

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY ON KINDERGARTEN  
TEACHER PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT  
IN URBAN KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my husband, Tom Leveridge. He encouraged me to believe in myself and to have confidence in my abilities. He was my inspiration and was proud of my accomplishments. My late father, Billy Dale Butler, encouraged me to get my PhD and to never give up. My late husband and father continue to be my inspiration. My mother, Ninfa Butler, has remained by my side through this process and contributed to my desire to keep going. My daughter, Christine Powell, encouraged me to stay positive, and her encouragement was endless. My son-in-law, Mark Powell, listened and guided me through this journey, and we often had long talks about writing. I want to thank my family for believing in me and for being my inspiration. Your never-ending love has been my greatest gift of all. Remember what happens when you get everything you ever wanted.....YOU LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

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## ABSTRACT

TINNEY LEVERIDGE

### A PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY ON KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS

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The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to have a better understanding of kindergarten teacher perspectives with varied levels of teaching experience on parental involvement in urban elementary schools. Three teachers who participated in the study included: a novice teacher, a mid-career teacher, and a veteran teacher. Varying years of teaching experience gave insight into how teachers' perspectives were beneficial in determining how they played a role in promoting positive and active parent engagement.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (1979) and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) were used to guide the study and served as a lens for analyses. Teacher perspectives were helpful in finding ways to get parents involved in school and at home and ultimately to promote academic success. This study was beneficial in enabling teachers to have a better understanding of their perspectives on parental involvement and to find ways to get parents involved with their students. Data collection consisted of interest groups, individual interviews, audio journaling, and reflexive journals. Holistic and pattern coding were used to code and analyze the interest group and individual interview transcriptions.

Findings showed there were cultural contexts, access, and barriers that influenced parental involvement. Cultural contexts were (a) sibling involvement, (b) home culture, and (c) engagement of mothers. Access were (a) high parental involvement, (b) professional development, (c) parental support, (d) teacher/parent relationships, and (e) communication. Barriers were (a) lack of knowledge and (b) low parental involvement. Teachers' lived experiences may be helpful in suggesting professional development programs that could improve parental involvement and academic success in urban kindergarten classrooms.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Statement of the Purpose.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Researcher’s Paradigm.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	9
Delimitations.....	10
Summary.....	10
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
Theoretical Framework.....	15
Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Theory.....	15
Microsystem.....	16
Mesosystem.....	18
Exosystem.....	20
Macrosystem.....	21
Chronosystem.....	22
Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory.....	24
Academic Success.....	25
Ethnicity.....	30
Hispanic Culture.....	34
Gender.....	35
Sibling Involvement.....	38
Barriers to Involvement.....	39
Perspectives on Parental Involvement.....	43

Student Perspectives.....	43
Principal Perspectives.....	44
Teacher Perspectives.....	44
Professional Development and Parental Involvement.....	46
Professional Development and Teaching.....	49
School Environment/Climate.....	50
Teaching Experience.....	54
Teacher Preparation/Education.....	54
Years of Teaching Experience.....	55
Texas Professional Development.....	56
Conclusion.....	57

### III. METHODOLOGY..... 59

Introduction.....	59
Research Design.....	59
Research Questions.....	61
Field Site Setting.....	62
District Professional Development.....	63
Recruitment.....	64
Participants.....	66
Interest Groups.....	66
Interest Group Participants, School A.....	67
Interest Group Participants, School B.....	67
Interest Group Participants, School C.....	68
Interest Group Participants, School D.....	69
Individual Interviews.....	69
Teacher A.....	70
Teacher B.....	72
Teacher C.....	73
Role of the Researcher.....	74
Data Collection.....	76
Interest Groups.....	76
Individual Interviews.....	78
Recording Information.....	78
Teacher Audio Journaling.....	79
Weekly Debriefing.....	79
Reflective Journaling.....	79
Summary Sheets.....	80
Artifacts.....	80
Interview Guide.....	80
Timeline of Study.....	83

Data Analysis.....	83
Theory Used to Analyze Data.....	85
Trustworthiness.....	87
Member Checking.....	87
Peer Debriefing.....	88
Human Participants Protection.....	89
Summary.....	91
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS.....	93
Introduction.....	93
Interest Groups.....	93
Individual Interviews.....	94
Theoretical Framework.....	95
Vygotsky's Social Development Theory.....	95
Analysis of the Findings.....	96
Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory.....	99
Research Question One.....	100
Microsystem.....	100
Mesosystem.....	102
Exosystem.....	105
Macrosystem.....	106
Chronosystem.....	108
Research Question Two.....	109
Home Contexts.....	110
Sibling Involvement.....	110
Home Culture.....	112
Engagement of Mothers.....	115
Research Question Three.....	117
Access.....	117
High Parental Involvement.....	117
Professional Development.....	121
Parental Support.....	123
Teacher/Parent Relationships.....	125
Communication.....	128
Barriers.....	130
Lack of Knowledge.....	130
Low Parental Involvement.....	133
Summary.....	135
V. DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS.....	138



Introduction.....	138
Overview of the Study.....	139
Research Questions.....	141
Discussion.....	141
Bronfenbrenner's Nested System View.....	142
Microsystem.....	142
Mesosystem.....	144
Exosystem.....	146
Macrosystem.....	148
Chronosystem.....	150
Home Contexts.....	151
Sibling Involvement.....	152
Home Culture.....	154
Engagement of Mothers.....	156
Access.....	157
High Parental Involvement.....	158
Professional Development.....	159
Parental Support.....	161
Teacher/Parent Relationships.....	163
Communication.....	165
Barriers.....	167
Lack of Knowledge.....	167
Low Parental Involvement.....	169
Future Research.....	171
Limitations.....	173
Summary.....	173

REFERENCES.....	177
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## APPENDICES

A. Interest Group Guide.....	193
B. Initial Individual Interview Guide.....	196
C. Individual Interview Guide.....	199
D. Recruitment Script.....	203
E. Informational Handout.....	205
F. Dissertation Study IRB Signature Page.....	208
G. Recruitment Flyer.....	210
H. Researcher Reflection Samples.....	212

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Study Timeline.....	83
2. Initial Themes.....	84
3. Coding Definitions.....	97
4. Coding Process.....	99
5. Microsystem Exemplars.....	101
6. Mesosystem Exemplars.....	103
7. Exosystem Exemplars.....	106
8. Macrosystem Exemplars.....	107
9. Chronosystem Exemplars.....	109
10. Sibling Involvement Exemplars.....	111
11. Home Culture Exemplars.....	113
12. Engagement of Mothers Exemplars.....	116
13. High Parental Involvement Exemplars.....	118
14. Professional Development Exemplars.....	122
15. Parental Support Exemplars.....	124
16. Teacher/parent Relationships Exemplars.....	126
17. Communication Exemplars.....	129
18. Lack of Knowledge Exemplars.....	131
19. Low Parental Involvement Exemplars.....	134
20. Themes for Interview Questions.....	140

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher perspectives of parental involvement influence parental interactions in the classroom and at home (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). Research suggests strong connections between the academic success of children and types of interactions with school teachers and parents. According to Mannix-Lesh (2013), teacher perspectives also contribute to how often parents make an effort to get involved with their children, which in turn may be influential to a child's school learning and grades in kindergarten. There are many outside influences that determine child and parent interactions. Mannix-Lesh (2013) states that as research continues to show that the types and lengths of parental interaction patterns make a positive difference to the overall development of children and often affects academic success, there is a need to understand teacher perspectives of parental involvement.

It is imperative to determine how to promote more parental involvement and to find ways to support parents at school and at home. This type of support may be aimed at finding ways to decrease the barriers that may be associated with a lack of parental involvement. Khajepour and Ghaznini (2011) explain, "Some parents have the skills to foster both cognitive growth and achievement motivation. More importantly, parents who do not have the skills can readily acquire them" (p. 1204). Research suggests that the barriers that affect parental involvement influence children's involvement in school activities as well (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

It is important to examine teacher perspectives of parental involvement in kindergarten classrooms, and the importance of regular and consistent parent and child interactions during the early years of life (Siddiqui, 2011). Barnyak and McNelly (2009) state that teachers' perspectives and attitudes are directly correlated to more parental involvement. Eliminating some of the barriers to parental involvement include helping parents to feel less intimidated in front of teachers and reaching out more effectively to parents through on-going communication (Kersey & Masterson, 2009). Investigating issues associated with parental involvement and teacher perspectives of these issues may promote more parental involvement at school and ultimately help children to be more successful academically.

Looking at how cultural contexts affect parental involvement may be helpful in finding ways to promote parental involvement, particularly among immigrant families (Hafford, 2010). Lee and Bowen (2006) concur, stating that cultural contexts should be considered among families of low economic status. This information may also be helpful in suggesting professional development for teachers that may promote more parental involvement in their classrooms and in children's homes. This chapter will discuss teacher perspectives of parental involvement gathered through a phenomenological qualitative study of three kindergarten teachers of varying teaching experience.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has become increasingly important for teachers to understand the issues that affect parental involvement in the classroom and at home, and how their perspectives of parental involvement affect how parents get involved at home and in the classroom

(Horvat, Curci, & Partlow, 2010). There is a need to understand what influences teachers' interactions with parents and how teachers' perspectives of parental involvement may make a difference in how often parents get involved at school (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013; Mannix-Lesh, 2013). Understanding the ways that teachers contribute to parental involvement may be beneficial in promoting student academic success in urban school districts (Barnyak and McNelly, 2009). Without appropriate school interventions and parental support, some students could be at risk of failure in school (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010).

Examining how teachers feel their perspectives may promote parental involvement in the classroom and at home is important to understanding how teachers may make a difference through their own parental involvement strategies (Mannix-Lesh, 2013). This is especially important when considering how positive relationships between teachers and parents may help in building a positive foundation throughout the school year (Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010). However, there are few studies that have analyzed teacher perspectives of urban kindergarten children in regard to parental involvement, how teachers feel their perspectives impact parental involvement with their children, and how teachers feel their perspectives impact academic success.

Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) state that there are many problems associated with parental involvement in urban school districts and that many urban public schools have traditionally been associated with low socio-economic status of the community and poor academic success of the students. Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) also suggest a need for teachers to have an awareness of the diversity of families who use urban public schools.

They emphasize the importance of understanding parental involvement in large cities and the need for community-based efforts to support diversity. According to Desforges and Aboucharr (2003), it is crucial for research to identify strategies that would increase parental involvement in urban schools, and that research is limited in this area. They indicate that understanding the diversity of large urban schools may increase parental involvement.

Parental influence during kindergarten is vital to a young child's learning and overall academic success (Ray & Smith, 2010). Based upon research based practices, they emphasize that the role of parental involvement during kindergarten is crucial to student learning and the need for teachers to find ways to get parents involved. Research based practices also stress the importance of kindergarten transition and parental involvement. According to Ho (2009), there are challenges associated with children in kindergarten who were from low-income and minority status, particularly in areas of math and language. She explains that parents' beliefs are positively related to involvement with their children.

With research being limited in this area, there is a need for research on teacher perspectives to include information on the understanding of how teacher perspectives on parental involvement may give insight into ways educators may facilitate more parental involvement at school and at home (Topor et al., 2010). The current study investigated kindergarten teacher perspectives of parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study is to better understand teacher perspectives of parental involvement, so that the teachers can more effectively facilitate parental involvement within urban kindergarten classrooms. Research indicates a strong correlation between parental involvement and student academic success (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). There are several factors that impact the relationships and types of involvement between parent and child and include self-efficacy, family background, and the expectations that parents have for their children (Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner, 2010).

Investigating teachers' perspectives of these factors is beneficial in determining the role they play in promoting parental involvement and student achievement and ultimately how well students perform academically (Regner, Loose, & Demas, 2009). This information may be helpful in assisting teachers plan yearly curriculum and develop parent involvement strategies aimed at getting more parents involved, particularly in a diverse school district (Jackman, 2013; Weiser & Reggio, 2010; Wright, 2009).

### **Research Questions**

This research study investigated teacher perspectives of parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms and was influenced by a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research explores, describes, and analyzes the meaning of individual experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (1979) was used as a framework for both the construction of interest group questions and interview questions. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) was used as a lens

for analysis. I examined how teacher perspectives were helpful in finding ways to get parents involved in school and at home.

The broad research question that guided the study was:

What are the lived experiences of three urban kindergarten teachers of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Three questions were more narrowly refined for my inquiry:

Research Question One: What are the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested system and parental involvement?

Research Question Two: How do teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement?

Research Question Three: How do teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement?

### **Researcher's Paradigm**

My worldview as a researcher has been influenced by my time spent as a kindergarten teacher. I taught kindergarten for many years in an urban school district and witnessed the importance of parental involvement. With this knowledge, I have an understanding that when parents become involved in school, academic success may increase. I also know that parental involvement at home is an important factor to academic success. Working with children and interacting with their parents made me aware that there were ideas and beliefs that parents had that either facilitated or hindered their involvement with their children. During my work as a professional, I discovered that teachers' perspectives of parental involvement was a key factor in how often parents had become involved with their children at home and at school. Knowing that some parents did not get involved with their children, I developed an awareness that the lack of these



relationships play a part in a child's ability to learn and to achieve academic success. This knowledge guided the design of my research study and helped me to understand and to analyze my research data.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory influenced my conceptualization of the research study. Taking each theory into account gave me an understanding, from multiple perspectives, of how teacher perspectives of parental involvement influences parental participation. The principles of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky's Social Theory provided a framework in which I investigated teachers' perspectives of parental involvement and how teachers considered their perspectives on parental involvement impacted actual parental involvement in their classroom and at home. Bronfenbrenner's Theory helped me have a better understanding of how the various Bioecological systems played a role in parental involvement. Vygotsky's Social Theory helped me understand how mediation and scaffolding between child and parent are helpful for children to succeed in school. These two theoretical frameworks were used to aid in analysis of my research study and allowed me to understand a teacher's perspective of parental involvement, such as their attitudes, values, and beliefs in involving parents.

My worldview can be best understood from the stance of social constructivism and has influenced my thinking on teacher perspectives of parental involvement. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), social constructivism uses inductive reasoning as research starts with the views of the participants and builds up to develop patterns and theories within the research. A social constructivist worldview has four characteristics

that include: understanding, multiple participant meanings, social and historical construction, and theory generation.

These characteristics in my thinking were crucial in navigating the research process and allowed me to have a better understanding of my participants and their input into my research topics of teachers' perspectives of parental involvement and academic success. It was important that I be aware of my paradigm as I looked at the opinions and beliefs of others as this allowed me to better understand their points of view that might differ from my own (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Through the lens of social constructivism, I was able to understand and to interpret the various parts of the research study situated in collaborative and meaningful exchange of experience within interest groups and individual interviews. My research paradigm included a belief that understanding teacher perspectives through a process of collecting rich, thick descriptions of teachers' perspectives of parental involvement helps to serve as a way of verification throughout the process. This was essential in developing subjective meanings of teacher perspectives and helped to reduce bias in my research (Creswell, 2007). I took into account that all individuals may be influenced by the social and historical contexts in which they live and that they take significant meaning and understanding from these contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Using a social constructivist's point of view, I took into account life settings, environmental factors, and environmental influences of my participants as I interpreted the data I collected (Creswell, 2007).

## Definition of Terms

The following key terms were defined for the purposes of the research study:

*Academic Success* is defined as passing grade level assessments, such as standardized achievement tests (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). *Academic success* includes being successful in areas of math, language arts, and science (Van Voorhis, 2011).

*Bioecological system* is defined as a theoretical framework in which the environment contributes to a child's overall development and that everything and everyone in the environment will eventually have an effect on a child's overall development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

*Microsystem* is the interaction between parents and their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

*Mesosystem* is the interaction between parents and teachers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

*Exosystem* is the influence of parental employment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

*Macrosystem* is the influence of home culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

*Chronosystem* is teachers' perspectives of the other four systems over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

*Access* is a parent, teacher, administrator, or school district intervention that promotes parental involvement. In a school setting this often includes parent programs aimed at helping parents and students (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). *Barrier* is parent behaviors or cultural contexts that may hinder parental involvement within large diverse urban schools (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009).

*Direct Interaction* is defined as parents and children spending time together in a meaningful way, such as parents getting involved with their child's school work, involvement with the child's school or classroom, and regular communication with classroom teachers (El Nokali et al., 2010).

*Title I School* is defined as various schools in terms of low socio-economic status (Jackman, 2011).

*Teacher Perspectives* are defined as how teachers feel about the roles of parents within the school and home context and how these experiences affect academic success (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

*Race/Ethnicity* are defined as cultural differences among families and their children (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

### **Delimitations**

This study was delimited in the following ways:

1. Access was limited to kindergarten teachers in an urban elementary school.
2. The sample size for the interest groups consisted of 16 teachers.
3. The sample size for the individual interviews consisted of three kindergarten teachers with varying years of teaching experience.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate teacher perspectives of parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms. Teacher perspectives give insight into how teachers view parental involvement and how their perspectives play a role in how and when parents get involved (Makgopa & Mokhele,

2013). Teacher perspectives were examined regarding how they felt their perspective of parental involvement affected a child's academic success. This information was useful for teachers in an urban setting, in determining what steps would be beneficial to get parents more involved in school and at home, thereby, increasing academic success in elementary school children.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of the literature in reference to the effects of parental involvement on academic success, parental involvement across ethnic groups, influences of Hispanic culture on parental involvement and how mother/father roles may affect parental involvement. Additionally sibling involvement, barriers to parental involvement, student, principal, and parent views of parental involvement explored are presented. Finally, the examination of the impact of professional development on parental involvement and various aspects of the school and classroom environment as well as teacher experience are discussed.

