marital Status, 9) Gender of Parent, 10) Hours of Work per Week. Parents with more than one child at the child care were required to select and focus on only one child.

On the last, detachable page of the survey, parents were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in a focus group interview by completing the detachable page with their contact information. A separate envelope was provided for the completed detachable page to ensure that it was not linked to the survey. After the packets were returned, participants who had expressed an interest in participating in the focus group interviews were contacted. (See Appendix B).

**Teachers' Perceptions on Parent Involvement Survey.** The teacher perceptions on the parent involvement survey was designed by the principal investigator to be parallel to the Parent Involvement Survey. The items on the Parent Involvement Survey for Teachers were identical to the items on the Parent Involvement Survey with one qualification--the wording was changed to make it appropriate for teachers. For example, the item "I believe it is my responsibility to volunteer at the school," on the Parent Involvement Survey, was changed to "I believe it is the parent's responsibility to volunteer at the school." The item "I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child about the school day" was changed to "My students' parents' have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with their children about the

school day.” (See Appendix C for specific items). The cronbach’s alpha reliability for the teacher perception scale ranged from .48 (Self-Efficacy Scale) to .92 (Time and Energy Scale).

**Teacher Demographic Survey.** Also included in the survey were four demographic questions about the school based participants: 1) Age, 2) Gender, 3) Ethnicity, and 4) Teaching Experience. On the last, detachable page of the survey, teachers were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in a focus group interview by completing the detachable page with their contact information. A separate envelope was provided for this detachable page to ensure that it was not linked to the survey. After the packets were returned, those participants who had expressed an interest in participating in the focus group interviews were contacted. (See Appendix D).

### **Focus Group Interviews**

Two separate face-to-face focus group interviews, one with a subsample of 6 parents and one with a subsample of 6 teachers, were conducted at one of the five child care centers four weeks after the surveys were received. The interviews were semi-structured, with 6 predetermined questions. The questions were based on the quantitative findings from survey responses. The focus was on those findings that reflected statistical differences in perceptions between groups, high scale scores, and unexpected or inconsistent results. The purpose of these interviews was to explain and expand on these results in order to understand and to ascertain parents' and teachers' definitions and perceptions of parent engagement.

**Data Collection Procedure.** Data collection began in March and continued through May of 2012. Survey kits were prepared for every teacher in each of the five

child care centers. Each survey kit contained enough survey packets for every student in the classroom and a direction sheet for teachers. The direction sheet instructed teachers to distribute a packet to each family. Teachers were asked to tell parents that their school was participating in a study of parent involvement and that it was important that they take the survey home and return the packet within a week, regardless of whether or not they agreed to participate in the focus group. A large envelope was provided for teachers to store collected surveys. Reminders were sent out after one week and again after two weeks in the form of the initial letter and invitation. Therefore, the deadline to complete the surveys was extended twice.

Survey packets for parents included the Parent Involvement Survey, Parent Demographic Survey, an introductory letter, a consent form and two labeled envelopes. One for the survey and one for the detachable focus interview page. The introductory letter provided general information about the study and asked for parents' participation. There was a place at the bottom of the introductory letter for parents to indicate whether or not they agreed to participate. If parents agreed to participate, they were asked to complete the enclosed consent form and surveys. On the last detachable page of the survey, parents were able to indicate their willingness to participate in a focus group interview. If parents chose to participate in the focus group interviews, they were required to fill out their contact information and place the detachable page into the provided envelope. Surveys and consent forms were also placed in assigned envelopes. Sealed envelopes were returned to the school within one week of receipt.

Child care directors were given survey packets for each teacher at the participating child care. Survey packets for teachers included the Teacher Perceptions

Survey, Teacher Demographic Survey, an introductory letter, a consent form and an envelope. The introductory letter provided general information about the study and asked for teachers' participation. There was a place at the bottom of the introductory letter for teachers to indicate whether or not they agreed to participate. If teachers agreed to participate, they were asked to complete the enclosed consent form and surveys. On the last detachable page of the survey, teachers were able to indicate their willingness to participate in a focus group interview. If teachers chose to participate in the focus group interviews, they were required to fill out their contact information and place the detachable page into the provided envelope. Surveys and consent forms were also placed in assigned envelopes. Sealed envelopes were returned to the child care director's office within one week of receipt.

A week after survey packets were distributed, directors were contacted and asked to have teachers send all returned surveys, including theirs, to the front office. Reminders were sent out after one week and again after two weeks in the form of the initial letter and invitation. The principal investigator collected all packets from the front office. This data was entered into a statistical software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data set for analysis.

Focus group interviews were arranged four weeks after the surveys were returned. Parents and teachers, who had indicated an interest in participating, were invited to a session at one of the five child care centers. Parents and teachers who completed the surveys and participated in the focus group interview portion of the study, received a \$20.00 gift card from a local store at the conclusion of the interview.

The focus group interviews were conducted on two separate days, one with a subsample of teachers and one with a subsample of parents. These sessions, which were set up for 6 participants, were led by the researcher and a colleague, and audio taped with consent of the participants. The researcher conducted the focus group while the colleague took notes on responses, body language, and non-verbal cues. The interviews were semi-structured with 6 predetermined questions shaped from results obtained from the quantitative data analysis. Participants were also allowed time for general discussion and for any concerns arising during the focus group interviews. Each session lasted for about an hour. Refreshments and babysitting were provided during the sessions.

**Participation Consent.** Interviews were audio recorded, with the consent of the interviewees, and audiotapes were coded with a unique ID number. Tapes and field notes were transcribed with all references to individuals and programs removed. All coded computer-based data was stored in a secured, locked location. All paper data was stored in a locked file and is only accessible to the researcher. Findings from all data analysis were reported anonymously in group form for the quantitative and qualitative results.

### **Data Analysis**

To answer the research questions the following procedures were used:

*Research Question One: Do differences exist between school staff and parent perceptions regarding parent engagement?*

Descriptive statistics in the form of item means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum values of every question for each respondent were computed and reported in tables and graph forms, in addition to discussion of the findings. The mean scores on the subscales were created by averaging the results of the responses based

on a 6-point scale. The mean scores for teacher and parent responses to parallel items on the six scales of the survey were compared to determine if there was a difference in perceptions of these practices. The difference between these mean scores on each of the six scales of the survey for the two groups were arranged in numerical order from highest to lowest. This representation of data in an organized way helped in identifying patterns in the set of scores.

Additionally inferential statistics in the form of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were run to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding parent involvement in schools through the lens of the six motivational variables. The categorical independent variable for this question was teacher versus parental group. The dependent variables of interest were the parent and teacher responses to the parallel items on the six scales.

*Research Question Two: Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to race or ethnicity?*

A MANOVA was run to determine whether statistically significant differences exist between parents' perceptions regarding parent involvement across ethnic groups. The categorical independent variables for this question were family participants grouped as Caucasian, Hispanic, and African American. Asians were excluded from this analysis because only two completed the surveys. The dependent variables of interest were the parent participant's responses to items on each of the seven scales on the parent surveys.

*Research Question Three: Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to the gender of the parent's child?*

MANOVA was run to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between parents' perceptions regarding parent involvement according to the gender of the parent's child. The categorical independent variables for this question were the gender of the child. The dependent variables of interest were the family participant's mean responses to each of the seven scales on the parent surveys.

The MANOVA was chosen for analysis of these data because it allows for simultaneous testing of more than one dependent variable. The areas of perspectives with the highest divergence were addressed in the focus groups.

Focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed. Collected focus group data was analyzed descriptively. Codes were created for key concepts, and data was categorized according to these codes. Responses from the recorded focus group interviews were categorized according to the three constructs (parents' motivational beliefs regarding their involvement, parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and parents' perceptions of life context for involvement in their children's education) on the surveys. Collected data was also categorized according to themes which emerged from the conversations. To assure inter-rater reliability, the researcher and a colleague independently categorized the data from transcripts of the focus group audio tapes. These categorizations were then compared and discrepancies in analysis were discussed and negotiated to consensus. Findings from the surveys and interview results were summarized and organized according to the research questions.



**Summary**

This chapter described the methods used for this study. Information on the research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures was provided.

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

### **Chapter IV**

#### **Results**

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine the perceptions of teachers and parents regarding parent engagement in child care centers based on a parental engagement theoretical model (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 2005). A sample size of 78 parent participants and 56 teacher participants (see Appendix E for respondent demographics) were included in analysis after incomplete surveys were identified. Three of the surveys met the incomplete scales criteria (Rudestam & Newton, 2007) and were excluded.