Research in the field of parental involvement indicates that there are many reasons why parents become involved with their children and why parents perceive their involvement with their children to be important (El Nokali et al., 2010). The empirical studies included in this review of literature examine the nature of various forms of parental interactions between parent and child and how they influence children at home and at school.

The most prevalent themes to emerge from the research on parental involvement were how this involvement affects overall student academic success and the various barriers to parental involvement. Empirical research emphasizes the importance of parental influences on a child's school learning and grades in kindergarten and indicates parental involvement plays an important role during the school years (Ray & Smith,

2010). This evidence appears, in general, to give the most emphasis in these areas and indicates that parental involvement is one of the best ways to ensure academic success of children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

The literature on parental involvement indicates the overwhelming importance of involvement at home and school. LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) state students learn more and make better grades when parents collaborate with their children consistently as well as communicated with their children's teachers. They suggest that teachers often have a difficult time getting parents involved, and parental involvement is a daunting task to promote and to maintain throughout the school year due, in part, to the ethnically and racially diverse students seen in schools today.

Ho (2009) explained that other challenges, such as low-income and minority status of families, seemed to have had an effect on parental involvement. She conducted research on parental beliefs of education and parental involvement. Her study found that parents' beliefs of education were positively related to their involvement with their children and suggested that children who may be at risk academically when starting kindergarten, especially in math and language, benefit academically when parents use intrinsic and extrinsic practices when involved with their children (Ho, 2009). Many experts in the field of education believed that parental involvement with kindergarten children take many forms, such as classroom or school involvement, and that educators should find ways to get parents involved if direct support inside the classroom is not possible (Ray & Smith, 2010).

There is overwhelming evidence that parental involvement has a positive effect on academic success, and it is clear that parental involvement is necessary for the overall development of children, particularly in areas of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional development in the early years and beyond (Nargis, 2013). Researchers indicate that when parental involvement is consistent and meaningful children have less stress, anxiety, and fear associated with school (Siddiqui, 2011). Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) suggest that research in urban districts is important for understanding parental involvement in large cities. They explain that this is particularly important due to the diversity of urban schools, many of which have low-income families.

Considering the issues associated with parental involvement, research on teacher perspectives on parental involvement is necessary to show the links between school and home. There is a need to understand how teacher perspectives influence their behaviors with parents and how these influences affect student academic success. Knowing how teachers perceive parental roles could influence communication between teacher and parent and either hinder or enhance parental involvement (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013).

This review of literature introduces the theoretical framework and current literature that guided and supported the research study of teacher's perspectives on parental involvement. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory is used to explore influences of the environment on parental involvement through examination of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Vygotsky's Social Development Theory helped in determining how the lived



experiences of kindergarten teachers within a large urban school district influenced teacher perspectives (Vygotsky, 1978).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory were used to guide the current research study. With an understanding that a child's surroundings affects growth and development, Bronfenbrenner (1979) elaborates on what he calls a child's enduring environment. He explains that what a child experiences directly and indirectly can make a significant difference in his or her developmental outcomes. He explains that the most apparent, and possibly the most influential, of experiences come from immediate interactions within the home. Within the home, there are factors that make a difference in how a child interacts with others and learns. Engagement with parents can be critical in this development as well, including how often and to what extent children communicate and have meaningful interactions with their parents (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

According to Swick and Williams (2006), Bronfenbrenner conceptualizes this ecological environment occurring within a "nested structure" in which developmental outcomes are influenced by interactions within microsystems, or the immediate settings that contain the developing person. Swick and Williams (2006) indicates that a child's parent influences the child academically and has a tremendous effect on social emotional development starting from birth. Positive effects of involvement, as well as barriers to

involvement, may be important factors to take into consideration when considering how child development progresses through time.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) states that his Bioecological Theory encompasses a wide range of worldviews and research methodologies. These worldviews and research methodologies can be applied throughout a number of social fields of study, including parental involvement, academic success, and the social emotional development of children and can help in understanding what circumstances can affect child growth and development, including barriers to involvement (Swick & Williams, 2006).

### **Microsystem**

Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualizes the microsystem as being the closest to an individual, which encompasses interpersonal relationships and direct interactions within immediate surroundings in the environment. This system includes the family, family members, classroom, child's school, religious institutions, neighborhood, and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Swick and Williams (2006) indicate children have multiple microsystems, which include interactions and involvement between parents, caregivers, siblings, and school.

Taking the microsystem into account is important to understanding ways in which parental involvement is influential. According to Xu et al. (2010), there is a strong connection between parental involvement, social emotional development, and academic success, particularly in reading. Parental involvement helps to foster academic success and includes parents who are involved in school, have television rules at home, support their child's academic endeavors, and participate in extracurricular school activities.

Examining the relationship between parental involvement, self-regulated learning and reading achievement, the most benefit in reading achievement is seen when parents have high educational expectations, are involved in their child's school, and help with homework on a consistent basis (Xu et al., 2010).

The microsystem is influential when examining how teacher's views make a difference in student academic success and overall social emotional well-being. Baeck (2010) indicates that when teachers are more involved with their students and find ways to communicate with parents, students excel overall and the lack of teacher-parent communication often equates to the lack of parental involvement. Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement are an important factor when considering parental involvement. Teachers indicate a positive connection between parental involvement and academic success when parents express they want to support their child's school. The teachers explain that many parents feel that parent and school connections are important enough to discuss with their children, indicating a significant benefit to the child when parents get involved on a regular basis (Baeck, 2010).

Valdez, Shewakramani, Goldberg, and Padilla (2013) state that parental depression is a barrier to parental involvement. Parental depression has an effect on children's social emotional competence, and children whose parents are more involved with the school have fewer emotional issues. Depressed parents have a tendency to be more involved with their child at home than at school. This is an example of how the microsystem works within a family unit and shows the need for family intervention and resources (Valdez et al., 2013).

## **Mesosystem**

The mesosystem includes interactions between microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A relationship between the child's family and the child's school is considered part of the mesosystem. Within the mesosystem, parental involvement has been found to have a positive effect on student achievement when parents are involved with their children before they start kindergarten and during the kindergarten school year (Ray & Smith, 2010). The most benefit to children seems to come from parents who are involved in numerous ways and who are active participants, supportive, and caring at home as well as being involved with teachers and in school activities once the child starts school (Ray & Smith, 2010). According to the authors, kindergarten students do better academically because parent and child involvement promotes cooperation and collaboration with others, self-control, and pro-social relationships among children. Students are also more likely to succeed if parents talk to them about the importance of school before they start into kindergarten and help them with homework once they start kindergarten (Ray & Smith, 2010).

While research exists for the importance of these mesosystem level interactions, not all parents are as involved in their kindergartener's schooling. Bower and Griffin (2011) state that administrators and teachers do not take the time to build good relationships with parents, and teachers lack techniques to help parents understand how to get involved with their children and how involvement makes a difference academically. Parent and school involvement is critical to student success in this sample, and parents facilitate communication when they take leadership roles in the school by contacting

teachers about working toward common school goals in the classroom and within the school environment (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Horvat, Curci, and Partlow (2010) offer additional support for Bower and Griffin's findings. The researchers conducted a study on parent and principal relationships at an urban elementary school and interviewed twenty-one parents, five teachers, and three principals. Their results revealed the more parental involvement in the school, such as helping in the classroom, resulted in children who benefited academically and developed better self-esteem.

Additional examples of these meso-level interactions are provided in studies examining the views of the students themselves. For example, Fan and Williams (2010) conducted a study with a nationally representative sample of 12,721 students from four ethnic groups, including Asian American, Hispanic, Caucasian, and African American to investigate parental involvement and student school motivation. Their study found positive relationships between student views of their parents' involvement and their academic achievement. In the sample, students indicated that communication between parent and school was the most influential factor in their academic success. Parents' educational aspirations for their children was also a key factor in the students' viewpoint with a strong connection with academic success, and better well-being for the child (Fan & Williams, 2010).

Considering school culture may be beneficial in determining ways to promote communication between parent and teacher, which in turn may encourage more parental involvement. School culture is considered to enhance parental involvement as

demonstrated by Nargis (2013) in a study using quantitative questionnaires and semi-structured interviews of kindergarten teachers and parents on their perspectives of parental involvement and school culture. The study found that cognitive development was enhanced when the child reported positive communication with parents and teachers. Interactions were more beneficial when the experiences were positive in nature and when these experiences contributed to the process of socialization, helping to promote positive social emotional growth. Parental involvement in preschool was essential for the child's success in kindergarten (Nargis, 2013).

When parents' involvement with their children extends to extracurricular activities, children advance academically and feel better about their achievements (Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010). This in turn creates a better self-esteem among children and indicates a positive correlation between parental involvement and cognitive development. Therefore, within the mesosystem, parental involvement is beneficial not only in regard to class involvement, but also is valuable when conducted outside of the school in the form of extracurricular school activities (Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010). When considering how the meso-level factors influence teacher perspectives, it is important to look at school environment. School environment and climate are considered highly important in helping children deal with outside environmental issues at home or in the community (Bryant, Shdaimah, Sander, & Cornelious, 2013).

### **Exosystem**

The exosystem involves external environments that indirectly influence child growth and development. It contains environments in which the child does not directly

participate but nonetheless influences the child's micro-level contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) states there are ways to assist parents and their children to become more "empowered" within the exosystem.

According to Swick and Williams (2006), the exosystem includes relationships within families in which families create buffers with each other and children experience the exosystem psychologically but not physically within their environment. Ways to help families within the exosystem would be to educate parents regarding early childhood program expectations. This in turn may increase parents' comfort level with their child's school, classroom teacher, and classroom activities. According to the authors, helping children to understand their parents' lives, such as obligations to work, may help them to better understand how the outside environment affects them indirectly (Swick & Williams, 2006).

### **Macrosystem**

The macrosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner, includes the larger socio-cultural context described as the culture in which individuals live (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Cultural contexts include whether a child lives in a developing and industrialized country, federal and state policies, socio-economic status, poverty, and ethnicity (Swick & Williams, 2006).

There is a positive correlation between parental involvement when a family's socio-economic resources and parental education levels are higher (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012). Paat (2013) explains that it is important to understand diversity within large urban schools when contemplating ways to promote parental involvement. According to Paat

(2013) children of immigrant families are greatly influenced by differences and diversity in their family settings and social ecology plays a significant role in how immigrant children assimilate into new cultures. He states that immigrant families develop within a family ecology paradigm that focuses on interrelationships between family and other systems, such as school and neighborhoods. This becomes an important part of how a child develops and grows within a school context and recommendations for public schools include promoting respect for people of different cultural heritage (Paat, 2013).

### **Chronosystem**

The chronosystem is described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as the evolution of the four other systems over time. This refers to the influence of patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course on children's development. Many influences within the chronosystem affect a child and may impact academic success and social emotional development through time. Within the chronosystem, there are many situations that may affect children through the years, such as divorce or poverty (Swick & Williams, 2006). When considering how the chronosystem is influential in teacher perspectives, it is imperative to understand how professional development and teaching experiences may change over time.

Looking at how teacher perspectives are influenced by the chronosystem is important in understanding ways to enhance parental involvement. Kose and Lim (2011) conducted a quantitative survey study in which they explored the relationships between professional learning and teachers' beliefs about diversity, transformative expertise, and transformative teaching. Participants included kindergarten through fifth grade teachers



in 25 urban elementary schools in the Midwest. The findings from the study suggested that professional growth came from transformative teaching and that in-service workshops are influential and effective for teachers. Staff meetings that included discussions of teaching problems, teaching practices, and student learning tended to enhance teachers' self-efficacy. Due to this, teachers' perceptions that students or parents were responsible for low academic success decreased (Kose & Lim, 2011).

Communicating with parents throughout the school year may be beneficial to getting them more involved in school and at home. Fantuzzo et al. (2012) examined 584 early childhood teachers' perspectives on the relationship between Early Childhood Teacher Experiences Scale factors and teacher practices. The participant sample was predominantly female at 94.9%. The teachers were from Head Start, child care facilities, kindergarten classroom, and first grade classrooms in a large urban school district. A series of exploratory factor analyses was used for data analysis. Positive teacher efficacy was associated with time spent communicating with parents. Although job stress was considered to be important to teacher practices, school support was important to teacher/parent interactions. Because teaching experiences may change through time, Fantuzzo et al. (2012) suggested that these experiences affected parent/teacher relationships.

Teaching experience, through time, should be considered within the chronosystem. According to Rice (2013), there is a variation in teaching practices associated with years of teaching experience. She indicates that the most significant teacher gains are found within the first years of teaching, early-career experiences are

affected by level of education, inexperienced teachers are more likely to teach in high-poverty schools, and experiences for teachers differ in high versus low-poverty schools. Rice suggests that policy makers should find ways to find strategies, through professional development opportunities, to encourage high performance throughout a teacher's career, especially encouraging effectiveness among veteran teachers through time (Rice, 2013).

In addition to examining Bronfenbrenner's nested system it is crucial to understand teachers' perspectives of parental involvement through Vygotsky's Social Development Theory. Vygotsky's Theory shows the importance of social and cultural contexts to home and school environments and offers an insight to understanding how this may contribute to parental involvement.

### **Vygotsky's Social Development Theory**

In light of twenty-first century educational paradigms, the necessity to understand teacher perspectives of parental involvement and to investigate social and cultural contexts within the classroom could impact teacher preparation and student success. Vygotsky (1978) states that development of the mind and personality in ontogenesis, or the course of development, occurs in stages in the form of two periods. This cultural-historical theory refers to these periods as lytic periods during which the development of a person is slow and incremental, and critical periods during which development of a person occurs abruptly during development. It is through these critical periods of development that children's social emotional and cognitive progress develops (Vygotsky, 1978).

This process is also influenced by others in their environment, including teachers and parents. Advances in development occur if these influences continue on a regular basis. Looking at this type of development through Vygotsky's "periods" of development solidify the importance of parental involvement and academic success and the role each plays in understanding how they influence teacher perspectives (Obukhova & Korepanova, 2009). It is also through the "critical periods" that Vygotsky's Social Development Theory underscores the processes of mediation between parent and child. It is through these processes and broad social contexts that parents assume the important role of filtering the basic values of their culture to their children and may be influential in how teacher's perspectives are formed regarding parental involvement.

### **Academic Success**

Taking a critical look at research on parental involvement and academic success may help in understanding the importance of getting more parents involved at home and at school. Considering circumstances that promote or hinder parental involvement is important when determining ways to reach out to parents of school children. Schady (2011) explains that the benefits of parental involvement occurs when children are young and may be contingent upon parents' education, mothers' vocabulary, and the developmental stages of young children. Schady (2011) states that children between ages three and five do better on vocabulary acquisition when mothers have richer vocabularies.

According to Adams, Womack, Shatzer, and Caldarella (2010) and Ho (2009), parents' beliefs are an important aspect of parental involvement and when parents believe

it is important for their children to do well in school, especially in areas of math and reading, they use more strategies, including both intrinsic and extrinsic practices, to encourage their child. These strategies may be helpful in promoting academic success in the areas of math and reading (Adams et al., 2010; Ho, 2009).

Similarly, in a research study by El Nokali et al. (2010) the academic development of elementary school aged children, maternal and teacher reports regarding parental involvement, standardized achievement scores, social skills, and problem behaviors were examined. The results showed that children performed better academically and had fewer behavioral problems when parents were highly involved. The results indicated that parents had a great deal of influence on their child's social emotional development as they went through school. The researchers found that as parents became more involved with their children's school and school work, they were more likely to communicate with school personnel about their children's social emotional development.

Additionally, Van Voorhis (2011) states that families interact with their children as facilitators. He states, "The family partner serves as an assistant, never the teacher. All parents, regardless of formal education, should be able to participate in the student family interaction" (p. 245). As children start into high school and adolescence, parental involvement remains important. Hill and Tyson (2009) offer additional support for the importance of family involvement during adolescence and explain that when children experience changes in school context, family relations, and developmental processes their

academic performance usually goes down. It is during this time that the family plays a significant role.

Although research suggests that parental involvement is crucial to academic success, many parents are not well aware of their roles in their children's education. Many parents do not take interest in their children's education and do not take the time to interact with their children during homework or study time. Safdar, Roasat, Saqib, and Muhammad Saeed (2010) conducted research on parental involvement and academic success in government primary schools in rural areas. Parent and child interviews on the topic of parental involvement were conducted and their results revealed a positive correlation between parental involvement and academic success when parents talked to their children about the importance of school at home on a regular basis, when parents used praise with their children and appreciated their academic efforts, when parents did not allow children to become involved in their family financial issues or other adult issues, and when there was a balanced diet and good health care of the children at home. Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad, Khan, and Hukamdad (2010) concur, concluding "Children often remain with parents in their home, so it is the responsibility of the parents to fulfill the basic needs/educational needs of their children" (p. 95).

Freeman (2010) found, through a study on parental involvement, that parents' involvement was dependent upon social and cultural aspects. Participants included 11 parents from one elementary school and explored parents' perceptions and experiences with their children through individual interviews. The study revealed parents often felt

they were being stereotyped and were made to feel inferior and became more involved when they were allowed to talk about real issues that mattered to them.

A Grogan-Kaylor and Wooley (2010) study examined assessment instruments of middle and high school students and found that neighborhood safety and exposure to violent crime played a role in students' behavior problems, which in turn affected academic success. Socio-economic factors also played a role in school success. According to Grogan-Kaylor and Woolley (2010), these factors included family dynamics, neighborhood, and school. The researchers found that children of all grade levels could be affected by these socio-economic factors well into middle school and high school. A family's socio-economic status as well as its race and ethnicity were found to be a contributing factor to academic success.

Patacchini and Zenou (2011) suggest that neighborhood quality makes a difference in academic achievement of children. Parents who are low-educated spend less time with their children, and parental investment on a child's education is higher if the parents are highly educated. Stacer and Perrucci (2012) explain that a family's socio-economic status, parent education, and household income has a positive effect on parental involvement at school and in the community (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012).

Bass, Butler, Grzywacz, and Linney (2009) explain that household income plays a positive role in parental involvement. They suggest that working longer impacts parental involvement with children spending more hours in child care and positive parent/child interactions are reported when parents spend more time doing leisurely activities with their children. Xu et al. (2010) offer additional support and state positive effects are

compounded when parents are involved in school, have television rules at home, help with homework, have high educational expectations, and are involved in extracurricular activities with their children. The researchers suggest that the most benefit to the child comes from parental educational expectations, school involvement, support, and helping with homework.

Overall positive and negative school experiences may impact parental involvement. Parents who have education as a top priority are more vested in their involvement (Rucker, 2014). Teachers appear to be more satisfied with parental involvement when parents work with their children consistently at home and when they communicate with them on a regular basis. Teachers feel school involvement to be the least effective in academic success (Chung-Kai & Chia-Hung, 2012).

A study conducted by Nargis (2013) looked at how managing parental involvement in early childhood education was extremely beneficial. This study examined how parents perceived involvement and their understanding of how the education system affected their children. The study found that social emotional development of the child was enhanced when there was positive communication between parents and teachers. The study found that parental involvement in preschool was essential for the child's success in kindergarten (Nargis, 2013). To have an understanding of parental involvement on academic success, it is important to examine how cultural aspects such as home culture and ethnicity may play a role in involvement.

## **Ethnicity**

Understanding diversity among school-aged children may help teachers understand the importance of considering the ethnicities of students and their families. This may be helpful in determining ways to promote parental involvement at home and at school. Huntsinger and Jose (2009) stated that culture played a significant role within a child's environment, and it was essential to have an understanding of how race and ethnicity contributed to teachers' perspectives of parental involvement. The researchers found that when examining the reasons why parents got involved with their children, it was important to take cultural differences into account. They examined children in preschools and kindergarten classes from Chinese schools in a 4-year longitudinal study. Using individual interviews and an 8-item scale on involvement, the study found that school based parental involvement was the most significant over time. Examining cultures offered insight into why and how parents got involved. The researchers believe that parents should be recognized by educators for what they contribute to the child's education, stating that teachers of young children should appreciate the efforts of European American parents as well as Chinese American parents (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

Alvarez-Valdivia et al. (2012) state this to be true with Cuban families. Being in a diverse region of Cuba, parents are often more involved if their children are not at risk for behavioral problems at school. This was an indication of how parents from this diverse area perceive their roles. Alvarez-Valdivia et al. (2012) suggest that "The results of the current study have contributed to the idea that there may be cultural differences in terms



of what aspects of parental involvement have the most impact on student adjustment” (p. 325). Vitoroulis, Schneider, Vasquez, de Toro, and Gonzales (2012) agree that parental and peer support is an important factor among older adolescents from Canadian, Cuban, and Spanish ethnicities. Both parent and peer support is important across all cultures with more importance placed on family oriented cultures than social support from same sex peers (Vitoroulis et al., 2012).

According to Durand (2011), the same evidence of positive parental involvement outcomes is seen among parents and children of Latino families of kindergarten children. Literacy skills are enhanced when parents are involved and communication between parents and school is a predictor of continued and consistent involvement. This involvement increases at school and at home and often extends into areas of greater collaboration between the parents and teachers. This was of particular importance when taking into account that many children from minority status are at risk for academic failure. Durand (2011) states “By virtue of their ethnic minority status, relative poverty, and particular schooling experiences, Latino children may be in a disadvantaged position even in the early school years” (p. 481).

Parental involvement is predictive of children’s motivation in reading skills in middle school. When parents are more involved, children of Latino families do better in reading. This indicates the need for administrators and teachers to have parents involved on a regular basis and to understand that parental involvement is important throughout a child’s schooling, not just in the early years of school (Loera, Rueda, & Nakamoto, 2011). Latin American immigrant mothers appear to participate more often when they are

involved in activities at their children's schools. It appears school programs help mothers get more involved in a positive way (Rivera & Lavan, 2012).

The culture and values of the family have become an important aspect of parental involvement, including length and method of interaction. Henry, Plunkett, and Sands (2011) investigated the motivation of Latino parental involvement with adolescent children. Using self-report data from 594 Latino adolescents regarding parental involvement, their research suggested that monitoring adolescents was essential in producing positive effects on academic motivation within the family unit. Their research indicated that mothers are more likely than fathers to monitor the behaviors of their adolescent children and that parental involvement was related to academic motivation. The researchers found that parental involvement varied according to family structure, such as stepfather families or single-mother families.

Henry et al. (2011) stated:

Because Latino adolescents who see their parents as engaging in monitoring report greater academic motivation, it is important to prepare parents to engage in monitoring in ways that help adolescents understand that their parents are invested in their lives through monitoring. (p. 386)

Fan, Williams, and Wolters (2012) conducted a study on parental involvement and school motivation across ethnic groups. They found that undertaking the problems associated with school motivation was hindered by the effects of ethnic diversity. Using structural equation modeling analyses, they found ethnic differences on parental involvement. They found that Asian families have difficulties with communicating with

teachers, and research suggests that when Asian parents have high standards for their children's education, student academic success is higher. The communication between parent and teacher was an indication that school-parent communication was a positive aspect of involvement (Fan et al., 2012).

Eng, Szmodis, and Mulsow (2014) state that parental involvement indicates that Cambodian children of elementary school age are greatly affected by their cultures and that social networks influence parental involvement, such as relative involvement. The researchers suggest that parental social networks, trust, academic aspirations, and gender role attitudes determine how and to what extent parents participate with their children. Eng, Szmodis, and Mulsow (2014) explain parental involvement, "Parents' participation in their children's education requires not just physical resources (e.g., parental education, wealth, and number of children) but also the value and belief they place on educational achievement, adding to the important role of social capital in education" (p. 594).

According to Eng (2013), capital within the family is influential in determining Cambodian adolescents' academic achievement. Maternal education and cultural roles are significantly associated with students' academic achievement, such as the belief of traditional gender roles among family members which indicates a different view regarding attitudes on female students' academic achievement. Eng (2013) suggests cultural beliefs account for predetermined ideas of family involvement and academic success.

Eng (2013) states:

Parents describe children who perform well academically as those who “can do it” and children who perform poorly as those who “cannot do it,” suggesting that intervention to push or motivate children to achieve would be futile given that children have already been fated. (p. 383)

### **Hispanic Culture**

Understanding Hispanic culture may help in understanding how parental roles are influenced by their home culture. Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) indicate a need for teachers to take into account the diversity of their students and their families. This in turn may help promote parental involvement at home and at school.

Having an understanding of the culture within a community and school may help teachers find ways to get parents more involved with their children. According to the United States Census Bureau (1991, 2009), Hispanic children have increased dramatically in the past two decades from 12% in 1990 to 21% in 2006-2008. Klugman, Lee, and Nelson (2012) state that Hispanic immigrant parents have more involvement in their child’s school if there is a great co-ethnic concentration of Hispanics at the school and if Hispanic concentration increases so does parental involvement. Ethnic communities often help immigrant families adjust to American schools.

Considering cultural contexts within low socio-economic areas may aid in understanding parental involvement. Lee and Bowen (2006) found that Hispanic families from low socio-economic status report similar levels of homework help with their children from higher income parents and that Hispanic culture is consistent with a strong

belief in helping with homework and managing children's activity time. They explain that this is a strength within the Hispanic culture and that Hispanic parents are willing to make time to support their children's education at home.

According to Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008), Hispanic parents are not as willing to support their children's learning and that in the Hispanic culture there are parents that are reluctant to question their child's teacher or to question the authority in the classroom. They state that Hispanic parents are reluctant to advocate for the rights of their children within a school setting. They feel that schools should make efforts to communicate through newsletters written in Spanish.

### **Gender**

Looking at the roles that mothers and fathers perform within cultural contexts may aid in understanding some of the ways parental roles influences behaviors and how gender roles make a difference in parental involvement. When considering strategies to promote parental involvement, it is crucial to examine gender roles of the parents. Teachers may find that mothers and fathers do not take on the same roles in the home. This in turn may affect how often and to what extent parents interact with their children.

According to Bronte-Tinkew, Burkhauser, and Metz (2012), looking at methods to get fathers involved is of high importance. Over the last two decades there has been an increase in the role of fathers within the family and community, and there has been an increase in the number of fatherhood intervention programs that may provide a guide for the development of father participation (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2012). Pleck (2007) states that both fathers and mothers contribute to family social capital in their children's

development and fathers provide more material capital on average. Fathers typically spend less time with their children than mothers, when fathers did spend time with their children, the benefits had more of an impact on the child's overall social emotional growth and development. Children have more positive outcomes when fathers live at home, indicating that some fathers who do not live at home have limitations due to visitation in terms of frequency and overall time spent with their children. Parental conflicts cause limitations to parent and child involvement (Pleck, 2007).

Aram (2010) compared mother and father involvement with their young children, and specifically explored how parents guided their children in early literacy activities. Fifty one families of kindergarten children participated in the study. Parents were videotaped while interacting with their children. The study indicated that paternal and maternal roles varied significantly. The study specifically looked at academic success in the areas of early literacy development and writing. Parents were videotaped while they worked with the children at home and both mother and father were videotaped at different times during the week. The study measured the cooperation of the parent and child and the parent's perception of the task at hand, such as word writing, letter naming, initial phoneme retrieval, and final phoneme retrieval. In general, mothers guided their children more often and in ways that promoted academics. This was seen in areas of early literacy, such as writing skills. Fathers were influential in this development when they wrote with their children and were supplied productive methods for guidance. The study concluded that mothers practiced more cooperation strategies to guide their child's writing whereas fathers did not. Mothers more often guided their children linguistically

when working with them and found that their children listened to advice and suggestions (Aram, 2010).

Morgan, Nutbrown, and Hannon (2009) explain that fathers tend to be less involved in literacy type activities, “while this study challenges findings from other research which suggests that fathers are not involved in their children’s home literacy, the amount of fathers’ involvement may be lower than that of mothers” (p. 181). Additional research also sheds light on several reasons why mothers may interact more often with their children than fathers. In a study by Goldberg, Tan, Davis, and Easterbrooks (2013), fathers reported that job and school were often barriers to parental involvement.

Additionally, Goldberg et al. (2013) found that mothers were considered gatekeepers or gate openers and regularly thought of their role as being a facilitator of involvement. The researchers included 91 young fathers age 21 and young children age 17 months in the study. The longitudinal study was conducted over an eight month period and a quantitative study used scales and paternal assessment to collect data regarding personal, relational, and contextual characteristics of parental involvement of fathers.

Interventions become especially critical when evaluating how to get fathers involved in families of varying cultures, with research indicating the need for continued and consistent interventions. Cowan et al. (2009) indicate that families who receive interventions show positive effects on fathers’ engagement with their children. According to the researchers “interventions involving a single meeting with participants are unlikely to have a positive effect” (p. 679).

Considering socio-demographics and individual characteristics is essential in understanding father involvement and the quality of interactions between father and child (Holmes & Huston, 2010). Evidence shows that interventions for fathers is still limited but that there is evidence of some effective fatherhood programs (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2012).

### **Sibling Involvement**

Looking at the family dynamics aids in understanding parental involvement within the home and should include a critical look at sibling involvement. Sibling involvement is common in families in the United States and often replaces parental involvement at home. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving (2005), an estimated 1.4 million United States children and adolescents are involved in family caregiving, with approximately 11% helping a sibling. East and Hamill (2013) state that girls are more often involved with siblings and sibling involvement within families contributes to higher educational aspirations, tendencies to socialize more, and getting more involved in school. They also explain that sibling involvement causes more absences in school among the youths and when youths have strong family beliefs they are more highly involved with sibling involvement.

An awareness of family values and principles may help in understanding sibling involvement in families. According to Weisner (2001), cross-culturally, families view sibling involvement as a responsibility necessary to prepare for the future, for promoting competence, and maturity. He stresses that parental workloads are often predictors of developmental transitions that occur between the ages of five and seven, and many



cultural and familial transitions revolve around children taking care of younger siblings, cooking, and crucial tasks around the home. Crouter, Head, Bumpus, and McHale (2001) explain four processes that encourage mothers to rely on daughters to help at home: mothers' heavy work schedule, daughters often offer to help around the house, there is a cultural script for women and girls in regard to domestic work, and it is harder to get boys to help at home.

Cultural contexts may influence sibling involvement and often impacts the interaction patterns of families. Hafford (2010) states it is important to understand how culture relates to decisions to include sibling involvement in the home, especially within immigrant families. She explains that within immigrant families' children and adolescents have significant responsibilities that include older children supervising and being involved with younger children. Sibling caretaking in immigrant families takes on cultural significance and is grounded in family structure, access to resources, social supports, and child care options (Hafford, 2010).

### **Barriers to Involvement**

Parental involvement may not be as prominent in some families and overcoming barriers may be difficult for some parents. When considering ways to promote parental involvement, teachers must consider the barriers to involvement. Having an understanding as to why parents do not get involved may help teachers to plan strategies that may help promote more parental involvement. Understanding the reasons why parents do not get involved with their children may be helpful in finding techniques to improve efforts to support children's education at home and school. Engle, Fernald,

Alderman, Berhrman, and O’Gara (2011) suggest that although parents who live in poverty have many barriers to involvement, their beliefs about roles and perspectives make a difference. This was true with parents who live in poverty or are minorities.

Bartel (2010) states that parents are more involved with their children at home and at school if they have received a high school diploma and that a majority of the parents feel it is their responsibility to get involved with their child’s education. Parents feel this is due in part to receiving resources that are helpful to understanding the importance of their involvement.

Bartel (2010) discusses the importance of resources:

It is imperative that cities, schools, and school districts work to provide sufficient opportunities for all parents to know what they need to help their children learn at home and in school, and to give higher priority to making sure they have the resources to do so. (p. 220)

Understanding the needs of immigrant families may make a difference in helping to promote parental involvement. According to Villiger, Wandeler, and Niggli (2014), immigrant students had barriers associated with parental involvement and the goal of academic success. Their research included data from 891 Swiss elementary school children and their families. Using data from a reading intervention study collected during two schools years, the study indicated that immigrant parents give less emotional support to their children. Parents’ expectations for achievement are high, especially in the areas of reading skills. Their research also revealed that barriers, such as a lack of resources, may hinder parental involvement and student success. The most important factors that

affected parental involvement included academic expectations, emotional support, and interference during homework.

Villiger et al. (2014) state the following:

When analyzing the influence of immigrant background on student outcomes, it is important to consider further aspects of family background that might be confounded with migration status. There is evidence that immigrants usually have a less privileged socio-economic situation, which might be associated with lack of resources and knowledge to foster their child academically. (p. 14)

Bower and Griffin (2011) conducted a case study of an urban elementary school regarding parental involvement in a high-minority, high-poverty area. Using the Epstein Model a microethnographic study was used for the case study. Their study found that in order to overcome the barriers associated with parent/teacher communication, schools and teachers needed to build effective relationships with parents in high minority poverty schools. The researchers believed that effective relationships should encompass not only parents, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, and the community in which the children live (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

It is crucial to understand the effects of parental involvement in young children, particularly where there are challenging home situations. Chang, Park, Singh, and Sung (2009) state that building effective parent/child relationships with infants, toddlers, and children early in their schooling is an important aspect to consider, especially children from low-income, diverse ethnic and family backgrounds. They indicate that mothers who participate in parenting classes or meetings with other parents are able to help their

children linguistically and cognitively through appropriate stimulation activities at home and Chang et al. (2009) suggest, “Head Start programs in particular have great potential for parental education, support, and development” (p. 321).

McWayne et al. (2004) explain that although research indicates there are some barriers to parental involvement, urban kindergarten children who have the opportunity to have frequent and meaningful interactions with their parents have more chances of being successful in areas of academic success throughout their school years. McWayne et al. (2004) state that when parent interaction patterns with urban kindergarten children are completed on a regular and consistent manner that they are mostly positive in nature with some barriers to parental involvement. When barriers do exist, children still benefit from interactions with their parents once teachers or administrators intervene. Often, this means setting up programs aimed at getting information to parents about the importance of involvement or getting resources for parents that help them personally (McWayne et al., 2004).

Cucchiara and Horvath (2009) suggest problems associated with the diversity of urban public schools, such as class and race, and indicate a need to understand parental involvement, which highlights strategies aimed at getting families involved with their children. They explain that teachers should use strategies that would get more parents involved, particularly in urban schools where there are large numbers of low-income families. The researchers believe that appropriate strategies would increase parental involvement in general and would be enhanced by encouraging community-based efforts that support the diversity of large urban schools. Understanding teacher perspectives on

barriers associated with parental involvement is important to finding ways to increase parental involvement. Johnson (2011) states that teachers believe the following to be important to parental involvement: frequent teacher/parent communication, high teacher expectations, good teacher/parent relationships, and having available parent resources.