Data collected from a parent perception survey for parents to record their perceptions on parent engagement (Appendix A), a teacher perception survey for teachers to record their perceptions on parent engagement, (Appendix B), a parent demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), and a teacher demographic questionnaire (Appendix D) were used to answer three research questions:

1. Do differences exist between school staff and parent perceptions regarding parent engagement?
2. Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to race or ethnicity?
3. Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to the gender of the parent's child?

#### **Research Question One**

The first research question addressed in this study was, "Do differences exist between school staff and parent perceptions regarding parent engagement?"

Survey questions were grouped by three constructs (i.e., **A--Personal Motivation** (A1--Role Construction and A2--Self-Efficacy), **B--Invitations** (B1--Specific Invitations and B2--General Invitations) and **C--Life Contexts** (C1--Knowledge and Skills and C2--Time and Energy). Descriptive analysis revealed means and standard deviations, and a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the differences between the groups. Parent and staff were the grouping variables, and scores on the three constructs were the dependent variables. Table 3 displays the results of the descriptive and multivariate analysis.

Table 3

*Parent and Teacher Responses (N =134) to Six Parallel Motivational Scales*

	<i>df</i>		<i>F</i>		<i>p</i>		<i>η</i> <sup>2</sup>
<b>Multivariate Test<sup>a</sup></b>	6.000		14.84		.000		1.000
<b>Scales</b>	Parents (n= 78)		Teachers (n=56)		<i>F</i> (1,132)	<i>p</i>	<i>η</i> <sup>2</sup>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
<b>A--Personal Motivation</b>							
A1--Role Construction	5.17	.67	5.15	.66	.022	.882	.00
A2—Self-Efficacy	4.87	.67	4.09	.66	7.38	.000***	.05
<b>B--Invitations</b>							
B1--Specific Invitations	2.75	1.2	3.78	1.3	20.8	.000***	.13
B2--General Invitations	5.13	.92	5.60	.69	10.4	.002**	.07
<b>C--Life Contexts</b>							
C1--Knowledge and Skills	4.99	.68	4.68	1.3	1.15	.022*	.00
C2--Time and Energy	4.83	.85	4.10	.98	20.6	.000***	.13

Note. 1 = Disagree Very Strongly, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Disagree just a little, 4 = Agree just a little, 5 = Agree, 6 = Agree very strongly. Wilks Lambda was applied. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

There were significant overall multivariate differences between parent and teacher perspectives regarding parent involvement in child care programs (Wilks'  $\lambda = .588$ ,  $F[6, 127] = 14.8$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = 1.00$ ). The large effect size indicated that 100 % of the variance in scores reported among groups could be explained by the differing perspectives of the parent and teacher respondents. Given the significance of the overall test, univariate main effects were examined.

The results indicated that parents reported higher perceptions of parent involvement than teachers did on parental self-efficacy, parental knowledge and skills, and parental time and energy. Teachers reported higher perceptions of specific invitations and general invitations from the school than parents did. Specific invitations are also distinct, as both teacher and parent participants report low perceptions.

Univariate analyses revealed that self-efficacy, specific invitations, general invitations, knowledge and skills, and time and energy were significantly different for teacher and parent groups. Separate ANOVAs were run on items within each of these five scales to further investigate differences between the two groups (Appendix F). Using a Bonferroni adjustment to minimize the risk of a type I error associated with multiple tests, each ANOVA was evaluated at a significance level of .001 (.05/33). These follow up ANOVAs revealed significant mean differences in responses from teacher and parent participants as follows.

**Self-Efficacy.** Significant mean differences in responses between teacher and parent participants were found in three items within this scale: Parents reported higher means than teachers in Q2 “I don’t know if I am getting through to my child,”  $F(1, 134) = 28.7$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Q3 “I don’t know how to help my child make good grades in

**school,”**  $F(1, 134) = 28.7, p < .001$ ; and **Q5 “I don’t know how to help my child learn,”**  $F(1, 134) = 34.9, p < .001$ . That is, in comparison with teachers, parents reported a higher ability to get through to their children, help their children get good grades, and help their children learn.

**Special Invitations.** Significant mean differences in responses between teacher and parent participants were found in five out of six items within the scale. Teachers reported higher means, indicating that they had greater confidence than parents in all the five items as follows; **Q2 “My child’s teacher asked me or expected me to supervise my child’s homework,”**  $F(1, 134) = 13.7, p < .001$ ; **Q3 “My child’s teacher asked me to talk with my child about the school day,”**  $F(1, 134) = 21.7, p < .001$ ; **Q4 “My child’s teacher asked me to attend a special event at the school,”**  $F(1, 133) = 13.2, p < .001$ ; **Q5 “My child’s teacher asked me to help out at school,”**  $F(1, 134) = 23.1, p < .001$ ; and **Q6 “My child’s teacher contacted me (for example, sent a note, phoned, e-mailed)”**  $F(1, 134) = 11.5, p < .001$ . Parents reported stronger beliefs than teachers in **Q1 “My child’s teacher expected me to supervise my child’s homework.”**

**Time and Energy.** Finally, significant differences in participants’ mean responses were found in four out of six items within this scale. Parents reported having more time and energy to communicate effectively with their children and children’s teachers, to help with and supervise homework than was perceived by the teachers; **Q1 “I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child about the school day,”**  $F(1, 134) = 16.3, p < .001$ ), **Q3 “I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child’s teacher,”**  $F(1, 134) = 24.0, p < .001$ , **Q5 “I have enough time and energy to help my child with homework,”**  $F(1, 134) = 21.0, p < .001$ .

.001), and Q6 “I have enough time and energy to supervise my child’s homework,”  $F(1, 134) = 24.0, p < .001$ ).

There were no significant differences between teachers and parents in any of the items within the general invitations and knowledge and skills scales.

### Research Question Two

The second research question was “Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to ethnicity?”

Survey questions were grouped by construct (i.e., Constructs **A--Personal Motivation** (A1--Role Construction and A2--Self-Efficacy), **B--Invitations** (B1--Special Invitations and B2--General Invitations) and **C--Life Contexts** (C1--Knowledge and Skills and C2--Time and Energy). An additional scale that focused on parents' school experience; **D--Attitude** was also included. An inferential analysis was conducted using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Ethnicity was used as a grouping variable with construct and question used as within subject factors.

Table 4

*Parent (N = 76) Responses to Seven Motivational Variables by Ethnicity*

Parent (N = 76) Responses to Seven Multivariate Variables by Ethnicity									
		df		F		p		$\eta^2$	
Multivariate Test <sup>a</sup>		16.000		3.776		.000		.314	
Scales	Whites (n= 36)		Hispanics (n=23)		Blacks (n=17)		F (2.76)	p	$\eta^2$
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
A1- Role Construction	5.35	.466	5.42	.448	4.48	.844	16.5	.000***	.31
A2- Self-Efficacy	4.91	.767	4.74	.859	4.99	.638	.550	.580	.01
B1- Specific Invitations	2.83	1.15	3.18	1.59	2.16	.623	6.75	.038*	.15
B2- General Invitations	5.24	.959	5.26	.941	4.72	.746	11.8	.119	.24
C1- Knowledge & Skills	5.18	.538	5.05	.732	4.50	.679	3.40	.002**	.08
C2- Time and Energy	5.11	.636	4.94	.688	4.04	1.02	2.19	.000***	.057
D- Attitude	4.49	1.08	4.98	.957	4.17	.899	3.34	.041*	.084

Note. 1 = Disagree Very Strongly, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Disagree just a little, 4 = Agree just a little, 5 = Agree, 6 = Agree very strongly

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Wilks Lambda was applied.

The results from the descriptive analyses as shown in Table 4 indicated that all the three ethnic groups reported relatively high scores (ranging from 4.04 to 5.35) for all scales except for the specific invitations scale. Mean responses to specific invitations were distinctly low for all the three groups; Hispanics ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 1.59$ ), Whites ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) and Blacks ( $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = .623$ ). Whites reported higher perceptions of parental role construction, parental knowledge and skills, and parental time and energy than the other two ethnic groups. Hispanics reported higher perceptions of specific invitations, general invitations and attitudes than Whites and Blacks. Blacks reported higher mean scores for self-efficacy than the two other groups.

There were significant overall multivariate differences between parent groups by ethnicity (Wilks' Lambda = .481,  $F[3, 776] = 7.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .314$ ). The large effect size indicated that 31.4% of the variance in scores of survey responses between groups could be explained by whether the respondent was White, Hispanic, or Black.