### **Perspectives on Parental Involvement**

It is important to consider different perspectives within a school context and to understand the varied perspectives of students, principals, and teachers. Understanding how educators view parental involvement may offer insight into how to get more parents involved and to help children achieve academic success. It is crucial to understand student perspectives as teachers consider strategies to promote parental involvement.

#### **Student Perspectives**

Students often perceive their teachers' academic involvement as taking on a monitoring role, and parental involvement taking on a supportive role (Regner et al., 2009). These perspectives are related to mastery goals more often than actual performance goals. Regner et al. (2009) explain this "Finally, the very fact that perceived parental and teacher academic involvement influenced students' achievement goals while the effect of perceived competence was controlled, emphasizes how important is the role of parental and teacher academic socialization" (p. 272).

According to Peters (2012), some parents indicate involvement is not necessary as children reach upper elementary school and student perceptions of their parents' involvement in their education may have a positive relationship with their behavior and their academic successes.

## **Principal Perspectives**

Considering the importance of principal perspectives on parental involvement may be beneficial in understanding their role within the school. Horvat et al. (2010) state that principals often indicate that getting parents involved in school activities is a daunting task. The principals' perspectives on parental involvement was an active ongoing undertaking that was essential in improving schools and visions for shared goals, "Leaders and organizations do not exist in a vacuum. They are affected by the context in which they reside" (Horvat et al., 2010, p. 723). They explain that parent and school involvement is critical to student success, and parental involvement makes a difference when the parents take on leadership roles in the school by contacting teachers about working toward common school goals in the classroom and within the school (Horvat et al., 2010).

## **Teacher Perspectives**

Examining research on teacher perspectives of parental involvement gives insightful information that may be helpful in promoting parental involvement. This may be especially important in large urban districts with Title I schools. Barnyak and McNelly (2009) state that teachers and administrators contribute to parental involvement in the classroom and at home and that teachers' perspectives and attitudes regarding parental involvement is correlated to more parental involvement. The teachers also believe in using different forms of communication to contact parents including newsletters, webpage, and email. The students believe teachers and administrators feel the need to offer parent projects at the school but are never carried through.

Teachers feel the need to maintain consistent communication with parents and find that students do better academically when their parents are involved on a regular basis. Teachers indicate parental involvement improved the grades of their students and that parents should visit the school on a regular basis and not only with problematic children (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). Teachers feel the need for parents to have information that would help them to maintain an environment at home that is conducive to learning and that communication should be constant between parent and teacher (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). The researchers indicate that teachers feel there is a need for parents to have information that would enhance involvement and student success.

Makgopa and Mokhele (2012) state:

Communication between teachers and parents is of prime importance in all of this, because communication, by its very nature, means that teachers can tell parents what they are supposed to do in order to help their children do well at school. (p. 225)

Teacher beliefs regarding parental involvement also indicates the importance of understanding the significance of parental involvement. Mannix-Lesh (2013) investigated the teaching and nonteaching staff at one elementary school in Mississippi regarding teacher beliefs. Using the Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships teacher questionnaire, the researcher concluded that teachers were more likely to invite parents into their classrooms if they recognized the significance of having parents actively involved in school. Her research in the field of parental involvement indicated that teachers believed that academic success was directly tied to parent and child

interactions and that teachers had the responsibility to find strategies to invite parents into the classroom.

Often teaching within a large urban district presents challenges when working with parents. Teachers may need to use different strategies to get parents involved. Wright (2009) conducted a study on parent and teacher perceptions of parental involvement. Participants included all elementary parents of first through fifth grade students and included 5,316 participants. Using a quantitative study, the researcher found that although parents believed all involvement to be important, teacher perspectives include the idea that strategies involved with holding high parental expectations to be an effective form of involvement (Wright, 2009).

Parental involvement involves cooperation between teacher and parent and teachers often find it difficult to keep parental involvement throughout the school year. According to Topor et al. (2010), parent involvement is often defined by teacher's perspectives of positive attitudes by parents and when there is consistent parental involvement, academic performance increases. It is, therefore, apparent that teacher perceptions are important to consider when contemplating motives for parental involvement.

### **Professional Development and Parental Involvement**

With a need for teachers to understand factors associated with parental involvement, professional development in areas of parental involvement shows a strong connection between teacher understanding and implementation strategies that are helpful



in promoting parental involvement. Teacher perspectives play an instrumental role in obtaining and keeping parental involvement in the classroom and at home.

According to LaRocque et al. (2011) there are several ways in which schools may encourage parental involvement. They suggest that principals could help bridge the gap between parent and school by training teachers to communicate with families through professional development. They state that professional development in communication skills would be beneficial in fostering parent involvement and would allow the teacher to understand ways in which to be culturally aware and to implement strategies working around differences among families.

Shen, Washington, Palmer, and Xia (2014) concurred, suggesting that parental involvement was an important tool for improving student academic success, and administrators had to make improvements within the school that would help facilitate student achievement. Shen et al. (2014) examined parental involvement's impact on students' academic school performance. They applied a hierarchical linear modeling method to the national Schools and Staffing Survey 2007-2008 data. The researchers found that school improvements should occur not only in regard to standards, testing, and accountability, but also occur in encouraging of facilitating parental involvement. Their study found that traditional arenas were effective for student academic success and included "setting standards, developing curriculum, developing professional development programs, evaluating teachers, hiring teachers, setting disciplinary policies, and deciding on expenditures" (Shen et al., p. 333).

Blackmore and Hutchison (2010) state that parents are interested in creating home/school relationships with equal partnerships and that mandated policies and partnership school initiatives may constrain the development of these partnerships. Teachers indicate they would benefit from understanding the best ways to encourage parents' involvement in the classroom.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) concur suggesting there are several areas that could facilitate understanding barriers to parental involvement that could be used for in-service training of teachers. These areas include: parents' beliefs about parental involvement, perceptions of invitations for parental involvement, current life contexts, class, ethnicity and gender of the parents, age of the child, learning difficulties and disabilities, gifts and talents, behavioral problems, differing goals and agendas of the parent and teacher, differing attitudes of the parent and teacher, differing language use of the parent and teacher, historical and demographic factors, and political and economic factors (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Wildenger and McIntyre (2011) suggest that professional development opportunities are needed to understand and implement successful kindergarten transition and parental involvement. They state that kindergarten transition often affects the child and the family, and in order for children starting kindergarten to be successful, there must be increased parental involvement. Efforts to help parents and children during kindergarten transitional periods are noted as being especially crucial in low-SES school districts where family income and parental education level is low.

Wildenger and McIntyre (2011) state:

The unique system-level barriers faced by these families necessitates special consideration by professionals on behalf of incoming kindergarten students. The kindergarten transition represents a unique opportunity for professionals and families to partner in order to foster positive early educational experiences for children. (p. 396)

### **Professional Development and Teaching**

Research indicates that professional development is beneficial in educating teachers on how to understand parents and families. To fully understand how professional development can help, it was essential to understand how professional development impacts teaching and parental involvement within the school. Kose and Lim (2011) state that transformative teaching occurs when there is content-specific professional learning, such as workshops and graduate courses and that transformative teaching is defined as: “curricular diversity representation, diversity and social justice expertise, and teaching for social justice” (p. 200). They suggest that school administrators and professional developers should design professional development that is purposeful for teachers and promotes specific transformative practices.

Kose and Lim (2011) suggest:

Particularly in this climate of accountability, it seems crucial to link transformative professional learning and student outcomes, whether academic, behavioral, social-emotional, or citizenship. Although many educators value transformative education, studying its effectiveness on student learning not only

provides data for improving practice and policy, it may help build wider political support for creating and sustaining more socially just schools. (p. 213-214)

Masuda, Ebersole, and Barrett (2012) suggest that teachers view professional development differently, depending on years of teaching experience and that preservice teachers want to learn everything regarding their new teaching career. Novice teachers are not as enthusiastic and feel that professional development provides them with too much information. They explain that novice teachers are more selective in professional development and participate in professional development that would fit their particular needs. Midcareer teachers discuss the need to earn ongoing credit and to receive pay raises. Their professional development is tied to these extrinsic purposes. Late-career teachers feel professional development that is worth their time is usually not the traditional mandatory sessions but rather professional development that is worthwhile.

Burkman (2012) suggests that novice teachers of large urban school districts are faced with many challenges, and professional development is crucial to their success in their first year. She states the most benefit comes from professional development sessions that include mentoring programs, which include a solid foundation of learning and how to deal with classroom challenges.

### **School Environment/Climate**

Classroom challenges are often linked to school environment, and it becomes essential to understand how a positive school environment could be beneficial in making parent partnerships more lasting and meaningful. Understanding diverse schools within

an urban school district may help teachers create a school environment that is encouraging to parents.

Bryant et al. (2013) suggest that school environments are important for the development of children and should be considered safe havens for all children, especially those who are rejected by their peers, have low self-esteem, or despair. Since the school environment is crucial in helping children who come from stressful situations at home or school, teachers play a critical role in encouraging school engagement and help students to cope with challenges. Several factors that impact students positively are: staff who are invested in students, administration who provide clear guidelines for success, administrators, teachers, and staff who create partnerships with parents, students, and the surrounding community (Bryant et al., 2013).

Dagli (2012) states that school environment is directly linked to kindergarten teachers' attrition rates and that school climate and work conditions are important to teachers leaving the profession. Kindergarten poses challenges due to difficulties with that age group, which include children's limited ability to take others' perspectives, share, sit still, and follow directions. Dagli explains there are several factors that are directly related to school climate and included: "four support-related factors were administrative support, colleague support, professional support and interference with teaching, and three influences and control related factors were influence on school's global policy, influence on school's curriculum policy, and classroom autonomy" (p. 3126).

Weathers (2011) further explains that state initiated bureaucratic accountability that imposes instructional standards on teachers is directly linked to a teacher's sense of community within the school and that teachers feel that principals who show strong leadership abilities within the school are able to build community among teachers. The most important areas of teacher community for teachers include community beliefs, values, and norms and include language and artifacts to help build cultural coherence in the school.

School climate may be a contributing factor to helping develop parent/teacher relationships. Thapa and Cohen (2013) explain that school climate contributes to student mental and physical health and indicates that self-esteem and academic success is linked to school climate and student learning and development is directly tied to feeling safe in school and schools need supportive norms and structures. They indicate that many urban and economically disadvantaged schools are stricken by violence and that the violence hinders a students' capacity to learn and to develop in healthy ways. Positive school climate is shown to reduce aggression, violence, and bullying behaviors. Thapa and Cohen (2013) suggest, "The patterns of norms, goals, values, and interactions that shape relationships in schools provide as essential are of school climate" (p. 7). They state that when students feel school has more structure, discipline, and practice there are better student-teacher relationships and fewer behavioral problems occurred in kindergarten and first grade. Of importance to a positive school climate was teachers' work environment, teacher peer relationships, and a feeling of inclusion and respect. Race and ethnicity are

other factors associated with perceptions of school climate, and positive school climate has been considered important for racial minority and poor students.

Understanding how novice teachers perceive school climate may be influential in their self-efficacy. Meristo and Eisenschmidt (2014) believe that perceptions of school climate among new kindergarten teachers creates higher levels of self-efficacy when there are fewer students. They suggest that the first years of teaching to be the most important in terms of professional growth and stated, “Nearly half of American novice teachers leave the teaching profession within the first five years” (p. 1). School type and location is an important factor in novice teachers’ self-efficacy, such as teaching in a rural or urban school. A supportive school system appears to create a school climate that facilitates and influences teachers’ professional development and overall job performance. Teachers’ professional development activities extend into areas of self-efficacy, such as greater commitment to teaching and instructional strategies, and they explain that experienced teachers have greater self-efficacy when they report a more supportive, positive school climate. Desforges and Aboucharr (2003) concur emphasizing the importance of understanding the types of families who use urban public schools, the diversity of urban public schools, and parental involvement in large cities.

Gulsen and Gulenay (2014) suggest that promoting a well-balanced school climate should include a strong administration, in-service training, performance assessments, feedback, and reward systems for students and teachers. Gulsen and Gulenay (2014) state that “In today’s world, schools are expected to teach effectively.

The principal plays a crucial role in the formation of the school climate, which, in turn, has a positive effect on the school's efficacy" (p. 99).

### **Teaching Experience**

Because teaching preparation and experiences contribute to the overall school environment and climate of the classroom, it is important to understand in what ways these experiences may contribute to parental involvement. Looking at varying years of teaching experience may also be beneficial in understanding teacher perspectives of parental involvement.

### **Teacher Preparation/Education**

Fantuzzo et al. (2012) suggested that teacher experiences in preschool, kindergarten, and the first grade in large urban public school districts was dependent upon teacher efficacy, job stress, and school support. Positive teacher efficacy included increased time spent on classroom teaching and communicating with parents. Job stress included having less time to teach and actively engaging parents in the classroom. School support included teacher-parent interactions. Their study, which examined 584 early childhood teachers' perspectives of teacher practices, found that time spent communicating with parents was significantly related to teachers' support experience. Teacher experience was directly tied to establishing relationships and instructional practices, such as increased time spent on literacy, numeracy, social-emotional development, and parent communication (Fantuzzo et al., 2012).

According to Rice (2013), teacher experience is of great importance within teacher workplace policies in the United States, with the rationale being that experience



contributes to knowledge, skills, and productivity within our schools. Most gains in experience are seen in the first few years of teaching, but Rice (2013) states that early career experiences vary by the level of education of the teacher as well as the subject area. Inexperienced teachers are more likely to teach in high poverty schools, and teacher experience varies between high and low poverty schools. Having an understanding of high poverty schools is important in understanding how and why teachers interact with parents and why parents are involved with their children. Seeking out and understanding specific initiatives may help in understanding ways in which states are helping schools and students to be successful (Rice, 2013).

### **Years of Teaching Experience**

Coulter and Lester (2011) state that novice teachers often have issues associated with beginning teaching such as anxiety and professional confidence. They explain that mid-career teachers feel either stagnant or rejuvenated depending on their own individual experiences and late-career teachers often do not appreciate change but are more qualified overall. Fantilli and McDougall (2009) explain that novice teachers have communication issues with parents especially if parents are demanding and if they feel that the challenges associated with parental communication is attributed to ineffective leadership within the school. According to Abel (2014), novice teachers need more experiences with families as part of academic preparation and teacher/parent involvement in the classroom. Klassen and Chiu (2010) explain that novice teachers go through a discovery period; whereas, mid-career teachers undergo an experimental stage. In

addition the researchers reveal that veteran teachers possess a greater sense of self confidence and tend to disengage from professional development activities.

### **Texas Professional Development**

Professional development in areas of teacher/parent involvement could provide useful information in helping teachers obtain parental involvement in the classroom. It is important to understand professional development and to gain knowledge on how professional development is implemented. It is important for teachers to have a better understanding of how to promote parental involvement and understand why parents choose to get involved with their children in the classroom. School interventions could be helpful in offering parental support, which in turn could help some students who are at risk of failure in school to be more successful academically (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010). Williams (2012) states that leaders at state and national levels continue to find ways to ensure the development of quality educators. In Texas, there continues to be achievement gaps between African Americans, Hispanics, Whites, economically disadvantaged students, special education students, limited English proficient students, and at-risk students.

According to Bosland, Rucker, Cohen, Fischer, and Rogers (2011), Texas has had a long history of supporting early childhood success and a shared vision of kindergarten children being successful, with eventual graduation from high school and college. Initiatives within high-need neighborhoods have brought together early education providers and school districts as a way to strengthen education within families and

neighbors in poor communities. The authors stated that childhood education training for families, friends, and neighbors was beneficial (Bosland et al., 2011).

### **Conclusion**

It was apparent that children's environments, quality and amount of parental interactions, circumstances that affected involvement, and other external factors must be taken into account. Examining research on parental involvement and academic success was important to understanding the connection between parental involvement and school achievement. Promoting academic success in all children required taking a look at how to get parents involved. It may be necessary to promote parental involvement with parents of kindergarten children in ways that support children's academic success (Ray & Smith, 2010). Understanding diversity within large urban schools was critical to making connections between home and school. This was especially important within Hispanic cultures in large cities.

Examining mother/father roles was imperative to understanding how family dynamics affect parental involvement. Understanding how cultural roles extended to sibling involvement may help teachers make critical connections with families. Considering the barriers that many families encounter may be helpful in finding resources that will help promote more parental involvement. Looking at various perspectives, such as principal, teacher, and student may give helpful information into how to create a more meaningful school environment. Professional development, school climate, and teaching experience played a critical role in promoting more parental involvement at school and at home.

The literature review provided a historical perspective and offered a theoretical framework for the research study, showing the various ways in which parental involvement had an effect on academic success. Investigating the literature on teacher perspectives in regard to their roles was crucial in understanding ways to get more parents involved at home and at school. Chapter III discusses the design and methodology for this research study that used qualitative methods to investigate teacher perspectives of parental involvement.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of kindergarten teachers' perspectives with varied levels of teaching experiences of parental involvement in an urban elementary school. Looking at how teachers recognized these factors could be beneficial in determining how teachers play a role in promoting positive and active parent engagement and involvement and, ultimately, how well students perform academically in school.

In defining the methods, various factors were considered including academic success, race/ethnicity, mother/father roles, barriers to parental involvement, teacher perspectives and levels of experience. Additional factors included professional development, school climate/environment and district initiatives. The research design was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory and examined the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers working in an urban setting. Data analysis strategies including the theoretical lenses utilized and ethical considerations are presented in this chapter.