Univariate analyses revealed that role activity, specific invitations, knowledge and skills, time and energy, and attitude significantly differed by parent ethnic group. Post hoc analysis indicated that Blacks rated parental role activity ( $p < .001$ ) and parental time and energy ( $p < .001$ ) significantly lower than the other two ethnic groups. Each pair-wise comparison was tested at .01 (.05/5) using the Bonferroni method for multiple comparisons. Significant differences were also found between Whites and Blacks regarding their perceptions on knowledge and skills ( $p = .001$ ) with Whites ( $M = 5.18$ ) reporting higher mean scores than Blacks ( $M = 4.50$ ). No significant differences between Hispanics and Whites were revealed on any of the scales.

Separate ANOVAs were run on each of the items within each of the four scales to further investigate differences in perceptions by ethnicity. Using a Bonferroni adjustment, each ANOVA was evaluated at a significance level of .002 (.05/31) for the six items in B1--Specific Invitations, C2--Time and Energy, 9 items in C1--Knowledge and Skills and 10 items in A1--Role Activity.

**Role Activity:** Blacks reported significantly lower mean scores than the other two ethnic groups for questions; **Q3 “help my child with homework”**  $F(2, 75) = 13.6, p < .002$ ; **Q4 “make sure the school what has what it needs”**  $F(2, 75) = 10.2, p < .002$ ; **Q6 “stay on top of things at school”**  $F(2, 75) = 10.7, p < .002$ ; **Q7 “explain tough assignments to my child”**  $F(2, 75) = 10.8, p < .002$ ; and **Q10 “talk with my child about school every day”**  $F(2, 74) = 24.4, p < .002$ . Significant differences were also found in mean responses between Hispanics and Blacks for **Q2 “communicate with my child regularly”**  $F(2, 75) = 14.5, p < .002$ , with Hispanics recording higher perceptions than Blacks. There were, however, no significant differences found between Hispanics’ and Whites’ responses on any of the items on the scale.

**Time and Energy scale:** Post hoc tests also revealed significant differences between Whites and Blacks for **Q3 “I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child’s teacher,”**  $F(2, 75) = 9.43, p < .002$ , **Q4 “I have enough time and energy to attend special events at the school,”**  $F(2, 75) = 8.69, p < .002$ , **Q5 “I have enough time and energy to help my child with homework,”**  $F(2, 74) = 9.53, p < .002$ , and **Q6 “I have enough time and energy to supervise my child’s homework,”**  $F(2, 74) = 9.71, p < .002$ . Significant differences were found between Hispanics and Blacks for **Q1 “I have enough time and energy to communicate with my child,”**  $F(2, 75) = 14.3,$



$p < .002$ . There were no significant differences reported in mean responses between Hispanics and Whites.

Tests did not reveal a significant result for any of the items within the specific invitations, attitudes, and knowledge and skills scales.

### Research Question Three

The third research question was “*Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to gender of the parent’s child?*”

Survey questions were grouped by construct (i.e., Constructs **A--Personal Motivation** (A1--Role Construction and A2—Self-Efficacy), **B--Invitations** (B--Special Invitations and B2--General Invitations) and **C--Life Contexts** (C1--Knowledge and Skills and C2--Time and Energy). An additional scale that focused on parents' school experience, **D--Attitude**, was also included.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Parents by the gender of the parents’ child were the grouping variables, and the scores on the three constructs were the dependent variables. Table 5 reveals the results of the analyses.

Table 5

*Parent (N = 78) Responses to Seven Motivational Variables by the Gender of the Parent’s Child*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$
<b>Multivariate Test</b>	7.000	1.278	.274	.509

The results from the descriptive analyses indicated that both parents of boys and parents of girls reported relatively high scores (ranging from 4.54 to 5.31) for all the scales except for the specific invitations scale.

The MANOVA model failed to reveal a significant multivariate main effect for child's gender, Wilks'  $\lambda = .887$ ,  $F(7.70) = 1.27$ ,  $p > .05$ . Power to detect the effect was .509. Because the overall multivariate effect was not significant, univariate ANOVAs were not considered.

### **Summary of Quantitative Analysis**

The results from the survey data indicated that parents and teachers perceived parental involvement differently in the areas of self-efficacy, knowledge and skills, specific invitations and time and energy. The results also indicated that parents, differentiated by ethnicity, perceived parental involvement differently in the areas of role activity, and time and energy. From this data, categories were created and topics for focus group discussions were generated to probe the motivations that contribute to varying parental involvement perspectives.

### **Focus Group Interviews Analysis**

The identified areas of divergence from the survey data were categorized as 1. Specific invitations from the school, 2. Parental self-efficacy and role activity, 3. Parental knowledge and skills and time and energy. Therefore, questions for discussions based on these identified areas of discrepancy were prepared to be presented to two separate focus groups. One group involved six out of the fifteen parents who had indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews. The second group involved six out of the thirteen teachers who had indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews (see Appendix E for participants' demographics). Parents and teachers were asked the same six questions. Appendix F indicates the questions that were used to stimulate discussion.

Although all the questions were presented, participants' thoughts and ideas flowed freely, frequently straying off topic. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities.

The researcher transcribed and coded the data with the help of a colleague. The colleague is both an early childhood teacher and graduate student. After transcribing and reading through the data, researchers divided the data into smaller significant parts. Using the constant comparative method (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), the data was sorted and analyzed for common themes. Eight themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the parent focus group. Six themes emerged from the data collected from teacher focus groups. A summary of key themes for each category that were identified by parents and teachers is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*A Summary of Key Themes for each Category*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Specific Invitations</b>	<b>Personal Motivations Themes</b>	<b>Life Contexts</b>
<b>Themes identified in parent focus groups</b>	Few Invitations Effective Communication Teacher reluctance	Family Responsibilities Specific Requests to Volunteer Conflicting Work Schedules	Age of Child Lack of Support
<b>Themes identified in teacher focus groups</b>	Teacher Resignation Parent Distractions	Parent Know-How Life Obstacles	Time Constraints Other Priorities

**Specific invitations.** The first general category under investigation was specific invitations. Each of the six parent participants was given an opportunity to share perceptions of being invited to participate by their child's teacher. Three themes were identified in this category: few invitations, effective communication, and teacher reluctance.

There seemed to be an overall agreement among the parents in the group that specific invitations for involvement in children's learning were few, ranging from never to three times a year. However, some of the parents felt the two or three invitations they got in a year were adequate. A divorced mother of a nine month old boy in the infant room, Anne, stated, "I would help in the classroom but my son will just cry the whole time and then it will not be very helpful, so I think being invited to events once or twice a year is enough. Furthermore, I am single and I work all the way in the downtown area."

Several parents expressed that despite the few invitations, their respective child care centers were effective in communicating with them about their children. Debbie, the mother of a seven month old and three year old, shared, "Yes, it is true that I do not get any special invitations to volunteer or visit the classroom, but I see the teacher every day when I drop off my sons, so I know what is going on." This sentiment was echoed by two other participants who indicated that communication with the teachers occurred spontaneously when they dropped off or picked up their children.

The need for effective communication between the home and school was expressed by some of the parents in the group. As one mother commented, "I like knowing what is going on with my little one. I don't care if it is negative or positive. I want to deal with it right away. The director at my child care has really been good in communicating with me, so different from the school we attended last year."

Some parents expressed that most communication, especially regarding discipline, was with the child care director and not the classroom teacher. Communication with the office and not directly with the teacher was emphasized by Mary, one of the parents of a four year old boy, "At my child care, we bring our children

to the front and they are taken to the classroom by the director or someone else, so I do not really get to see the classroom teacher.”

The need for more direct communication from the teacher was expressed by several members in the group. Parents stated a preference for face-to-face meetings, e-mails, or phone calls as the mode of communication.

In response to a question on what parents thought was the reason for not being invited to participate at the school more often, teacher reluctance was mentioned as a possible reason. The idea that teachers may not want parents in the classroom due to their being a distraction was stated by two parents in the group. One parent of a toddler expressed it this way: “I guess the teachers know that we would be a distraction. I was a teacher before and from experience I remember having parents in the classroom was more of a distraction than helpful especially after we had developed a routine.”

Overprotective parents were also mentioned as likely to contribute to teacher reluctance by Debbie, the mother of a 7 month old and 3 year old. “Both my children’s teachers know that I am over protective. I am one of those helicopter mothers (laughter) and they may not really want me in the classroom hovering around.”