#### **Research Design**

This phenomenological research study investigated teacher perspectives of parental involvement and sought to understand the lived experiences of three kindergarten teachers with varied levels of teaching experience teaching in urban

classrooms. This study used Bioecological and Social Development Theories as a framework to develop concepts and to consider processes involved in human science inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). This study included four interest groups with teachers from various urban elementary schools. This approach was utilized to better understand broader school contexts and to assist in the development of interview questions for the lived experience investigation. The research design included the selection of teachers with varying years of teaching experience as a means of understanding how the perspectives of teachers could be different, depending on how many years they have taught. Emphasis was placed on gathering information on teacher perspectives about the topic through their own personal experiences and interpretations of specific parent/teacher situations.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (1979) and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) were used as a conceptual guide for the contextual development of the study as well as a frame for the structure of the interest groups and interview questions. Bronfenbrenner's Theory was used as a framework to understand teacher perspectives on parental involvement within the "nested systems" and included a critical look into the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The mesosystem lens was useful in understanding how teachers considered their perspectives on parental involvement impacted parental involvement as it took into account the interactions between teacher and parent and the relationships between the microsystems of children, home, and school. This helped in understanding how teachers considered their perspectives of parental involvement had impacted

academic success, and it took into account outside facts, such as low socio-economic status of families (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory was used as a guide to understand teacher perspectives of parental involvement within cultural contexts of school and home. Teacher perspectives on parental involvement included a critical look into Vygotsky's socio-cultural views and included how learning is social in nature, how development was driven by the input from others, how development may be different depending on social and cultural contexts, and how children work with others to build knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The Social Development Theory helped as a lens in understanding the different social contexts that may have affected teacher perspectives. An example of this is the extent of parental involvement at home and school, the quality of time spent between parent and child, and how these relationships may have affected academic success.

### **Research Questions**

As mentioned above, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory influenced the development of the research questions that were used to investigate teacher perspectives of parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory was used to guide the query by seeking understanding of the teachers' perspective of immediate surroundings and interactions between various aspects of these surroundings and individuals. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory was used to develop the research questions. Differing social contexts, such as school and home and parent/child relationships, were considered.

The broad research question guiding this study was:

What are the lived experiences of three urban kindergarten teachers of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Three questions were more narrowly refined for the inquiry:

Research Question One: What are the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested systems and parental involvement?

Research Question Two: How do teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement?

Research Question Three: How do teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement?

### **Field Site Setting**

Urban public schools have traditionally been associated with low socio-economic status and poor academic success. Research has shown a need for understanding the types of families who enroll in urban public schools, a need for understanding the diversity within urban public schools, and the importance of understanding parental involvement in large cities (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Desforges & Aboucharr, 2003). Additionally, there are challenges associated with parental involvement of children in kindergarten from low-income and minority environments (Ho, 2009). In order to gain a better understanding of teacher perspectives of parental involvement, a phenomenological approach was used with kindergarten teachers with varied years of teaching experience in urban Title I elementary schools. This approach was useful in understanding teacher perspectives as it studied the way kindergarten teachers felt about certain issues, regarding parental involvement at home and at school (Van Manen, 1990).



This study was conducted in a large urban school district. The study included four Title I elementary schools, each with their own unique qualities and school climate. Campuses were parent friendly and had inviting front offices. Multiple after school activities included parents and children. Schools had receptive school climates that consisted of school personnel that were eager to help parents and parents appeared at ease in the front offices. Student/parent friendly pictures and posters decorated the front offices and the décor was inviting. All of the campuses had gifted and talented programs. Three of the campuses served Pre-K through fifth grade and one campus served kindergarten through fifth grade.

### **District Professional Development**

Professional development may be beneficial in providing teachers with strategies to help their students be successful. These opportunities could help teachers understand the importance of being culturally aware and to implement strategies that would encompass the diversity of their classrooms (LaRocque et al., 2011). The district provided comprehensive and continuous access to professional development opportunities for their teachers. The district aimed to provide professional development in an effort to advance student achievement. They followed the Texas Education Agency guidelines when planning professional development for their teachers. They provided Continuing Professional Education (CPE) opportunities for their teachers and ensured that all CPE provided were approved and registered by the State Board for Educator Certification. The district offered professional development workshops through the

region service center and the teachers were provided a link to the service center directly through the district website.

Professional development consisted of providing new teacher training at the beginning of the school year. This training lasted for one week and was completed the week before the regular professional development training started for the other teachers in the district. Professional development was then conducted throughout the school year and was determined in advance and posted on the school calendar. Professional development opportunities for elementary schools that were specific to parental involvement this school year included a teacher workshop on how to communicate with parents using technology. This workshop stressed the importance of using technology to reach out to parents, such as email and school apps.

Scholastic training was provided to teachers and provided ways to teach parents how to read to their children. Professional development was offered on how to have a successful conference with parents and gave helpful tips to make the conference beneficial to both the teacher and the parent. A science conference was held to give tips to teachers on how to get parents involved with their children using science activities. Other professional development opportunities included a behavior workshop on how to help teachers be more successful with their classroom management, strategies for yearly testing, and diversity of the classroom.

### **Recruitment**

I contacted the central administrative office of the school district via telephone, inquiring about their regulations for conducting research in elementary classrooms. I

then met face-to-face with the district superintendent and we discussed the research study in detail. Once the superintendent agreed to the study, the districts' procedures were followed, resulting in permission to conduct the research study. The principals of each elementary school were contacted via telephone to set up face-to-face meetings. During these meetings I explained the research study to each principal, delineating exact details and anticipated duration of the study. Upon principal consent, I met with each kindergarten teacher through face-to-face meetings. Kindergarten teachers participating in the research study were given 'Consent to Participate' forms, which explained the details of the study. After all consent forms were signed, the study began.

The interest group participants were recruited from four elementary schools within an urban school district. All were Title I schools and were of close proximity to each other, allowing for higher levels of participation. This enabled the interest groups to easily meet either during their conference period or after school on a weekly basis. All of the participants in the interest groups were given the opportunity to participate in the individual interviews and explanation of the continuation of the study was discussed during the initial meeting and recruitment of the study.

A purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the three teachers with varied years of teaching experience. I took into consideration teachers who were interested in continuing with the study; were enthusiastic; offered insightful information during the interest group sessions; or met the criteria for novice, mid-career, and veteran teacher. Of those that expressed interest in continuing with the study, I chose three that

fit the criteria. This was important as this added depth to the phenomenological study. Including participants with different levels of teaching experience allowed me to examine teacher perspectives from varying points of view and gave insight into parent/teacher experiences at home and in the classroom (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

### **Participants**

The interest groups included kindergarten teachers in four elementary schools and consisted of sixteen participants. Three teachers with varying years of teaching experience were recruited from the interest groups to continue with the study and participated in the one-on-one interviews and audio journaling. The teachers included in the study were certified teachers specializing in early childhood. Three of the teachers in the interest groups had bilingual certifications. Participation occurred either during teacher conference time or after school in the teacher classrooms.

### **Interest Groups**

Sixteen kindergarten teachers began the interest group sessions that met weekly for four weeks. The interest group participants were kindergarten teachers from four Title I campuses in the district. Having interest groups from four different elementary schools added comprehensive understanding of the nature of the school district and school environments. The topics explored during the interest group sessions included: academic success, race/ethnicity, mother/father roles, barriers to parental involvement, teacher perspectives, professional development, and teaching experience. Through holistic coding of the data, cultural contexts of the teacher's perspectives of parental involvement emerged. This information was used to develop the questions for the individual

interviews by providing new topics on teachers' perspectives on parental involvement to be explored further.

### **Interest Group Participants, School A**

Parental involvement is often enhanced when teachers communicate with parents on a regular basis (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). The kindergarten teachers at this elementary school felt communication to be one of the most important aspects of parental involvement and student success. High expectations for their students and parents consisted of communication that was conducted on a regular basis and consistent throughout the school year. Parent/teacher relationships were referred to as teamwork and strategies were developed to get parents involved. Parental involvement was often dependent on groups of students and was individualized, which demonstrated the need to reflect on ways to make improvements in parent communication and involvement. Different methods of communication with parents such as email, face-to-face conferences, and telephone meetings were used. Communication between teacher and parent tended to be beneficial to student learning and academic success.

### **Interest Group Participants, School B**

The school environment plays a critical role in parental involvement and can be a factor in how often parents get involved (Thapa & Cohen, 2013). The kindergarten teachers agreed that classroom climate and understanding the diversity of students was important to understanding how to get more parents involved at home and at school. The need for there to be structure and consistency for parents was mentioned as a method to get more parental involvement. Challenging situations often deterred parental

involvement but parent/child interactions were considered an important aspect to student success. Parental involvement was described by one of the teachers as being a triangle in which the teacher, parent, and student worked towards a common goal. Similar to her colleagues, she tried to find ways to communicate with her parents and sent weekly newsletters to the parents. Diversity of families was taken into consideration as the kindergarten teachers planned strategies to get parents more involved. Understanding the home culture and having a welcoming school environment appeared to be the most important aspect of getting parents involved.

### **Interest Group Participants, School C**

Family culture is an important aspect to understanding parental involvement among families (Freeman, 2009). Two bilingual teachers at this school felt understanding the parents of Hispanic students was essential in finding ways to get more parents involved. Challenging home situations tended to interfere with parental involvement but consistent communication helped to address the needs of the parents. Communication appeared to be the best method of getting parents involved at home and at school. Various methods of communication that were the most effective included email or telephone calls. One teacher stated that being a reflective teacher helped her grow as a teacher and helped her to find ways to promote parental involvement in her classroom. She found that many of her students' families had strong cultural beliefs and that many of the parents were interested in getting involved with their children. It was apparent that although challenging at times, consistent communication and understanding of culture and diversity among the kindergarten students was beneficial to getting parents involved.

### **Interest Group Participants, School D**

Barriers to parental involvement may include a lack of resources at home and a lack of understanding on how to help with school activities (Engle et al., 2011).

Understanding the families within the community and their home culture appeared to be important among the teachers at this school. Parental involvement strategies included ways to help parents interact with their children at home, such as learning games, and ways to get more parents involved in the classroom. Challenges discussed among the group included lack of resources at home and lack of in-class involvement. Being consistent and structured appeared to be beneficial for one of the kindergarten teachers and regular communication helped to get more parents involved. Another teacher agreed and found that parental involvement was dependent on family culture and home situations. She felt every year was different and that she adjusted her strategies according to her parents' home culture. Strategies to get more parents involved helped to provide the needed support for the kindergarten students.

### **Individual Interviews**

Three teachers with varying years of teaching experience continued with the study and met weekly for an additional eight weeks. Each of the three kindergarten teachers that continued with the study had unique qualities and different lived experiences that added depth to the study. Abel (2014) states that novice teachers need to receive exposure and experiences with families as part of academic preparation and explains that this type of preparation would facilitate teacher/parent involvement. According to Klassen & Chiu (2010), teachers in the early career years go through a process of survival and discovery,

marked with a time of stabilization at around 4–6 years of teaching. Mid-career teachers go through a process of experimentation and activism and then reassessment. Veteran teachers have a greater sense of confidence and self-acceptance but may go through a period of disengagement, disappointment and bitterness. Rice (2013) found that novice teachers are more likely to teach in high-poverty schools with the impact of experience, differing among teachers in high versus low poverty schools. Taking into account teacher and parent barriers associated with parental involvement of kindergarten students in urban school districts, appropriateness of participants and setting was important in determining recruitment. The interview process consisted of learning about the lived experiences of three teachers with varying years of teaching experience. Each teacher had a unique story to tell as she described and recalled experiences she had lived through regarding parental involvement.

### **Teacher A**

A beginning certified teacher with one year of kindergarten teaching experience stated she had previously worked in a daycare setting as a childcare provider where she eventually became director of the facility. After being in that position for eight years she was a paraprofessional for five years in a life skills classroom and was a substitute teacher while she was doing her student teaching. She then received a generalist EC-6 certification. The demographics of her kindergarten classroom were: 45% Hispanic, 45% African American, 5% Asian, and 5% White.

She felt she had learned a great deal from one year of teaching kindergarten and found that being structured worked for her. Her teaching experiences with students and



her communications with parents were positive. She believed in consistency between classrooms and schools and felt that parental involvement could be enhanced if every classroom and every school had specific rules regarding parental involvement, such as times and requirements for involvement with each teacher.

Due to the low socio-economic status of many of her families, parents often did not have the resources or the time to work with their children at home or to get involved in the classroom. Her classroom environment was an involved classroom in which the students were experiencing hands on activities. She often motivated her students by challenging them to try new concepts in the classroom and explained that when her students were motivated to learn they often became excited and enthusiastic. Because of this student motivation, the students continued to work hard and did better academically. She felt pride in her students' accomplishments and stressed the importance of creating good self-esteem among her students. As she explained her students' accomplishments, she often described the pride they felt in themselves when they accomplished goals in the classroom.

Parental involvement was important to her and she strived to find ways to get parents involved regularly. Her philosophy of education was to inspire children to be the best they could be socially and academically and to continue learning herself. She wanted to continue to improve on her organization skills and to try new teaching concepts. Her goal was to embrace what the district had offered and to make the mandates work, so she could reach all parents and could grow as a teacher.

## **Teacher B**

Another teacher was a mid-career certified teacher with ten years of teaching experience. Previously in high school she was part of an Early Childhood program where she learned to teach three and four year olds. She substitute taught for one year and then received her Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies EC-4. She had an ESL certificate as well as being Gifted and Talented trained. She taught second grade for four years before teaching kindergarten. Her ways of getting parents involved were evolving continually and teaching for ten years had made her a reflective teacher in which she reflected on ways to improve her teaching skills and to become a better teacher over time. Her lived experiences as a kindergarten teacher were filled with descriptive explanations about her students and their parents. She often described her classroom as a welcoming room in which students were eager to learn and grow. Students often felt pride in doing hands on activities in the classroom.

Challenges as a teacher included student behavior and difficulty communicating with parents. Lack of parental communication often hindered student engagement. Her philosophy of education had changed through time. She explained that when she graduated from college her philosophy of education was idealistic, and she believed that every child had the opportunity to learn and her job was to facilitate and guide them. She became more realistic in her philosophy over time and with more years of teaching experience believed that school and education were privileges, and it was her right to connect the two. She believed that every child had the right to come to school, and it was a privilege bestowed upon them based on what they took away from it.

She promoted ways to make her students lifelong learners and felt the climate of her classroom was welcoming, clean, organized, and a place where students felt safe and secure. She bonded with her students every year. She had the desire to promote more parent involvement and to have strong teacher/parent relationships. She wanted the parents to know that she was in school to help their children and wanted parents to understand the importance of school and academic success. She felt that parents needed to be more aware of the importance of the guidelines. Her classroom environment was one of constant learning and she felt teaching kindergarten was fulfilling and rewarding. She was grateful for the opportunity to work with kindergarten students and explained that her lived experiences as a kindergarten teacher were challenging at times but the most rewarding of her career.

### **Teacher C**

A veteran certified bilingual teacher with over 30 years of teaching experience, Teacher C had a bachelor's degree in general education (Grades 1-8), with a bilingual and ESL specialization. She had a Master's of Early Childhood degree. She had previously substitute taught before getting her teaching degree. Classroom demographics were 100% Hispanic.

Having good rapport with parents was of utmost importance to her and she believed that being warm and friendly and giving parents positive feedback helped to enhance her teaching and to promote parental involvement at home and at school. Challenges included a lack of student-focused learning and parental support for homework and language. Many of her students were able to grasp the curriculum, but

their attention spans were short and they got tired in the afternoon. Her classroom was a learning environment in which her students were motivated, challenged, and ready to learn.

Her philosophy of education was to develop lifelong learners in all aspects, such as emotional, social, and physical. She believed the teacher was the facilitator and guided learning, especially using hands on materials for the kindergarten students. She felt teachers should present the material in a way that worked best for the students, because children learn in different ways. She adjusted her teaching styles to meet the needs of her students and took into account the home life and family culture of her students' families. She believed parental involvement to be of the utmost importance in helping her students to be successful.

Her kindergarten students were well-disciplined and always respectful. She described her role as an educator as being a triangle, where the teacher, the student, and the parent worked together for the benefit of the child. She found that being empathetic and kind to students and parents was beneficial in getting parents more involved in the classroom and at home. She also felt making a connection to the natural world was important, such as having real life objects in the classroom and telling stories of real individuals in real life situations, often involving herself personally.

### **Role of the Researcher**

This phenomenological research study investigated the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers through their descriptions of their lived experiences on parental involvement, utilizing their feelings, their moods, and their emotions as they lived them

(Van Manen, 1990). With extensive background knowledge of young children and the importance of parental involvement, I had an understanding that when parents become involved in school, student success may increase. Having taught kindergarten in a low SES district, I had an understanding of working with parents in a large urban district and had experienced firsthand some of the barriers to parental involvement.

The Bioecological Theory was influential in my understanding of the role of the teacher and the nature of working with parents. This understanding and theoretical position helped me to gather teacher perspectives through a “nested” structure in which the immediate environment was taken into account and how various aspects of the environment influences teachers, parents, and children. This meta-theoretical approach helped me establish a basis for working with educators or researchers in the field of education that was consistent with important theoretical paradigms, structures and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I used the Bioecological Theory to guide my view and understanding of varied teacher perspectives of the home environment of students, barriers associated with parental involvement, and other environmental factors that may affect students and families in a large urban school district that was largely economically disadvantaged.