Teachers identified resignation and parent distractions as major themes in their discussions on specific invitations. Three out of the six teachers admitted that they rarely invited parents to participate at the school. Mollie, who has been teaching preschool for the last three years, stated that she often sent some worksheets home and was lucky to get a third back, while two teachers stated that they reminded parents to read to their children from time to time.

There was a strong sentiment of resignation as teachers discussed invitations to parents to participate. “Last year we had a family day, and only two parents came: What is the point? Every time we have something going on, we send a note and it comes back in the backpack,” commented Tammy. “We have to beg them to attend events and even when they do come, it is the same parents that come all the time,” stated Dana, a toddler teacher who had been working in her child care for the last three years. “Parents are too busy nowadays working and all . . . I feel bad so I just do not ask them, period,” was another response from Angela, a teacher in the infant room, as several teachers nodded in agreement.

Responding to a question regarding the last time an invitation was issued to parents, one teacher responded referring to a recent event: “Yesterday we had an orientation and only nine parents out of the almost 60 parents attended. I tried to remind one parent that morning and his reaction was just horrible. He kept on ranting how this was just a day care and he did not see why he had to come. He even went on to say that he could put his child in another child care and that it was not like the building was on fire. It kinda made me think twice about inviting any parent.”

Similar to the sentiment expressed by parents, some teachers discussed that the reason they were reluctant to invite parents was that they felt parents would be a distraction. “They will just be a distraction, I cannot think of what they could do in my classroom. Last year I had a parent come in and all she cared about was who was being mean to her child. She was not helpful at all.”

Another teacher remarked, “I am o.k. with them helping out when we have birthday parties or things like that, but I do not want them in there when we are having classroom instruction. They will just take away the attention of the kids.”

Some teachers also expressed the belief that the children would not behave appropriately with their parents in the classroom, therefore disrupting the environment.

Similar to parents, there was a consensus among the teachers that communication was important, although many of them acknowledged that most communication with parents was done by the child care director. When asked how they communicated with parents, four teachers in the group admitted that they left the communication to the director of the child care. Some teachers stated that they did not have access to telephones or computers at work, and it was therefore easier to have the child care director take care of the communication. Parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, and informal communication as parents dropped off or picked up their children were recognized as ideal ways to communicate with parents.

**Personal motivations (self-efficacy and role activity).** The second category of personal motivations includes three emergent themes that were identified in parent focus group discussions. These three themes portray the challenges that parents face in their ability to participate effectively in their children’s learning. The themes are identified as family responsibilities, specific requests to volunteer, and conflicting work schedules.

Parents expressed they were capable and wanted to contribute to their children’s education. “I think I know what to do and am doing all the things I need to do for this age; what else should I be doing?” was a comment from Connie, the mother of a two year old girl in the toddler room. Expanding on the same comment, Jane stated, “Yeah, I think

the challenge will come when they are older and you have to do real homework.” The group realized that the children were still young and helping them with school would get more difficult as they get older.

There was recognition in the group that despite having the ability and knowledge to work with their children, parents’ schedules and time as a result of family responsibilities and conflicting work schedules did not allow them to participate fully. Comments relating to family responsibilities arose consistently in the discussions. One parent summarized what had been aired by several members in the group: “I could read to my children every day if only I had someone to help with dinner and the other chores. Being a single parent is hard because you have to do everything yourself. Even though I know what to do, sometimes I am just too overwhelmed to do it.”

As parents discussed what roles they perceived they should play in the school, the subject of younger children at home emerged. The concerns were linked to volunteering or helping in the classroom with young children at home. “It is so difficult because they are so attached when they are young. I know my child will not let me do anything. That boy is so clingy . . . I think as they get older, it will be easier to volunteer, like when they go to elementary school,” commented Ann as she talked about her nine month old son. Another participant, Julie, the grandmother of a three year old, suggested more family social events at different times to allow more attendance.

Some parents implied that one reason parents did not volunteer was that they did not know what needed to be done. Parents shared that requests for volunteers should be specific and able to occur at a variety of times and places, with some parents expressing willingness to work on volunteer projects at home when requested. As Mary explained,



“I’m not a teacher, and I don’t know what to do. I cannot imagine what I would do. The babies just sleep and play. But if the teachers could tell me what they want me to do, I will do it.”

Once again, the theme of teacher reluctance was restated in discussions on role construction. “I think some teachers just don’t want the help. They think they can do it by themselves,” suggested Connie. Comments about making the teacher uncomfortable with their presence were also echoed in the group. “I just know I would make my child’s teacher nervous if I was in there.”

Parents reiterated in focus groups their wish to be able to volunteer more than they did; however, they stated that many conflicting responsibilities prevented their participation, including work schedules and child care. As Debbie noted, “I have no one to take care of my two boys, so it is very hard for me to attend anything at the school.” Overall, parents shared they would love to help if barriers such as work schedules and care for their younger children could be overcome.

Teachers identified parent know-how and life obstacles as major themes in their discussions on parental self-efficacy and role activity. Some teachers felt that some parents lacked the ability to help or to be involved. “I cannot think of what they could do in my classroom. I seriously do not know what they could help with . . . . Some of these parents are so young. They themselves need to be taken care of. I cannot think of what they could do to help,” was another comment from Tammy. An interesting concern that emerged during this conversation was the perception that certain parents were lacking in their ability to help their child, especially with social skills. One mother framed the concern in this way: “Parents are not teaching their children manners. How can you teach

children manners when you have no manners yourself? You walk in with your cell phone, do not say a word . . . you just grab them and leave.”

Stating this lack of experience, several teachers said many parents do not engage in conversations with their children. They also expressed concern that the majority of parents did not read to their children or check for notes in their backpacks.

In discussing role activity, teachers were more positive stating that some parents are interested in volunteering; however, they realized that parents faced obstacles such as conflicting work schedules and child care.

**Life context.** This final category of life contexts revealed two themes in parent focus group discussion and two themes in teacher focus group discussions. Parents were asked whether they believed they had enough knowledge to contribute to their children’s learning. Parents were also asked if they had enough time and energy to be involved in their children’s learning. Parents in the group expressed having the knowledge to help their children. One theme related to the age of the children surfaced, however, as parents acknowledged not having time to do school related activities because young children required more care and attention in other areas. This challenge related to the age of the child was shared by Connie, “Honestly, my daughter because of her age, she clings to me all the time when I pick her up from school until it is time for bed.” The same sentiment was expressed by two other parents including Jane, who stated, “I have no time to do anything . . . when I pick my son up, he falls asleep in the car, when we get home he goes directly to sleep. There is no time to eat dinner, leave alone read or talk about school.” Children’s exhaustion at the end of the day was a subtheme emphasized in the conversation. “Even though my grandson is three now and can talk, he does not want to

talk about school when we get home; he says, ‘Go ask the teacher,’” expressed Julia. “My daughter eats dinner and goes to sleep in the car. I do not talk to her until the next morning,” declared Connie.

Hand-in-hand with this sub-theme of tired children was the theme pertaining to lack of support. This was stated as a major barrier to involvement by four single parents in the group and was more pronounced for two parents that did not have extended families. Mary, a single mother without family in town, lamented, “I work at the hospital and if they call me because of an emergency, I have to drive my children almost two hours away to a friend on the other side of town . . . I do not have anyone around here to take care of them.” This same sentiment was also expressed by Debbie, who was looking forward to some relief from her mother. “During the week I am too tired to take care of a three year old and seven month old. Thank God my mom is moving in next weekend.”

The subject of spouses came about as two parents stated that despite being married they still had to do everything regarding the children and anything related to school. “When my husband comes home, I say ‘Phew, now he can help’ but most of the time he just plops on the couch and watches the game,” declared Jane. “That sounds just like my husband” (laughter), lamented Mary, “He sits there and waits for dinner.”

Overall, parents shared that they would be more involved if they had more support.

Conflicting work schedules were also recognized as obstacles to full participation as working parents complained of how little time they had available to be involved in their child’s learning. One mom explained it this way: “I pick my daughter up when the center is closing at 6:00, and mind you I drop her off at 6:30 a.m. as soon as it opens. I have a long commute to my work; that is why. By the time we get home, I have two

hours to make dinner, give her a bath. Then I have to check my seven year old's homework."

Feelings of guilt were expressed by Debbie, "I bet some teachers think I am one of those parents who do not care but I do. It is just so hard to keep track of everything. I like helping my child with schoolwork. It makes me feel guilty and sad as the parent because I'm gone all day. I have no choice as a single parent. I have to pay bills. Of course I feel good when I can help them, but it is so hard sometimes."

The two themes that emerged in teacher focus groups were time constraints and other priorities. When asked if they believed parents had the time and energy to participate in their children's learning, many teachers implied that parents did not have the time and energy to be involved because of time constraints and other personal barriers. "Parents are too busy nowadays. I think it is too difficult for the single parents to find time," commented Cara. "Those children are so tired at the end of the day. I bet when they get home it is straight to bed. What do you expect? They come in when we open at 6 and leave at 6:30 when we close," stated Angela.

Some of the teachers in the group mentioned that some parents were not involved, as they had other priorities they considered more important. Tammy, the most outspoken and longest serving teacher in the group, stated, "I think some of these parents do not do anything with their kids, they leave everything to us. . . . Their work and other stuff is more important. There is this boy in my class; he is so hungry every day when he comes in like he has not eaten for days."

**Summary**

The data collected from the parallel surveys and focus group interviews provided an in-depth look at parent and teacher perspectives regarding parent engagement. Data from the surveys revealed statistically significant differences between teacher and parent perspectives for four of the six motivational variables. Data also revealed statistical significant differences in parent perspectives by ethnicity for two out of the six motivational variables. No statistical significant differences in parent perspectives by the gender of the parent's child were found. Overall, MANOVA comparisons of parent and teacher perceptions for the components of specific invitations, parental self-efficacy, parental knowledge and skills and time and energy were all statistically significant, while the components of self-efficacy and role construction were significant for parent groups by ethnicity. The qualitative analysis, which was composed of focus group interviews, resulted in several overall emergent themes. Themes discovered in parent focus groups included the belief that the specific invitations were infrequent; teachers were reluctant due to overbearing parents and distractions. Parents also noted that their ability to be involved was deterred by challenges such as the age of the child, family responsibilities, lack of support, and conflicting work schedules. Themes emerging from teacher perceptions included time and work constraints preventing parents from participating and parents who lack the know-how. Parents discussed the need to be informed of specific volunteering opportunities and more evening and weekend options. Teachers stressed that learning should not stop at school and that children should be included as negotiators in the invitations. Both parents and teachers perceived communication as the key to successful partnerships.

### **Chapter V**

#### **Discussion**

The objective of this study was to compare and examine parents' and teachers' perceptions regarding parent engagement in child care centers. The decision to examine these perspectives arose because even though research has indicated that parent engagement in schools is important for student development (Patriakakou et al; 2005), this engagement continues to be rare and inconsistent. This inconsistency may be attributed to the differences in perspectives between homes and schools on what constitutes effective parent involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seitsinger, Felner, Brand, & Burns, 2008).

It is also important to investigate what motivates parents to become involved, because research that examines parent involvement in child care based on motivational variables is limited. This study specifically looked at parent and teacher perspectives regarding parent involvement based on a research-based family involvement theoretical model (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Through the lens of the family engagement theoretical model, this study also examined relationships between parent demographic variables (ethnicity and gender of the parents' child) and their perceptions of effective involvement. This study aims to provide empirical data to further the research and understanding of parent involvement in early childhood programs.

A mixed method sequential explanatory design of surveys and focus group interviews was used for the study. This chapter presents and discusses the key findings resulting from the statistical analyses in this study. The findings are organized by the research questions that guided this investigation. This is followed by a discussion of the

implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and the implications of the study for future research and practice.

### **Findings from Research Question One**

The first research question this study examined was, “Do differences exist between school staff and parent perceptions regarding parent engagement?” In order to answer this question, the data collected from parent perception surveys, teacher perception surveys, and focus group interviews were analyzed. These findings are discussed by construct.

**Parent motivational beliefs (self-efficacy and role activity).** Quantitative results revealed that parents have positive role activity beliefs and positive self-efficacy beliefs; that is, they acknowledge they should be highly active in their young children’s education, and they believe in their ability to teach their children. Although these results are supported in several studies (Green and Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Anderson & Minke, 2007) both ideas were somewhat contradicted in the qualitative data. During the focus group interviews, parents expressed confidence in their capabilities to help their children learn, yet at the same time expressed that many barriers, such as work schedules and child care, interfered with this ability. Parents also expressed that they would play a greater role if they knew what needed to be done.

Considering that significant discrepancies were found between teacher and parent perspectives regarding parental self-efficacy, child care centers in this sample should be encouraged by the report that parents desire to be involved. Recognizing that many parents need to be guided on how to support their children educationally (Jeynes, 2007), child care programs need to be more specific with requests. For example teachers can

send materials home with clear and specific instructions or model an interactive reading style to parents by inviting parents to reading time. Taking into account the different schedules and child care needs, requests need to be tailored to specific families.

**Invitations for involvement.** Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the parents had positive perceptions of general invitations for involvement from the school. On the other hand, the findings revealed low perceptions of specific invitations from the child's teacher. Apparently, parents believe that the school administration wants their involvement, but their child's teacher does not want their involvement. The low perceptions regarding specific invitations from the teachers is consistent with findings from several studies (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Pena, 2000) including a study carried out by Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) in which parents with children in grades 7, 8, and 9 reported very low perceptions of specific invitations from the teacher.

There were significant discrepancies between teacher and parent perceptions regarding specific invitations. Teachers reported inviting parents to be involved more often than the parents believed they were invited. Teachers reported with high frequency that they asked parents to talk with their child about the school day and that they contacted parents (sent a note, e-mailed, phoned). Parents rated both these activities at a lower level.

The teacher reports from the survey data were contradicted in the qualitative data. Some teachers revealed they rarely offer invitations to parents to participate. Some of the teachers attribute this to a resigned attitude as a result of chronic parent non-participation. Others relate this to communication challenges. The qualitative data also helps explain



the quantitative data by revealing parents' thoughts regarding the few invitations. Some parents declare that teachers may not want them in the classroom due to their being a distraction or due to their being overprotective.

Several studies have identified teacher invitations as one of the most effective and stable predictors of both school and home based (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al, 2007) involvement. This suggests there needs to be a deliberate effort to extend specific invitations to parents to participate. This can be accomplished through effective communication, a persistent theme in the parent involvement literature (Evans, 2004; Minke & Anderson, 2004).

As discovered from the qualitative data, both parent and teacher groups acknowledge the need for effective communication between the home and school. Most parents expressed a preference for e-mails, telephone calls, and planned face-to-face meetings, while some teachers were comfortable with parents communicating through the child care director and impromptu face-to-face meetings. Electronic communications technology has been touted to hold the promise of increasing and enhancing communication between home and school (Ferriter, 2008; Miretzy, 2004). However, the effectiveness of this form of communication depends on the access, skill, and attitudes of those using them (Longfellow, 2004). For example, a lack of technological access for teachers in the classroom was exposed in this study, as four of the child care teachers in the focus group interviews expressed having no access to telephones or internet service in the classroom. Some teachers also expressed a lack of confidence and knowledge in using this mode to communicate with parents. These findings draw attention to the need to

explore parents' and teachers' perspectives regarding various forms of communication while taking into account individual differences and varied resources.

**Life context variables (knowledge and skills and time and energy).** The analysis of the quantitative data showed parent participants to have relatively positive perceptions of the life context variables. These findings align with those from several other studies in which parents reported having adequate personal knowledge, skills, time, and energy (Green and Hoover- Dempsey, 2007; Walker et al., 2005) for involvement in their children's education. However, several other reports revealed that most American parents reported not having time and energy for involvement (Rah, 2009; Weiss et al., 2003). The qualitative data obtained in this study supports the latter conclusion.

In the focus groups, demands on time and energy made up a consistent theme as parents acknowledged not having time to do school related activities and attributed this to conflicting work schedules, lack of support, and their younger children who require considerable care and attention. Parents whose jobs make heavy time demands and have unstable working schedules are less likely to be involved (Weiss et al., 2003) than those with more reasonable and flexible work hours.

Single parents are likely to work longer and more unpredictable hours each week than their counterparts in two parent families (Bianchi, 2011; Jeynes, 2002; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2009), therefore lacking time and energy to attend activities at the school. The focus group participants included four single parents who were very vocal about the various challenges, including long hours at work that interfered with their involvement. It is important that individual child care centers investigate perceptions of the life context variables in their respective centers and plan involvement activities accordingly. In

consideration of those parents who work long unpredictable hours, it may be necessary to schedule activities at many different times including weekends.

To strengthen and reinforce the networking between parents and teachers, it is essential to organize collaborative discussions or meetings such as the focus group meeting in this study. More flexible scheduling and holding meetings on the same night as other general school events could increase the participation. These types of meetings could be used as an opportunity to explain to parents the importance of involvement, model and give specific requests and allow parents to express their needs and concerns.