Vygotsky’s Socio-cultural Theory aided my understanding of how teacher perspectives on parental involvement may be influenced by social and cultural contexts. I used the Social Development Theory to guide my understanding of teacher perspectives in regard to how parental involvement may contribute to learning and how social and cultural contexts may be influential in development (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s Social

Development Theory was used in my study as a method of understanding the lived experiences of three kindergarten teachers, so I could better understand their perspectives on parental involvement.

I maintained consistency during the study by understanding the assumptions of a qualitative paradigm and by investigating critically the study as an inquiry process that was looking at the social problems of parental involvement through a teacher's point of view (Creswell, 1994). I reflected during the study by keeping an on-going reflective journal and doing weekly briefings with the participants. The phenomenological research study was structured in a way to promote consistency and to maintain trustworthiness and allow all participants to share their experiences through in-depth discussions and interviews (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Data Collection**

This qualitative phenomenological research study investigated kindergarten teacher perspectives with varied teaching levels on parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms. Various types of data collection were used in the study and included interest groups of kindergarten teachers, individual interviews of three kindergarten teachers with varying years of teaching experience, audio tapes, teacher audio journaling, weekly debriefing, reflective journaling, summary sheets, and artifacts.

### **Interest Groups**

The interest group process enabled a wider variety of information to be collected, such as teachers' level of teaching experience and alignment of research answers and discussion to the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I chose interest groups

rather than focus groups as interest groups allowed for teachers to discuss their own lived experiences regarding parental involvement in a manner consistent with a phenomenological study. This allowed for the participants to have conversations with each other regarding their own personal life stories and experiences in the classroom and with the parents of their students. During the interest group sessions, participants shared meaningful lived experiences and made connections between these events and the other teachers in a school context. This collaboration of teachers often sparked remembrance of past events or exploration of current experiences and added depth to the study (Van Manen, 1990).

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory guided the development of the interest group questions. I considered the many ways in which social and cultural contexts influenced teacher perspectives and as I examined the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers within a large urban school district. The diversity of the school district allowed for questions to include areas of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status and may provide insight into how barriers to parental involvement may make a difference in how teachers perceive parental involvement (Whitted, 2011).

My interest group guide included specific questions regarding teacher perspectives, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of parental involvement. I also recruited three participants from the interest group to continue with the study and participate with the one-on-one interviews and the audio journaling (Appendix A). Meetings for the interest groups were held at their elementary school.

## **Individual Interviews**

The interview process allowed three individuals to discuss the research questions in depth which is critical to understanding the lived perspective (Seidman, 2006). The phenomenological research study examined the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers and gathered life-experience descriptions by one-on-one interviews. The interviews consisted of descriptions of experiences and feelings and tried to focus on particular examples (Van Manen, 1990). I used reflective journaling as a way to document how the data came together in patterns or themes. This became a valuable experience for me and helped generate insights into the data that was collected (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Contact summary sheets were used to write brief descriptions during the interest group and interviews. Theoretical notes and reflective statements were included. Summarizing questions were helpful regarding a particular field contact (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Each meeting began with a general discussion, and the participants were given the opportunity to discuss the research questions in advance. The participants were told that any objections to the questions could be discussed, and if there were any objections that could not be resolved, those questions would not be included in the interview. After spending a few minutes discussing the questions, the participants were able to choose which part of the classroom that they felt most comfortable in for the interview.

## **Recording Information**

Audiotapes were used during the interest group sessions, interviews, and teacher audio journaling. This allowed for a systematic manner of collecting data that was



appropriate for the setting and the participants. This helped facilitate analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Interest groups and interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcribing detailed information from the interest group sessions, interview sessions, and the teacher audio journaling proved to be useful in re-creating the verbal material (Seidman, 2006).

### **Teacher Audio Journaling**

Teacher audio journaling was conducted on a regular basis. Weekly debriefing was beneficial to receiving teacher explanations and discussing audio journaling. Weekly debriefing sessions were planned throughout the data collection period. This allowed for current information to be analyzed consistently within the interpretive process (Gibbs, 2013).

### **Weekly Debriefing**

Weekly debriefing was beneficial to receiving teacher explanations and discussing audio journaling. Before beginning each individual interview, each teacher was given time to ask questions and receive explanations of the previous week's interview session.

### **Reflective Journaling**

Reflective journaling was a way to document how the data came together in patterns or themes. This became a valuable experience and helped general insights into the data that was collected. Each week I documented information from the individual interviews regarding theory and themes. This was helpful to me once I began to

transcribe the data as it gave me more context for the discussions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011)

### **Summary Sheets**

Contact summary sheets were used to write brief descriptions during the interest group and interviews. Theoretical notes and reflective statements were included.

Summarizing questions was helpful regarding a particular field contact (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Artifacts**

Weekly communications, such as newsletters between teachers and parents were written as a grade level and sent out on a weekly basis. Occasionally teachers sent out information specific to their classroom activities or had their own newsletter. Newsletters were often theme related and included what the students were learning for the week, classroom events, and notes from the teacher. Some examples of artifacts included information for classroom activities such as class parties. This parent information sheet included information about the party and parents signed if they were attending.

Information regarding open houses was provided to parents and included PowerPoint slide handouts. Reading strategy informational sheets were sent to parents throughout the school year as well as reading strategy resources such as activity cards.

### **Interview Guide**

I used the long interview process, described by Marshall and Rossman (2011) as one in which interviews are informal and interactive and utilize open ended comments and questions. I came prepared with a list of questions for each interview session and

audio recorded them for later transcription enabling me to capture the essence of the interview through in-depth interview questions (Appendix B).

The interview questions used in the guide were developed as part of the data analysis process. After conducting four weeks of interest group sessions, I transcribed and coded the data, using holistic coding. This holistic coding was the first cycle coding method in which I analyzed the data as a whole in order to “chunk” the text into broad topic areas (Saldana, 2011). Then I continued my analysis using pattern coding, which was a second cycle coding method. Pattern coding allowed me to find major themes within the topic areas that were repeated between teachers of all four elementary schools (Saldana, 2011).

The following themes emerged from the broad topics and helped guide the development of my interview questions: lack of parent knowledge on how to help their children; parent/teacher relationships; lack of parental involvement at home; high parental involvement; low SES; ethnicity; sibling involvement; socio-economic status/low SES (Title I school); Hispanic culture; communication between teacher/parents; more mother involvement; teachers should be approachable; communication with parents: face to face meetings, emails, and conferences; welcoming to parents; relating to parents; parental involvement.

After pattern coding, I analyzed the themes in order to revise my interview questions to include some new questions to explore the lived experiences of the three teachers during the individual interview sessions (Appendix C). Interviewing teachers of their lived experiences included talking about personal experiences in which they

explained their experiences to the fullest (Van Manen, 1990). During the interviews new questions naturally evolved and were included in the data collection and analysis. Going from secondary to primary data gave me insight into the thinking of the teachers as we continued with the study for an additional eight weeks.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory was utilized to structure the interview questions. Interview questions included how the immediate school environment plays a role, such as an elementary school in a large urban school district. Questions were structured to understand parental involvement between parent and child and cultural aspects of the school environment, such as low socio-economic status. Teacher perspectives may be influenced by parental behaviors and communication (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). Understanding parental involvement within a large urban city may be advantageous in understanding teacher perspectives of parental involvement (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009).

The interview questions were used to promote lived-experience descriptions from the kindergarten teachers. According to Van Manen (1990), there were some suggestions that were helpful in getting to the lived-experience descriptions:

1. Describe the experience as you live(d) through it. Avoid as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations.
2. Describe the experience from the inside, such as feelings, mood, and emotions.
3. Focus on a particular example or incident of the object of experience: describe specific events, an adventure, a happening, a particular experience.

4. Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness.
5. Attend to how the body feels, how things smell(ed), how they sound(ed).
6. Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology.

### **Timeline of the Study**

Table 1  
*Study Timeline*

<b>Sources</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Recruitment Letters and consent forms	November 3 - 17, 2015	
Interest Group (Phase I)	November 18 – December 17, 2015	Weekly
Interviews (Phase II) Teacher 1	January 6, 2016 – February 24, 2016	Weekly
Interviews (Phase II) Teacher 2	January 6, 2016 – February 24, 2016	Weekly
Interviews (Phase II) Teacher 3	January 6, 2016 – February 24, 2016	Weekly
Audio Tapes and Transcriptions	November 18 – February 24, 2016	Weekly
Reflective Journaling	November 18 – February 24, 2016	On-going
Contact Summary Sheets	November 18 – February 24, 2016	On-going

The research study began on November 3, 2015. IRB approval (Appendix F) and school district approval were obtained before beginning the research process. Teacher recruitment letters and consent forms were given directly to each participant.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis focused on teachers' perspectives of parental involvement. I looked for a holistic picture that included a complete understanding of teacher perspectives by using an interview guide technique, interest group discussions and open-ended interview

questions (Appendix B) to collect data. The following themes emerged from the literature and were used to create the interest group questions and analyze the data.

Table 2  
*Initial Themes*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Bronfenbrenner's Nested Systems</b>
Academic Success – Kindergarten students who pass all kindergarten assessments and are developed in all areas of the kindergarten report card.	Microsystem
Race/Ethnicity – Different races or ethnicities among the students of each kindergarten classroom.	Macrosystem
Family Culture/Home Environment – How parents interact with their children at home. How other family members also interact or live with the children in their home.	Microsystem
Mother/Father Roles – How mother and fathers interact with their children at home and at school. How these interactions may be similar or different.	Microsystem
Barriers – Influences that may hinder parental involvement. These may be barriers associated with home or school.	Exosystem
Teacher Perspectives – Teachers' beliefs regarding parental involvement.	Mesosystem
Professional Development – Workshops or other in-service opportunities aimed at helping teachers get more parental involvement at home and at school.	Exosystem
School Environment/Climate – How the school and classroom are perceived by parents and others.	Mesosystem
Teaching Experience – How varying years of teaching experience may influence parental involvement.	Chronosystem
District Initiatives – Ways in which the district may provide professional development opportunities for teachers regarding parental involvement.	Exosystem

Transcription of all data collected was completed immediately following each meeting in order to preserve integrity. The transcriptions were useful in maintaining correct and true information, and the transcriptions were coded, using holistic and pattern coding (Saldana, 2011). Pattern coding was a second cycle coding method to identify emergent themes. Coding of the data allowed me to determine the themes that were relevant to the study and to help maintain trustworthiness of the study (Saldana, 2011).

### **Theory Used to Analyze Data**

The importance of teacher perspectives regarding parental involvement was evaluated using Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Bioecological Theory helped in my understanding of the role of the teacher, working with parents, and parental involvement. Taking into account Bronfenbrenner's microsystem, I framed my interest group questions around the topics of parent/child interactions and mother/father roles, which included parental interactions within the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Because there were many ways in which the immediate environment affects parental involvement, I structured my interest group questions around these topics in order to have a better understanding of how they may influence teacher perspectives (Baeck, 2010).

The mesosystem, which included interactions between aspects of the microsystems, was helpful in understanding teacher perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I included interest group questions on how relationships of family to school

experiences may be influential in understanding teacher perspectives (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

The exosystem, included external environments that may indirectly influence children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Because school success was linked to family dynamics and socio-economic factors, it was important to understand how certain barriers may contribute to parental involvement (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010). Teacher perspectives may be influenced by barriers associated with parental involvement, such as socio-economic factors.

The macrosystem, which included the larger socio-cultural context described as the culture in which individuals live, helped me to understand how the culture of students and parents may influence teacher perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Race and ethnicity were considered in determining interest group questions and included areas that may affect involvement, such as socio-economic status and poverty (Swick & Williams, 2006).

The chronosystem lens helped me to understand teacher's perspectives as this system was an evolution of the four other systems over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Questions included how parental involvement and communication throughout the school year may influence teacher's perspectives. This was important in understanding the important role teacher/parent communication plays in the overall school environment (El Nokali et al., 2010).

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory gave structure to the questions in regard to the social and cultural context of the school and home environments and helped with



analysis (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's Theory helped in my understanding of how teacher perspectives regarding parental involvement may be influenced by the social and cultural contexts of students, their parents, and their home environment.

### **Trustworthiness**

Triangulation of the data included coding and synthesizing the data, using multiple methods and categorizing the data into themes. Themes were identified as I reviewed the data, and similar themes were clustered together. This helped to ensure trustworthiness of the study (Saldana, 2011). According to Erwin, Brotherson, and Summers (2011), qualitative research that includes triangulation can address the issues of credibility and trustworthiness and can be used with many qualitative methodologies. To establish and maintain trustworthiness, a range of established criteria was in place. The criteria included not only engagement in the field and coding of data, but also triangulation through many different data sources (Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005)

### **Member Checking**

Member checking was used after the coding process to obtain feedback from the teachers. I shared the themes with the teachers and asked whether the conclusions of the study were accurate by allowing them to read through the findings (Creswell, 1994). I asked the teachers to read through my results as a way of validating the findings (Saldana, 2011). Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain; "In member checking, the researcher devises a way to ask the participants whether he "got it right" (pg. 221).

I shared my findings with the kindergarten teachers and asked them if the conclusions were truthful and valuable. Each teacher was given the opportunity to read through a portion of the data, look at the theme, and decide if the theme matched correctly. Each teacher was encouraged to add or change information. Each teacher validated the findings and in one case new information was added.

Each teacher agreed with the coding and added a few additional comments regarding parental involvement during the meeting. Extra information helped to justify the meaning of the data and gave new insights into their perspectives. Each teacher was allowed to discuss the process and the analysis. They were allowed to share their own ideas regarding future professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers. Their feedback was crucial to validating the accuracy of the findings and was another way to establish trustworthiness.

### **Peer Debriefing**

This process determined if the themes that emerged from the study aligned with the transcriptions and definitions used in the study. I asked two colleagues who had their degrees in an early childhood discipline to examine my raw data, theories, and definitions, using a random selection from my data source. “In peer debriefing, the researcher makes arrangements with knowledgeable and available colleagues to get reactions to the coding, the case summaries, the analytic memos written during data analysis, and the next to final drafts” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, pg. 221). They coded a portion of the raw data using the definitions from the coding book. They checked for

consistency in the data analysis. New codes were discovered and several themes were collapsed by combining them into one basic theme. This process helped to validate the research findings and added to the trustworthiness of the study.

### **Human Participants Protection**

Teacher's recruitment letters and consent forms were given directly to each teacher at their schools. Maintaining privacy was ensured by keeping all information anonymous. Teacher consent forms were given to each teacher before starting the research. Any teacher wishing to drop out of the study had the opportunity to do so at any time during the research process. Teachers were ensured that all data was maintained confidentially, as well as any information regarding their students. No identifying information was tied to their answers, and all data was contained in a locked file cabinet accessible only by me. Teachers were assured that the information was used to obtain information that would help school administrators and teachers to understand parental involvement and to help reach out to parents in a more effective manner.

Loss of confidentiality risk was reduced by keeping all interview questions and answers in a locked file cabinet at my home. I was the only person to have access to the key. Once the study concluded, all information was shredded and thrown away. The risk of embarrassment was reduced during the interview process if some teachers felt embarrassed regarding the answers that they had given during the interview process. Giving them the opportunity to complete the interviews in their own classrooms and after school helped alleviate embarrassment. Emotional discomfort risk was reduced. I assured them that the information would be used to obtain information regarding parental

involvement and how the information may help schools reach out to parents in a more effective manner.

Child confidentiality risk was reduced. If some teachers felt uncomfortable discussing information regarding students and families, I assured them that the information would be classified as confidential, would be kept under lock and key, and names would not be used in the study. Loss of time risk was reduced by assuring participants that the time strictly adhered to a one hour time limit, and the interviews were scheduled at a time that was convenient to them. Because of the familiarity with the school districts and kindergarten population from past experiences, my bias was reduced by being self-analytical and not overly subjective. Due to my past experiences, I needed to keep an open mind, and I strove for objectivity. I used the bracketing method by writing memos throughout the data collection process and analyzed my memos as a means of examining and reflecting upon the data. During the bracketing process, observational comments allowed me to explore feelings about the research endeavor (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

The teacher interviews were audio recorded, and all data was kept on an encrypted hard drive and locked in a file cabinet at a secured home location. I was the only one who had access to the audio recorder, field notes, and encrypted hard drive during and after the study was completed. Once the research study finished, the data was shredded and/or erased.

Respecting the participants during the interview process became an important part of maintaining rapport. I strove to maintain rapport through the study in order to build an interviewing relationship with the teachers involved.

As stated by Seidman (2006):

Once the interview is under way, and as the participant begins to share his or her life history and details of present experiences it is crucial for the interviewer to maintain a delicate balance between respecting what the participant is saying and taking advantage of opportunities to ask difficult questions, to go more deeply into controversial subjects. (p. 97)

### **Summary**

This chapter presented an overview of the design and methodology for this phenomenological qualitative research study. This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers regarding parental involvement. Research techniques included interest group interviews consisting of sixteen kindergarten teachers from four urban elementary schools. Three teachers of varying teaching experiences were recruited for individual interviews. The interview process was used as a means of exploring and gathering information of the lived experiences of the teachers as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of their perspectives on parental involvement (Van Manen, 1990).

Data collection occurred over a three month period and consisted of interest group interviews, individual interviews, audio tapes, field notes, and reflective journaling. Data analysis procedure for coding consisted of holistic coding, which was a first cycle coding

method, and pattern coding, which was a second cycle coding method. The theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner and Vygotsky were used as a lens to help guide the data analysis and as a means of understanding the lived experiences of urban kindergarten teachers regarding parental involvement. This analysis investigated areas of academic success, race and ethnicity, mother/father roles, barriers, teacher perspectives, professional development, school environment/climate, teaching experience, and district initiatives.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to have a better understanding of kindergarten teacher perspectives with varied levels of teaching experiences on parental involvement in urban elementary schools. Areas investigated in the study included: (a) academic success, (b) race/ethnicity, (c) mother/father roles, (d) barriers, (e) teacher perspectives, (f) professional development, (g) school environment/climate, (h) teaching experience, and (i) district initiatives. Interest groups and teacher's lived experiences were helpful in suggesting professional development programs that could improve parental involvement and academic success in urban kindergarten classrooms.