Sending activities home may work better for those parents who have difficulties attending in-school activities. Encouraging children to invite their parents to events may also be one way to rope in errant parents. Child care centers also need to keep in mind that family needs are constantly evolving and therefore provide continuous training opportunities for their staff with this in mind. Holding several forums a year between parents and teachers would enable centers to be informed of the ever changing needs for their specific populations.

### **Findings from Research Question Two**

The second research question this study examined was, “Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to race or ethnicity?” The findings are discussed by construct.

**Parent motivational beliefs (self-efficacy and role activity).** Supporting several studies in the literature (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Quicho & Daoud, 2006) and in contrast with several others (Ritblatt et al., 2002; Yan & Lin, 2005), all parents in this study, regardless of ethnicity, reported relatively strong parent motivational beliefs. Child

care centers in the sample and others that have diverse populations should be encouraged by these results because parental self-efficacy and role activity have been strongly correlated with engagement in schools (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

Consistent with several studies (Auerbach, 2007; Wolfe & Lieberman, 2007), post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences between Blacks and the other two ethnic groups (Whites and Hispanics) for role activity. The statistical significant difference found between Blacks and Hispanics for role activity contradicts several findings in the literature (Wong and Hughes, 2006; Marinez-Lora & Quintana, 2009) where Hispanic families have been found to rank their role activity at a lower rate than other ethnic groups. Similarly, the lack of significant differences found between Hispanics' and Whites' responses on any of the items on the scales is a novel phenomenon in contrast with existing literature (Griffith, 1998; Wong & Hughes, 2006). The findings here, like in Durant's 2011 study, challenge the notion that Latino families are a relatively uninvolved group. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that stronger acculturation (Berry, 1980) played a role with this particular population. The Hispanic parents in this study appeared more acculturated to the mainstream American culture: they predominantly spoke English and seemed well versed on the school system. Research suggests that Hispanic parents who speak more English have indicated higher levels of shared responsibility and parental self-efficacy than parents who speak mainly Spanish (Ramirez, 2003; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

**Invitations for involvement.** Quantitative data revealed positive perceptions of general invitations from the school for all parent ethnic groups. On the other hand, they all reported low perceptions of specific invitations from the child's teacher. Low

perceptions regarding invitations, particularly specific invitations, have been noted in several studies (e.g. Ramirez, 2003). Studies that have been carried out with minorities, namely Hispanics and Blacks, found teacher invitations to have the strongest effect on parent involvement at home and school (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Marinez-Lora and Quintana, 2009). These results bear relevance to child care centers working with minority ethnic groups as they draw attention to the important role of teacher invitations. To strengthen teacher invitations, there is a need for professional development that prepares teachers to initiate and maintain effective contact with parents by equipping them with specific principles and practices that are culturally relevant.

**Life context variables (knowledge and skills and time and energy).** All the three ethnic groups had relatively positive perceptions of the life context variables. However, quantitative results revealed that Blacks rated parental time and energy significantly lower than both Whites and Hispanics and parental knowledge and skills significantly lower than Whites. These results align with previous studies which investigated ethnic perceptions and found that Blacks had significantly lower ratings of life context variables than Whites (e.g. Wong & Hughes, 2006).

When asked in focus groups whether they perceived that some parents were more involved by others based on their ethnicity, teachers stated that they had not noted any differences in the involvement. This is positive, albeit contrary to research that revealed teachers tended to have low perceptions of Black and Hispanic parents' involvement with their children's learning (Chrispeels and Rivero 2001; Delgado-Gaitlin, 2005 ).

Overall, Blacks were significantly different from the other two groups based on the quantitative data. It was speculated that diverse family dynamics across the ethnicities

may have played a role. Demographics showed that in this sample, more Whites and Hispanics than Blacks were married. The single dynamic which research correlates with a lack of time and energy was found mainly with Black parents and may explain their reports of a lack of time to be involved.

Contrary to several bodies of research (e.g. Martinez-Lora & Quintana, 2009), there were no significant differences found between Hispanics and Whites on any of the scales. Several things need to be taken into account, including the fact that Hispanics are not a homogenous group (Verdugo, 2012), and these results could be limited to only this data set or similar samples. The acculturation effect in Hispanic populations seems to be stronger than previously considered and therefore warrants more research.

### **Findings from Research Question Three**

The third research question this study examined was, “Do parent perceptions regarding parent engagement differ according to the gender of the parent’s child?” Both parents of boys and parents of girls reported relatively high scores (ranging from 4.54 to 5.31) for all the scales except for the specific invitations scale. When asked in focus groups whether they perceived more involvement from parents of boys or parents of girls, teachers stated that they had not noted any differences in the involvement. The lack of statistical significance in this study is in contrast to research that indicates that parents of girls especially those from minority groups tend to be more actively engaged in the education of girls than parents of boys (Farrell, Svaboda & Steba; 2008; Jeynes, 2005). As one continues to examine differences in parental involvement by the gender of the child, it may be beneficial to develop longitudinal studies to help determine what stage this change occurs.

**Limitations and Future Research**

This study holds promise in helping move research forward on the motivational factors that affect parent involvement in child care; however, there are a few limitations that warrant mention. First, there was the possibility of self-selection bias (Shepard & Carlson, 2003) as the parents who are involved in their children's education were the same ones likely to complete the research surveys.

Second, both parent involvement and teacher involvement surveys were in a self-report format, meaning that the participants reflected and reported on their perceived levels of involvement. There is a possibility that participants adapted their responses in the surveys to fit perceived social norms or tailored their responses to conform to the majority's views in the focus groups (Viscek, 2007). Additionally, although survey responses were kept anonymous, parents and teachers were required to sign their name on a separate consent form, and this may have discouraged participation or even resulted in response bias. However, in the event of these possibilities, the open-ended questions helped alleviate these weaknesses, because they allowed for clarification and follow-up questions.

Third, conducting focus groups proved to be challenging in that it was difficult to schedule meeting times that were conducive to all participants' schedules. The focus groups meetings were rescheduled twice and participant groups were configured three times. The final groups ended up being represented by parents from only two child care centers and teachers from three child care centers.

Fourth, single mothers were over represented in the focus groups and provided insight into their involvement. However, these findings cannot be generalized to other

family structures (e.g., married, teen parents, grandparents, single fathers) that are found in the general child care setting.

Fifth, parents' comments suggested frustration regarding the restrictiveness of the options on the Parent Involvement Activities scale. This frustration was regarding events that typically occur once a month or two or three times a year yet had daily and weekly options. The options of "always," "a few times a week," or "once a week" were not practical for the items like "I asked my student's parents to attend a special event at the school." Some parents added comments suggesting another quantitative choice to reflect the involvement practices more accurately. Some teachers also expressed frustration at some of the items on the motivational scale and were reluctant to fill out surveys or give them to parents. These were items related to homework, as some teachers voiced that homework was not an option for these age groups. Some tailoring of the questionnaire to specific age groups and school types would obviously be advantageous.

Finally, one cannot infer associations between teacher and parent reports and student achievement. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine whether perceptions of motivational variables for involvement in schools are predictive of the achievement path for students.

### **Implications for Practice**

Although the findings of this study revealed that teachers and parents had differing beliefs regarding parent motivations to be involved in child care, the findings also showed that the two groups value strong partnerships between home and school. Barriers interfering with this partnership were revealed. There is a need for professional development that helps teachers acknowledge barriers that prevent parent involvement



while searching for creative ways to overcome them. Similarly, teacher education programs need to ensure that they not only incorporate information about diverse families and various barriers they encounter but that they also place pre-service teachers in field experiences within the community where they can interact with families of various backgrounds.

Given that parents reported low perceptions of specific invitations from teachers, parental involvement programs might consider emphasizing in-service teacher training for parental involvement (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002) and initiatives to increase parents' school-related interactions with children both at school and at home.

Early childhood programs should not underestimate parents' potential capabilities for involvement regardless of background, as parents report strong beliefs in their knowledge, skills, time, energy, and role activity. Instead, schools should focus on implementing programs that help parents overcome challenges posed by contextual variables, such as time and energy, by offering flexible teacher-parent conference times and giving specific time-limited suggestions (e.g., read together for 10 minutes three times this week) for how to participate in the child's homework (Green et al, 2007).

It is particularly important that teachers understand the perspectives of the families represented in their programs. Holding forums between teachers and parents several times a year and at many different times and different locations would be one way of ensuring the participation of some overworked parents. For example, meetings could be held in community centers or libraries in the various neighborhoods to encourage

attendance and reduce commuting for some parents. By having meetings in these places, community organizations such as churches could be included in the conversations.

Offering meals or cash rewards could also be a way of enticing these hard to reach parents. Aggressive recruitment efforts might include home visits for interviews, outreach to community organizations, phone interviews and more intense reminders close to the meeting dates. Parents with inflexible schedules or multiple children for which to care are likely to engage in home-based activities with their child, therefore the need to emphasize on these types of activities.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study used a mixed methods design. Much of the research related to home-school partnerships use either quantitative or qualitative methods, not both. The findings from this study demonstrate the benefits of combining research methods. Data from the surveys provided a global perspective on the beliefs of teachers and parents regarding parent involvement in child care. Focus group sessions enhanced the global perspective provided by teacher and parent surveys by adding data that presented the views of parents and teachers based on discussions. In some instances, the more detailed information gathered through focus groups confirmed data collected from surveys and enhanced its understanding. In other instances, data gathered through focus groups conflicted with survey data. More studies that utilize mixed methods would add to the research and enhance understanding of the complex nature of home-school partnerships.

In addition, a longitudinal study that examines the ways these relationships develop over the course of the year would be informative, as would one that follows specific children and families across grade levels from child care to elementary school

entry and forward. Further investigation is needed to seek more consistent findings, including focus group interviews with homogenous ethnic parents or focus groups with both teachers and parents in one group. This type of data might help schools create environments more conducive to positive home-school partnerships.

The stories of child care administrators are missing from this research. As leaders in their respective centers, it is important to gain their perspectives on the issue of parent involvement. Questions on how these administrators frame parent involvement, activities they encourage, and their expectations from teachers and parents would be worth addressing.

The possibility that parental family structure could potentially explain a portion of the low levels of parent involvement is a topic worth of further study. Family policy initiatives that support struggling single as well as two parent families are needed.

Results from this study suggest that portions of the model proposed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) may be useful in studying parent involvement and identifying which constructs are the most important for specific populations. Research should continue to study those populations who are the most at risk for negative educational outcomes and who have the most to gain from parent involvement.

Experimental studies are needed in order to move from descriptive research about the parent-teacher relationship to assessing more directly its influence on children's school performance. Specifically, research needs to evaluate programs that promote parent involvement practices and how the parent-teacher relationship benefits children.

**Summary**

The results from this research study provided useful empirical data by relating how parents and teachers perceive parent involvement in child care centers through the lens of research based family engagement motivational variables. This study's findings that parents and teachers have statistically significant different perspectives regarding parent involvement in relation to time and energy as well as specific invitations suggest the need for conversation to share one another's thoughts and beliefs. The findings of this study also indicated significant differences in perceptions regarding involvement between Blacks and the two other ethnic (Whites and Hispanics) groups. Family structure appeared to contribute to the differences and therefore needs to be examined further.

There is no question that parents want to be involved in their children's learning and that parent engagement leads to improved student outcomes. Child care centers need to take advantage of this knowledge and establish a culture that is deliberate in building strong relationships between home and school. It is imperative that parents gain a better understanding of the school culture and school staff gain a better understanding of the home cultures represented. This acculturation can be best achieved through candid conversations between the two groups in planned forums that take into account the different schedules and needs.

Child care centers need to invest in professional development training that is tailored towards the different family structures that are represented in their respective programs. The trainings should not only emphasize the existence of the diverse structures but also articulate the importance of acknowledging and considering the various perspectives. Child care programs also need to invest strongly in equipping staff with the

knowledge, skills and tools to communicate effectively with their parent community.

Effective home-school communication will lead to stronger partnerships that will subsequently improve student outcomes.

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

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## PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

**Appendix A**

**Parent Involvement Survey**



**Role Activity Beliefs**

<p>"Parents have many different beliefs about their level of responsibility in their children's education. Please respond to the following statements by indicating the degree to which you believe you are responsible for the following."</p>						
<b>I believe it is my responsibility to.....</b>	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
volunteer at the school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communicate with my child's teacher regularly	1	2	3	4	5	6
Help my child with homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
Make sure the school has what it needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Support decisions made by the teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
Stay on top of things at school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Explain tough assignments to my child	1	2	3	4	5	6
Talk with other parents from my child's school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Make the school better	1	2	3	4	5	6
Talk with my child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Attitude Towards School**

<p>"People have different feelings about school. Please mark the number on each line below that best describes your feeling about your school experiences <b>WHEN YOU WERE A STUDENT.</b>"</p>						
<b>My school</b>	<b>Disliked</b> 1	2	3	4	5	<b>Liked</b> 6
<b>My teachers</b>	<b>Were mean</b> 1	2	3	4	5	<b>Were nice</b> 6
<b>My teachers</b>	<b>Ignored me</b> 1	2	3	4	5	<b>Cared about me</b> 6
<b>My school experience</b>	<b>Bad</b> 1	2	3	4	5	<b>Good</b> 6
<b>I felt like</b>	<b>An outsider</b> 1	2	3	4	5	<b>Belonged</b> 6
<b>My overall experience</b>	<b>Failure</b> 1	2	3	4	5	<b>Success</b> 6

**Parent Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale**

Instructions: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement."						
	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
I know how to help my child do well in school	1	2	3	4	5	6
I don't know if I am getting through to my child	1	2	3	4	5	6
I don't know how to help my child make good grades in school	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn	1	2	3	4	5	6
I don't know how to help my child learn	1	2	3	4	5	6
I make a significant difference in my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Parent's Perception of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale**

"Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement."						
	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
I know about volunteering opportunities at my child's school	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know about special events at my child's school	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know how to communicate effectively with my child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know enough about the subjects of my child's homework to help him or her	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know how to supervise my child's homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have the skills to help out at my child's school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I know how to communicate effectively with my child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Parental Perceptions of Personal Time and Energy for Involvement Activities**

“Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.”

	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have enough time and energy to help out at my child’s school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child’s teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have enough time and energy to attend special events at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have enough time and energy to help my child with homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have enough time and energy to supervise my child’s homework	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Parents' perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the school**

Instructions: Please indicate How <b>OFTEN</b> the following have happened <b>SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.</b>						
	Never	1 or 2 times	4 or 5 times	Once a week	A few times a week	Never
My child's teacher asked me or expected me to help my child with homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
My child's teacher asked me or expected me to supervise my child's homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
My child's teacher asked me to talk with my child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6
My child's teacher asked me to attend a special event at the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
My child's teacher asked me to help out at school	1	2	3	4	5	6
My child's teacher contacted me (for example, sent a note, phoned, e-mailed.	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Parents perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School Scale**

Instructions: Please indicate How <b>OFTEN</b> the following have happened <b>SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.</b>						
	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
Teachers at this school are interested and cooperative when they discuss my child	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel welcome at this school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent activities are scheduled at this school so I can attend	1	2	3	4	5	6
This school lets me know about meetings and special events	1	2	3	4	5	6
This school's staff contacts me promptly about any problems involving my child	1	2	3	4	5	6
The teachers at this school keep me informed about my child's progress in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

# PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

## **Appendix B**

### **Demographic Questionnaire for Parents**



**Directions:** In this last section, please provide some brief background information about your family and yourself. Please note that this information, along with the responses you provide on the questionnaires, will be completely anonymous.

**1. What gender is your child?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	male
<input type="checkbox"/>	female

**2. What is your gender?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	male
<input type="checkbox"/>	female

**3. How many children do you have living at home?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	3
<input type="checkbox"/>	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 or more

**4. Which of the following best describes your occupation?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	homemaker
<input type="checkbox"/>	unemployed, retired, student, disabled
<input type="checkbox"/>	labor, custodial, maintenance
<input type="checkbox"/>	warehouse, factory worker, construction
<input type="checkbox"/>	driver (taxi, truck, bus, delivery)
<input type="checkbox"/>	food services, restaurant
<input type="checkbox"/>	Skilled craftsman (plumber, electrician, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	retail sales, clerical, customer service
<input type="checkbox"/>	Service technician (appliances, computers, cars, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	bookkeeping, accounting, related administrative
<input type="checkbox"/>	singer/musician, writer, artist
<input type="checkbox"/>	real estate, insurance sales
<input type="checkbox"/>	social services, public service, related government
<input type="checkbox"/>	professional, executive

**5. What is your household income per year?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	0-10000
<input type="checkbox"/>	10000-20000
<input type="checkbox"/>	20000-40000
<input type="checkbox"/>	40000 and above

**6. On average how many hours a week do you work?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	0 to 5 hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 to 20 hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	21 to 40 hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	41 or more hours