#### **Interest Groups**

The four interest groups consisted of a total of sixteen elementary school teachers in an urban school district who met weekly for four weeks. Two interest groups met for session one on November 18, 2015, session two on December 2, 2015, session three on December 9, 2015, and session four on December 16, 2015. The other two interest groups met for session one on November 19, 2015, session two on December 3, 2015, session three on December 10, 2015, and session three on December 17, 2015. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes. Themes that emerged from the interest group sessions included parental involvement, socio-economic status, mother/father roles, barriers to

involvement, teacher beliefs, professional development, school environment, and district initiatives.

### **Individual Interviews**

Three teachers were recruited from the interest groups and consisted of a novice teacher with one year of teaching experience, a mid-career teacher with ten years of teaching experience, and a veteran teacher with thirty years of teaching experience. The individual interviews were conducted weekly for an additional eight weeks. The dates for the interviews were January 6, 2016, January 13, 2016, January 20, 2016, January 27, 2016, February 3, 2016, February 10, 2016, February 16, 2016, and February 24, 2016. The interview questions about perspectives of parental involvement evolved from the initial analysis of the interest groups. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Various topics were discussed, and the lived experiences of these three teachers were explored. The individual interviews were used to explore the lived experiences regarding teacher perspectives of parental involvement.

This chapter examines the analysis of the findings for the three research questions:

The broad research question that guided this study was:

What are the lived experiences of three urban kindergarten teachers of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Three questions were more narrowly refined for my inquiry:

Research Question One: What are the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested system and parental involvement?



Research Question Two: How do teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement?

Research Question Three: How do teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks used to guide this study and provide a lens through which to examine the social contexts of the lived experiences of kindergarten teachers were based on Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky Social Development Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory influenced the development of the research questions that were used to investigate teacher perspectives of parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory was used as a guide to help understand the teacher's perspectives of immediate surroundings and interactions between various aspects of these surroundings and individuals. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory was used as a guide to help understand the influence of differing social contexts, such as school and home and parent/child relationships.

#### **Vygotsky's Social Development Theory**

Vygotsky's Theory helped me to understand the ways in which social and cultural contexts influenced teachers' perspectives of parental involvement. This was helpful in understanding the lived experiences of three kindergarten teachers within a Title I school in an urban school district where the social and cultural aspects of family and community played a large role within the classroom, school, home, and the interactions between the

teachers, parents, and students of each school (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), “the social context encompasses everything in a child’s environment and can influence a child either directly or indirectly” (pg. 162).

### **Analysis of the Findings**

In this phenomenological study, first cycle coding included holistic coding in which the teacher transcriptions were analyzed in order “to grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole” (Saldana, 2011, p. 118). Using a coding chart for teachers A, B, and C, all the holistic coding themes were included for each session of the individual interviews. Once all the holistic codes were entered into the coding chart, second cycle coding included pattern coding, which developed major patterns from the data (Saldana, 2011). Entering the holistic themes and major patterns into the chart allowed for better interpretation of the data for each teacher. Once the major patterns were identified, they were colored coded to match the definitions in the coding book. The major themes included: (a) sibling involvement, (b) home culture, (c) engagement of mothers, (d) high parental involvement, (e) professional development, (f) parental support, (g) teacher/parent relationships, (h) communication, (i) lack of knowledge, and (j) low parental involvement.

The coding definitions were defined as follows:

Table 3  
*Coding Definitions*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Sibling involvement	Siblings helping with homework or other school related work at home, often taking the place of the parent
Influence of home culture	Cultural influences, such as family relationships, that affect the parent and child at home or at school.
Mothers are more involved than fathers	Mothers taking on the role of helping their children with their homework or getting involved at the school
Parental involvement/Higher academically	A connection between parents who worked with their children at home with homework or getting involved at school and academic success
Professional development for teachers	Finding ways to communicate with parents through district or school training
Educational support for parents	School programs aimed at getting parents involved
Teacher/Parent relationships	Teachers finding ways to build relationships with parents, such as asking for classroom help, having frequent communication, gaining rapport, being encouraging, and working as a team
Communication between teacher and parent	Methods of communication between parents and teachers, such as face-to-face conferences, email, telephone calls, daily notes, and class newsletters
Parents lack knowledge on how to help	Lack of knowledge on how to help with homework assignments and/or understanding the kindergarten curriculum
Low parental involvement	A lack of parental involvement, such as helping children with homework, due to difficult job or home circumstances

Taking a critical look at the developing patterns allowed for several of the patterns to be collapsed and identified. This process was helpful in determining the reoccurring themes that evolved from the interest groups and individual interviews

regarding the lived experiences of the kindergarten teachers. This helped in understanding Bronfenbrenner's Theory, culture, access, and barriers associated with parental involvement at home and in the classroom. Having three teachers who participated in the individual interviews read through a portion of the transcribed data was a way to validate the study. Peer debriefing also helped validate the study as two colleagues who were early childhood experts coded a portion of the raw data using the coding book. They were able to check for consistency in the data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Once the major themes were developed from the coding methods, a portion of the transcriptions for teachers A, B, and C were given to two colleagues who were experts in an early childhood discipline. They examined the raw data using the coding book. They were asked to code a portion of the data to check for consistency in the data analysis. Having two experts in the field of education examining and analyzing a portion of the raw data helped to validate the research findings and allowed for trustworthiness of the study.

A portion of the raw data was given to teachers A, B, and C, and they were allowed to read through the findings. After reading a portion of their transcriptions they were asked if they felt the coding was accurate. Each teacher agreed with the coding and added a few additional comments regarding parental involvement during the meeting. Extra information helped to justify the meaning of the data and gave new insights into their perspectives. Each teacher was allowed to discuss the process and the analysis. They were asked for input into the "implications for professional development" and were

allowed to share their own ideas regarding future professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers. Their feedback was crucial to validating accuracy of the findings and was another way to establish trustworthiness. The following was an example of the coding process from Teacher C's transcription:

Table 4  
*Coding Process*

Holistic Code	Pattern Code	Major Pattern
“Well, I'm thinking right now with my current class at the top of my head. They have homework just about every night, it's kindergarten. And the papers that I do see coming into me I can tell if they're receiving help through the way it looks I guess, on paper. For example, some of them I know get help from their older sister or brother. But at least they're getting help, which is a good thing. For example, I do know that one child has all the time on her”	Siblings help at home	Sibling involvement

### **Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory**

Teachers' perspectives of parental involvement included their understandings of how and why parents got involved in school and at home. Their lived experiences encompassed Bronfenbrenner's nested system and included a critical look at the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theoretical point of view was taken into account as teachers discussed experiences that included interpersonal relationships and direct interactions within the immediate surroundings of the environment, such as how parental involvement affected academic success. Interactions between the microsystems, such as parent/teacher

communication, were considered. Larger socio-cultural contexts within families such as socio-economic issues and home culture was another point of focus. External factors which indirectly influenced the child such as parents' lack of supporting their children were an additional factor. The evolution of the systems over time were also considered, such as how parental involvement might grow and change through the school year due to issues such as divorce or moving (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### **Research Question One**

What are the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested systems and parental involvement?

**Microsystem.** Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualizes the microsystem as being the closest to an individual, which encompasses interpersonal relationships and direct interactions within immediate surroundings in the environment, such as direct parent/child interactions. Teacher B explained parent/child interaction, "I have experienced for the most part there is a direct correlation between the parents that I work with when they work with their child. I see more growth when they are invested."

Swick and Williams (2006) explain that the microsystem may go beyond direct interactions between parent and child and could include direct interactions between the school and the child. Xu et al. (2010) states that these direct interactions may help to encourage social emotional growth of children, leading to a higher chance of achieving academic success. The following discussions occurred during the individual interviews and illustrated parent/child interactions and school/child interactions within the

microsystem. An example of these types of connected micro-systems from the individual teacher perspective can be found below:

Table 5

*Microsystem Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplars</b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent/child interactions:</p> <p>And I think it makes a tremendous impact whereas through my experience, this year alone, I had a very high (academically) student. The student left unfortunately, but I mean I could see the mother was sending in extra books that shows she was reading at home and that the student could talk about it in class.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent/child interactions:</p> <p>They [parents] understood my concerns and I saw an immediate turn around. Every day in the child's folder, whatever book they were reading the parents were making this child write the sentences over and over and over again so they would become more familiar with the word wall words and the letters.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent/child interactions:</p> <p>So that's what I see transferring from the home to here [school]. The child understands very well the counting of objects one-on-one because her homework came that way.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of school/child interactions:</p> <p>You can tell right away whether or not the students are turning in homework, but you can tell right away if that student's being worked with at home. Because it all depends on how they respond to you in class, if they are catching on to the material quickly.</p>

(continued)

Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of school/child interactions:</p> <p>She's [student] getting one-on-one help and it reflects in her homework and reflects in the classroom too.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of school/child interactions:</p> <p>I had some kids who were on grade level but then I had a good chunk of my class every year from year five and up that have been somewhat above to significantly above grade level in reading. And one of the only things I can attribute it to, well two things I can attribute it to, is parental involvement, teaching parents how to read with their child, and how to extend that reading.</p>

**Mesosystem.** The mesosystem includes the interactions between microsystems in which two microsystems interact with one another, such as teacher/parent relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Teacher A explained:

We're [parent and teacher] a team and in order for it to work we have to work together. And when you have that open feeling towards the parent, you seem encouraging and inviting they're going to feel, yes, they really want to be a team with me.

Ray and Smith (2010) explain that parental interactions with children who are in kindergarten are beneficial to helping children be more successful in school. They describe positive parental interactions as being interactions in which parents are supportive of their children's school activities as well as frequent communication with their child's teachers. Bower and Griffin (2011) concur, stating that parents who work



with teachers towards a common goal create an environment which is beneficial to student success. The following discussions occurred during the individual interviews and illustrated communication and supportive school environment within the mesosystem. Understanding the teacher perspective from the mesosystem can be seen in the exemplars in the table below.

Table 6  
*Mesosystem Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>Not just being open but you have to make a connection. If her [parent] son said “I like this” or her son said “I like that”. I was like “My son likes that too, oh wow, so you all could be good friends”. Just showing that you’re trying to make a connection somewhere. That you’re a parent and I’m a teacher, but we have something in common.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>And I try to explain to them [parents] that it’s not a problem for me, that I can be here for as long as I need to be because it’s your child. But when we’re doing conference, everything seems to be more fast-paced because they’re trying to get as much information while they have me as they can. Whereas a lot of information that I do receive I receive through things like class messenger or email.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>You know, when I was first teaching, because I was still learning how to build that relationship, I don’t think well I know I didn’t do some of the things that I do now. I didn’t send home “meet the teacher” notices. I didn’t</p>

(continued)

	<p>build myself up as the person that they could come and talk to, so I didn't have a lot of parental involvement. Now even from the very jump, like I said, I send the "meet the teacher", I send the weekly newsletter. I make phone calls home for not any other reason than to say I really love having your child or I caught your child doing this today and I thought you should know. And it opens up that kind of line of communication and once that's open, the parents feel a little more comfortable.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>We are in a people helping people profession, teachers are. It's a people business. So then the more you give the more you get back. With parents and with students. Always bring out the positive in return, always. I know there's things we have to talk to a person [parent] about that may not be too wonderful to discuss but if you start with a positive and end with a positive, remember positives are a lot harder to come by it seems these days than are negatives.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of supportive of school environment:</p> <p>And other parents they talk and when they do what is being said about me is positive. So to me I guess that confirms that I am making the right steps. I'm making sure that my classroom environment is welcoming and supportive and the parents know that it's a two way street and we're all here to be involved in our child's education.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of supportive of school environment:</p> <p>I think people (teachers) who are welcoming and positive, parents don't feel as intimidated so they feel more comfortable being involved in school activities.</p>

Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of supportive of school environment:</p> <p>Well I guess I'm just honest with the parents and I tell them up front that I love having a parent come help me because the child has another adult that they can look upon for direction and help. And also they see that it's not just teachers involved in the education process, it's parents too. And it helps the parent feel like they're contributing somehow, somehow. So I guess it's just what I verbally tell them. That I welcome the help.</p>
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**Exosystem.** Seeking to understand teacher perspective from the exosystem proved insightful and offered additional context to understanding the lived experience of each individual teacher.

Teacher A stated:

This parent did tell me at the beginning of the year that they didn't have time to help their child with their homework. That they have all these kids and too much going on. But I guess they're too busy.

The exosystem involves external environments, which indirectly influenced child growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Swick and Williams (2006), the exosystem does not directly affect individuals; rather the exosystem encompasses aspects of structures within the microsystem, such as with a parents' employment. The exosystem could affect a child but does not involve the child directly or within immediate contexts. The exosystem involves links between a social setting in which the child does not have an active role within the immediate environmental context in which the child lives and interacts (Swick & Williams, 2006). The following

discussions occurred during the individual interviews and illustrated challenging home environments within the exosystem. Teacher comments as exemplified through this system are as follows:

Table 7  
*Exosystem Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	Challenging home environments:  Some of them [parents], three students in my class, their parents work two jobs.
Teacher B Individual Interview	Challenging home environments:  I had two students, one was a boy and one was girl and I would swear they were from the same family. Parents were not working with them. They were so far behind, it was affecting their behavior.
Teacher C Individual Interview	Challenging home environments:  And he [father] comes home at ten o'clock at night. So I'm dealing with that right now too.

**Macrosystem.** The macrosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner, includes the larger socio-cultural context described as the culture in which individuals live. The macrosystem influences the interactions of all of the other layers and includes influences within the United States, such as values beliefs, customs and laws in which a child lives. This may include societal values, legislation, and financial resources provided to help families (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Hispanic culture was described by Teacher A, “You know in certain cultures, especially the Hispanic culture, the grandparents are very involved. They believe in multi-generational homes.”

Stacer and Perrucci (2012) explain that there are racial and ethnic differences in parental involvement and that the culture of the home may dictate how often parents are involved with their children. Paat (2013) states that diversity among family settings plays a role in parental involvement particularly children of immigrant families. The following discussions occurred during the individual interviews and illustrated Hispanic culture and home culture within the macrosystem.

Table 8  
*Macrosystem Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of Hispanic culture:</p> <p>Also, representation of the cultures within the communities in this school. You have Hispanic community, then you have that representative in the front office. And they understand.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of Hispanic culture:</p> <p>They [Hispanic culture] know that parents also have the respect for the teacher and the parent will listen to what the teacher says maybe over what the child says because they're believing that the teacher knows what they're talking about.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>Ninety percent of the time I've had the Hispanics and their discipline is good and I attribute it to home environment.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>A lot of my experience has been working with Hispanic families and I have seen quite a bit of involvement with the families and the children. And now I attribute that to their, perhaps. their belief in their church system.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p>

(continued)

	The parents who their culture at home is, I have my child and it's my responsibility to feed and clothe them and school is school and whatever happens at school stays at school and deals at school. There's a hindrance in their academics because homework isn't being done.
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**Chronosystem.** The chronosystem is the evolution of the four other systems over time, such as barriers to parental involvement in the study (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Teacher B explained a challenging home situation that described the chronosystem:

I recently learned of a student who was having some severe difficulties at home. And while mom has been to several conferences and has been very supportive, I think whatever's going on at home is standing in the way of being able to be involved and supportive in her child's education and that makes me wonder. Obviously it's starting to show. His grades are suffering and his progress is slowing. Knowing that she has the desire just not the capability of doing something we wonder what we can do as educators to help keep that from becoming as big of a barrier. And letting parents know that we are here to help them without being intrusive or invasive.

Kose and Lim (2011) suggest that teachers' beliefs are important to understanding the barriers to parental involvement. They indicate that professional learning and growth comes from understanding these barriers through transformative teaching. Fantuzzo et al. (2012) concur, stating that teachers' perspectives indicate that school support in the form of teacher workshops is crucial to supporting teacher/parent interactions through time.

The following discussions illustrated challenging home environments and lack of parental involvement within the chronosystem.

Table 9  
*Chronosystem Exemplars*

Source	Exemplar
Teacher A Individual Interview	Example of challenging home environment:  This parent did tell me at the beginning of the year that they didn't have time to help their child with their homework. That they have all these kids and too much going on. But I guess they're too busy.
Teacher C Individual Interview	Example of challenging home environment:  And he [father] comes home at ten o'clock at night. So I'm dealing with that right now too.
Teacher B Individual Interview	Example of lack of parental involvement:  Things that aren't always necessarily in the text or if we're doing math and we've done it one way he can see it a different way. But he can't write the letters in his own name because nobody at home works with him and they don't check his folder.
Teacher B Individual Interview	Example of lack of parental involvement:  I had two students, one was a boy and one was girl and I would swear they were from the same family. Parents were not working with them. They were so far behind, it was affecting their behavior.

The second research question examined the cultural contexts associated with parental involvement.

### **Research Question Two**

How do teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement?

Research Question Two examined teacher perspectives of parental involvement regarding the cultural contexts of their students and their families. The individual

interviews focused on the lived experiences of the teachers and each teacher discussed how culture influenced parental involvement. The themes found for the influence of cultural contexts were the involvement of (a) sibling involvement, (b) home culture, and (c) engagement of mothers.