**7. What is your level of education?** *(Please check the highest completed)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	less than high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	high school or GED
<input type="checkbox"/>	some college, 2 year vocational
<input type="checkbox"/>	bachelor's degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	some graduate work
<input type="checkbox"/>	master's degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	doctoral degree

**8. What is your marital status?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	single
<input type="checkbox"/>	married or cohabitating
<input type="checkbox"/>	divorced or separated

**9. What is your race/ethnicity?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian/Asian-American
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black/African-American
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hispanic/Hispanic-American
<input type="checkbox"/>	White/Caucasian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify: _____)

**10. Is English your native language?** *(Please check one)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	no
<input type="checkbox"/>	yes

*Thank you for your time and participation*

# PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD CARE

## **Appendix C**

### **Teacher Perceptions Survey**

**Role Activity Beliefs**

<p>“Teachers have many different beliefs about parent's level of responsibility in their children's education. Please respond to the following statements by indicating the degree to which you believe parents are responsible for the following.”</p>						
<b>I believe it is parent's responsibility to.....</b>	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
volunteer at the school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communicate with their child's teacher regularly	1	2	3	4	5	6
Help their child with homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
Make sure the school has what it needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Support decisions made by the teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
Stay on top of things at school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Explain tough assignments to their child	1	2	3	4	5	6
Talk with other parents from their child's school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Make the school better	1	2	3	4	5	6
Talk with their child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Teacher's Perceptions of Parents' Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale**

Instructions: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement."						
	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
My students' parents know how to help their children do well in school	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents don't know if they are getting through to their children	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents don't know how to help their children make good grades in school	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents feel successful about their efforts to help their children learn	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents don't know how to help their children learn	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents make a significant difference in their children's school performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Teacher's Perception of Parents' Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale**

"Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement."

	Disagree very strongly	Disagree	Disagree just a little	Agree just a little	Agree	Agree very strongly
My students' parents know about volunteering opportunities at their children's school	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know about special events at their children's school	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know effective ways to contact their child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know how to communicate effectively with their child's teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know how to explain things to their child about his or her homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know enough about the subjects of their child's homework to help him or her	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know how to supervise their child's homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents have the skills to help out at their child's school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents know how to communicate effectively with their child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6

### Teachers' Perceptions of Parents' Personal Time and Energy for Involvement

#### Activities

“Please indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.”						
	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
My students' parents have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with their children about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents have enough time and energy to help out at their children's' school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with their children's' teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents have enough time and energy to attend special events at school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents have enough time and energy to help their children with homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
My students' parents have enough time and energy to supervise their children's' homework	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Teachers' Beliefs regarding Parents' Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the School**

Instructions: Please indicate How <b>OFTEN</b> the following have happened <b>SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.</b>						
	<b>Never</b>	<b>1 or 2 times</b>	<b>4 or 5 times</b>	<b>Once a week</b>	<b>A few times a week</b>	<b>Never</b>
I asked or expected my students' parents to help their children with homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
I asked or expected my students' parents to supervise their children's homework	1	2	3	4	5	6
I asked my students' parents to talk with their child about the school day	1	2	3	4	5	6
I asked my students' parents to attend a special event at the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I asked my students' parents to help me out at school	1	2	3	4	5	6
I contacted my students' parents (for example, sent a note, phoned, e-mailed.	1	2	3	4	5	6



**Teachers' Beliefs regarding Parents perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School Scale**

Instructions: Please indicate How <b>OFTEN</b> the following have happened <b>SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.</b>						
	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree just a little</b>	<b>Agree just a little</b>	<b>Disagree very strongly</b>	<b>Agree very strongly</b>
Teachers at this school are interested and cooperative when they discuss children	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parents feel welcome at this school	1	2	3	4	5	6
Parent activities are scheduled at this school so they can attend	1	2	3	4	5	6
This school lets parents know about meetings and special events	1	2	3	4	5	6
This school's staff contacts parents promptly about any problems involving their children	1	2	3	4	5	6
The teachers at this school keep parents informed about their children's progress in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6

**Appendix D**

**Teacher Demographic Survey**

**Directions:** In this last section, please provide some brief background information about yourself. Please note that this information, along with the responses you provide on the questionnaires, will be completely anonymous.

1. **Gender:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	male
<input type="checkbox"/>	female

2. How long have you worked in the childcare center? \_\_\_\_\_

3. **What is your age?**

- ☐ 15-19
- ☐ 20-24
- ☐ 25-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-older

4. **What is your Race/Ethnicity?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian/Asian-American
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black/African-American
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hispanic/Latino
<input type="checkbox"/>	White/Caucasian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
<input type="checkbox"/>	Middle Eastern
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify: _____ )

**5. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?**

- ☐ No schooling completed
- ☐ High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- ☐ Some college credit
- ☐ Trade/Technical/Vocational degree
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Graduate degree

**Appendix E**

**Respondent Demographics**

**Parent Respondent Demographics**

	White (n=36)		Hispanic (n= 23)		Black (n = 17)		Total (n=76)	
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Marital</b>								
Single	5	13.8%	10	43.5%	11	62.5%	26	34.2%
Married	26	71.4%	11	47.8%	6	37.5%	43	56.5%
Divorced	5	13.8%	2	8.7%	0	0%	7	9.2%
<b>Income</b>								
0-10000	3	8.3%	4	18.2%	0	0.0%	7	9.2%
100000-20000	4	11.11%	4	18.2%	6	37.5%	14	18.42%
20000-40000	4	11.11%	6	27.3%	8	43.8%	18	23.6%
40000 and above	25	69.4%	8	36.4%	3	18.8%	36	47.6%
<b>Education</b>								
Less than high school	0	0%	1	2.3%	0	0%	1	1.3%
High school	5	13.8%	9	20.9%	4	23.5%	18	23.6%
Some college	11	30.5%	7	60.5%	5	29.4%	23	30.2%
Bachelors	10	27.7%	5	11.6%	8	47.05%	23	30.2%
Post Grad	10	27.7%	2	4.7%	0	0%	12	15.7%
<b>Hours</b>								
0-5	4	11.11%	4	17.4%	0	0%	8	10.5%
6-20	4	11.11%	2	8.7%	2	11.7%	8	10.5%
21-40	14	38.8%	10	43.5%	9	52.9%	33	43.4%
41 or more	14	38.8%	7	30.4%	6	35.2%	27	35.5%

**Appendix F**

**Focus Group Discussion Questions**

**Focus Group Discussion Topics and Probing Questions**

Area	Probing Questions	
	Parents	Teachers
Perceptions of Role Activity	Do you participate in your child's learning?	Do parents at your child care participate in their children's learning?
Perceptions of Self-Efficacy	Do you know how to help your child learn so that they can do better at school?	Do parents at your child care know how to help their children learn so that they can do better at school?
Perceptions of Specific Invitations	Do teachers at your child care invite you in the classroom or talk to you about how you can be involved?	Do you invite parents in the classroom or talk to them about how they can be involved with their children?
Perceptions of General Invitations	Are parent activities scheduled at this school for you to attend?	Are parent activities scheduled at your child care for parents to attend?
Perceptions of Knowledge and skills	Do you feel like you have enough knowledge to participate in your child's learning at school or at home?	Do you feel like parents have enough knowledge to participate in their children's learning at school or at home?
Perceptions of Time and energy	Do you feel like you have enough time and energy to participate in your child's learning at school or at home?	Do you feel like parents at your child care have enough time and energy to participate in their children's learning at school or at home?



**Appendix G**

**Focus Group Interview Teacher and Parent Participants Demographics**

**Focus Group Interview Parent Participants Demographics**

Participant Code	Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Childs' Gender	Childs' age	Marital Status	Relationship to Child
P1	Anne	White	Boy	9 months	Divorced	Mother
P2	Mary	Hispanic	Boy	4 years	Single	Mother
P3	Connie	Black	Girl	2 years	Married	Mother
P4	Jane	White	Boy	2.5 years	Married	Mother
P5	Debbie	Hispanic	Boy Boy	7 months 3 years	Single	Mother
P6	Julia	Hispanic	Girl	3 years	Single	Grandmother

**Focus Group Interview Teacher Participants Demographics**

Participant Code	Pseudonym	Years teaching	Age group
T1	Mollie	3 years	Preschool
T2	Cara	1 year	Toddler
T3	Tammy	5 years	Preschool
T4	Angela	2 years	Infant room
T5	Dana	3 years	Toddler room
T6	Wanda	6 months	Infant room