### **Home Contexts**

**Sibling involvement.** According to Vygotsky (1978), children learn, grow, and are influenced by the cultural context in which they live. He explains that a child's culture may impact academic growth and states, "Culture affects both the essence of the higher mental functions and the way mental functions are acquired" (p. 22). The cultural contexts of family's play a role in how teachers understand the way parents become involved with their children, how often they get involved, and if there are barriers that prevent them from getting involved with their children (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teachers indicated that often their students' siblings helped them at home due to parents' work situations and that often both parents worked late into the night or had large families.

Teacher C explained sibling involvement:

I have found that if they [students] have siblings, especially the older ones, this helps them a lot. They'll help their younger ones [siblings]. If the parent can't, the parent's at work, I do know my class this year, the siblings do help their little brother and little sister.

Job obligations appeared to be common in families where the parents were not involved with their children on a regular basis. Teacher perspectives on parental



involvement may be influenced once they gain an understanding into the home life of their students. Teachers understood that often parents were not available to help their children at home with homework or school related activities. The culture of the home appeared to extend to other family members who were willing and accessible to help.

Although research indicates the importance of parental involvement to academic success, many parents are unaware of their role in helping their children at home or school or often are not willing to take the time to interact with them (Safdar et al., 2010). The following exemplars occurred during the interest group and individual interviews and illustrated sibling involvement:

Table 10  
*Sibling Involvement Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b><i>Exemplar</i></b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	Example of home culture and sibling involvement:  Many parents don't realize. They think it has to be something with work sheets and all the fancy tools and blocks and numbers. It's not. I think everybody has the skills [to help students] everybody. Even older siblings.
Teacher B Individual Interview	Example of home culture and sibling involvement:  Their parents didn't come up and offer to read. Homework was done but it usually required the help of an older sibling who, you know, could take the time and also spoke English.
Teacher C Individual Interview	Example of home culture and sibling involvement:  If they have older brothers and sisters who are getting their homework done it seems that they're helping these little ones. Sisters or brothers don't necessarily do it but they are helping them.

(continued)

Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture and sibling involvement:</p> <p>For example, some of them [students] I know get help from their older sister or brother. But at least they're getting help which is a good thing.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture and sibling involvement:</p> <p>You know, if the parents or parent cannot [help with homework]. In fact, I talked to siblings, a couple of them here, to help their little sisters or brothers. My problem is that they have homework too and need to get theirs done. But I ask them if they can please help them a little.</p>
School C – Teacher 5 Interest Group	<p>Example of parents' work situations:</p> <p>I have some who have older siblings or cousins of them and the parents aren't able to be as involved. So that's kind of another extension of the parents.</p>
School C – Teacher 4 Interest Group	<p>Example of parents' work situations:</p> <p>But she's [student] moving on fine. But every time I see the homework and very few mistakes so I ask, "Who helped you" "Who did you do the homework with?" And she goes "With my sister or with my brother" and I know mom and they have work.</p>
School C – Teacher 1 Interest Group	<p>Example of parents' work situations:</p> <p>I've had students in the past whose parents are not home because they work two jobs or they get home and they're with older brothers or sisters.</p>

**Home culture.** Teachers viewed the influence of the home culture as either promoting or hindering academic success. The influence of the Hispanic culture was considered to impact parental involvement at home and at school. Teacher A discussed the Hispanic influence of her students, "You know in certain cultures, especially the Hispanic culture, the grandparents are very involved. They [families] believe in multi-generational homes."

Lee and Bowen (2006) explain that parents who are from Hispanic culture have strong desires to help their children with homework and are willing to make time to help with homework. Similarly, Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) state that Hispanic parents are often reluctant to communicate with their child's teacher or to question anyone in authority. The following discussions demonstrated the influence of various home cultures to parental involvement:

Table 11  
*Home Culture Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
School A – Teacher 2 Interest Group	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>From what I've experienced in this school, it's not necessarily a race or ethnicity issue as it is a socio-economic issue.</p>
School D – Teacher 2 Interest Group	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>Well the reason that I say socio-economic is not necessarily that if you're below a certain percentage then you don't value education, that's not what I'm saying. But it tends to be that those who have generational poverty, not just we've hit on hard times, but we've had to move into an apartment. The main focus is, let's get money for the family.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>The parents' culture at home is, "I have my child and my responsibility is to feed and clothe them and school is school and whatever happens at school stays at school and deals at school." There's a hindrance in their academics because homework isn't being done.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>But I do, I really kind of wonder with my one little student whose parents are working, if their</p>

(continued)

	home culture is they don't have time to talk to anybody.
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>Whereas at home if the culture is almost, when the parents talk to their kids about school being their job. I've heard a lot of parents have that conversation early on, and at school they'll say, "Mommy and daddy are going to go work and that's our job and your job is to go to school." And that's really important and when they talk it up, then their child wants to be successful and they want to do well.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of home culture:</p> <p>On the other hand, in this same classroom I do have a student whose home culture, from what I can tell right now, is that really nothing is important, not even school.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of Hispanic culture:</p> <p>They [Hispanic culture] know that parents also have the respect for the teacher and the parent will listen to what the teacher says maybe over what the child says because they're believing that the teacher knows what they're talking about.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of Hispanic culture:</p> <p>Also, representation of the cultures within the communities in this school. You have Hispanic community, then you have that representative in the front office. And they understand.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of Hispanic culture:</p> <p>Ninety percent of the time I've had the Hispanics and their discipline is good and I attribute it to home environment.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of Hispanic culture:</p> <p>You know, a lot of my experience has been working with Hispanic families and I have seen quite a bit of involvement with the families and</p>

	the children. And now I attribute that to their, perhaps, their belief in their church system.
School C – Teacher 4 Interest Group	Example of Hispanic culture: I think each culture is different. I know growing up in the Hispanic culture our parents were way up in our business whether we wanted it or not. And just from my personal perspective because this is a bilingual campus and of course they could probably attest way more to it, but like from what I've seen I think at this campus with the bilingual program what I've seen is they value the opportunity for education.

**Engagement of mothers.** All the teachers had similar experiences where the mother appeared to be the most involved at home and at school. Although some of the teachers explained that fathers did occasionally get involved, it was often the mothers who helped with the homework.

Teacher 3 discussed mother involvement:

I see, I would say 90% to 95% of moms getting involved with my kids. Maybe at the beginning of the year I met a couple of dads. It's been months, I haven't seen them again. Whenever we have a meeting with parents usually I would say most of the time it's moms that come.

Aram (2010) states that mothers generally guide their children more in academic areas especially in areas of cooperation strategies. Goldberg et al. (2013) explain that fathers often do not get as involved as mothers due to work or other outside obligations. The following exemplars illustrated how mothers were more involved than fathers:

Table 12

*Engagement of Mothers Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	I have more mothers [involved]. More mothers are the ones. I get contacted. I really have contact with two dads out of my whole classroom.
Teacher B Individual Interview	I see more mothers doing the mediation. They're usually the ones that I have more contact with.
Teacher B Individual Interview	I have one family who I've had several of the siblings and I only met with mom. Dad was, this was not his job, his job was to go to work.
Teacher B Individual Interview	Like I said, a lot of the things [school activities] are games. I find mothers and fathers are into some of the resources, like sending home a letter flash card set. I see more of the moms doing consistently than hear about or seeing the dads.
Teacher C Individual Interview	But most of my experience has been that moms have been very much involved and some dads. But once in a while you'll get a dad who's really involved and that's nice, along with the mom.
Teacher C Individual Interview	When it comes to helping the students with homework it seems like basically it usually falls on the mothers when it comes to helping them get their details done for school. Clothes ready or feeding them or making sure their details and their backpacks are in order. And that also encompasses homework.
School A – Teacher 2 Interest Group	Overall, mostly mom's the contact point. I've had a couple of single dads and they have been well involved but as a rule mom's mostly the contact point.
School B – Teacher 3 Interest Group	I've seen a lot of mom involvement especially the stay at home moms. More so than dads. In the previous years I've had dads be involved but very few if I had to count on my one hand. It's probably three moms versus two dads.
School D – Teacher 2 Interest Group	I've noticed that mothers help. I have a sheet at the beginning of the year and it says I would like to help and it has different things that they could possibly do and help with. You know they can check it off. And whenever the parent comes to meet the teacher, typically I've noticed that it's the mom filling out the paper work.

### **Research Question Three**

How do teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement?

Research Question Three examined how access and barriers influenced parental involvement at school and at home. Teacher perspectives on parental involvement showed that there were several factors that either promoted or hindered parental involvement and that often times these factors extended from home to school. The teachers indicated that their personal involvement was important to the overall success of getting parents involved. The themes established for access and barriers included (a) parental involvement/higher academically, (b) lack of parental involvement, (c) teacher/parent relationships, (d) communication between teacher and parent, (e) parents lack knowledge on how to help, and (f) professional development on parental involvement.

#### **Access**

**High parental involvement.** Teachers agreed that with more parental involvement students did better academically. There appeared to be a connection between parents who got involved at home and more academic success. According to Teacher B, “I have experienced for the most part there is a direct correlation between the parents that I work with when they work with their child. I see more growth when they are invested.”

El Nokali et al. (2010) explain that parents who are more involved with their children’s school work are more likely to reach out to their child’s teacher. Nargis (2013) concurs, stating that high parental involvement in kindergarten is crucial to student success. The following discussions occurred during the interest group and individual

interviews and illustrated the connection between parental involvement and academic success.

Table 13  
*High Parental Involvement Exemplars*

Source	Exemplar
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>They [parents] understood my [teacher} concerns and I saw an immediate turn around. Every day in the child's folder whatever book they were reading the parents were making this child write the sentences over and over and over again so they would become more familiar with the word wall words and the letters.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>I have one [student] that's like that. I can say one thing. "Oh I saw that museum in Alaska or I saw that place in Louisiana." Ok wow, this child has been everywhere and has something to say with everything I talk about.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>You can tell right away whether or not the students are turning in homework but you can tell right away if that student's being worked with at home. Because it all depends on how they respond to you in class, if they are catching on to the material quickly.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>And I think it makes a tremendous impact whereas through my experience, this year alone, I had a very high (academically) student. The student left unfortunately, but I mean I could see the mother was sending in extra books that show she was reading at</p>



	home and that the student could talk about it in class.
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>And I explained and I sat down and showed her [mother] what our [school] expectations are and I showed her what I would like the child to be doing. And, oh my goodness, there was a huge turn around.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>I had some kids who were on grade level but then I had a good chunk of my class every year from year five and up that have been somewhat above to significantly above grade level in reading. And one of the only things I can attribute it to, well two things I can attribute it to, is parental involvement and teaching parents how to read with their child and how to extend that reading.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>At first the child was not that involved with getting their homework done and then we had our early conferences in the middle of September or early October. The dad admitted that they weren't helping as much and the child was struggling somewhat. And he says "But I will promise you we will be working more with our child." And low and behold this child is moving up.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>So that's what I see transferring from the home to here. She [student] understands very well the counting of objects one-on-one because her homework came that way.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>She's [student] getting one-on-one help and it reflects in her homework and reflects in the classroom too.</p>

School A – Teacher 3 Interest Group	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>He [student] didn't come in with any skills what so ever. Versus, I have other students whose parents work with them at home and they continue to do so and their skill level is so much higher than the other students who had to start from scratch. So I agree that parental involvement is very important and the support they get at home even with what we teach them during the day.</p>
School D – Teacher 1 Interest Group	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>On the positive notes, I've noticed that the ones [students] that are doing really well in my classroom are the ones that parents actually do talk to them.</p>
School C – Teacher 1 Interest Group	<p>Example of parental involvement at home:</p> <p>I think the children take charge of their learning at home when they bring it home with them. And it's not just sitting down and doing a work sheet, it's interacting with the family and they all get involved with it.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at school:</p> <p>Mom rearranged her schedule and work so that she could be there [school] and she could help out more. And all of a sudden you started to see some real progress being made.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parental involvement at school:</p> <p>They're [parents] building those communication skills and they do transfer over to other academic areas.</p>

**Professional development.** Teachers emphasized the importance of having professional development opportunities that stressed ways to promote parental involvement and to develop parental rapport. The kindergarten teachers discussed ways in which professional development helped them to promote parental involvement. These teacher trainings appeared to be positive and helpful in providing various strategies to get parents involved at home and at school.

Teacher A explained a professional development opportunity:

Well recently, they [trainers] had a training where they gave pointers. You want to be a team with your parents. They [trainers] said, you know, when you're meeting with your parents, when you're having your meetings with your parents, don't sit across from your parents, sit next to your parents. Make it seem that you're a team.

Shen et al. (2014) explain that professional development is important in helping teachers to develop strategies that may improve parental involvement. The researchers feel this to be an important step in improving student academic success. Teachers explained their perspectives on professional involvement through the exemplars below:

Table 14

*Professional Development Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher training:</p> <p>There was one session, not everybody got to go. I was selected to go and it was geared specifically for parental involvement and it changed the way that I looked at my own classroom. So what we were taught to do for parental involvement, we were taught how to model a read aloud to parents and to entice them to come.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher training:</p> <p>We had a scholastic training at the end of last year and it was more to teach parents. It was about parental involvement. It was to teach parents how to read with their child and not just the basics of, you know, sitting down and reading the book to them. When you might pause and ask questions or if there's vocabulary in there point out that word. And then those of us who got trained in that came back and we did that session with parents who signed up.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher training:</p> <p>Most of our training has been, have a nice conference. You know, before you give them a negative give them a positive.</p>
School B – Teacher 3 Interest Group	<p>Example of teacher training:</p> <p>One of the things the district does at the end of year is how to talk to parents, specifically during conferences. Start with a positive, talk about the needs of the child, and end with a positive.</p>
School C – Teacher 2 Interest Group	<p>Example of teacher training:</p> <p>We looked at different ways of how to look at discipline and behavior plans. Not to have the stick system or the clip system but to make more phone calls to parents if you are having continuous issues.</p>

School D – Teacher 4 Interest Group	<p>Example of professional development:</p> <p>Well, we had some professional development on how to hold a conference. What would be a good way on how to approach a parent, how can you make them feel more comfortable?</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of a teacher conference:</p> <p>I was saying a few years ago I went to a conference where you can select different areas to go to in different rooms throughout the day and one of them was about conferences with parents. And that's what they talked about, the man in charge there said to be friendly, to be positive always. Don't bombard them with negatives.</p>

**Parental support.** Teachers discussed ways in which the district and school were having educational support for parents. These parent activities were aimed at getting parents involved through educational activities or other after school activities. Teachers expressed a desire to have more educational support for parents. Parental support was explained by Teacher A, “We do literacy night every year, science night, math night. We do it as a team. Each team member picks a night.”

Horvat et al. (2010) explain that parents who are more involved in school events or activities tend to have more parental involvement overall, and children do better academically. The researchers indicate the importance of finding ways to support parents and the community. The following discussions occurred during the interest group and individual interviews and illustrated the teachers’ perspectives on parental support:

Table 15  
*Parental Support Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of open house:</p> <p>Open houses, I think that's one of your good ones. Often times your open houses or meet your teacher, those are your first impressions and that's, I think, the ones that make your parents feel welcome and excited.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of open house:</p> <p>We get a good response at open house. We have open house early on in the year.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent educational activity:</p> <p>The literacy nights and the math nights that we [teachers] have that are supposed to get the parents involved, but we as teachers put that together.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent educational activity:</p> <p>We [teachers] offered two sessions (parent reading workshop). One immediately after school for people [parents] who were available. And one that was in the evening about 5:30 or 6:30 I believe, for parents who worked and needed a little bit later time.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent educational activity:</p> <p>It was after school, it was a mathematics get together and parents could come. And we had the parents help us with experiments.</p>
School B – Teacher 3 Interest Group	<p>Example of parent educational activity:</p> <p>We have literacy night. A lot of the teachers, we usually hang on to old adoptions or any old books that we might have lying around. Or we move from one grade level to another and we have this extra library.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent resources:</p> <p>And for the bilingual students I know we [teachers] got, many times, letters sent to parents</p>

	inviting the moms to meet at one of the schools down the street. To help them with their students and they [district] give them free books and backpacks to take home.
School B – Teacher 4 Interest Group	Example of parent resources:  A lot of campuses have scholastic end of the school year “Get the Backpack”. You (parents) got to pick if the kid was on level, above level, or below so you could get appropriate books.
School D – Teacher 2 Interest Group	Example of parent resources:  One year they [district] sent reading logs they [students] could read during the summer.
School C – Teacher 1 Interest Group	Example of parent support:  There was a sign outside the office; it was like community involvement month. October and November is community awareness involvement month and please come.

**Teacher/parent relationships.** Teachers felt a need to have a strong relationship with the parents of their students. Their experiences showed that this relationship did help the children in the long run and paved the way for better communication. This included inviting them into their rooms and finding ways to build strong relationships.

Teacher 3 shared her perspective on the importance of teacher rapport:

I think if a teacher’s standoffish or if the teacher does not readily put herself out there to be welcoming to any parent, no parent’s going to want to be forthcoming or be wanting to share or get close to that teacher.

Nargis (2013) states that child development and academic success improve when there is positive communication between parents and teachers. Johnson (2011) concurs, stating that teachers believe that frequent teacher/parent communication and good

relationships make an impact on how often parents get involved. The following exemplars discuss the significance of teacher/parent relationships:

Table 16

*Teacher/parent Relationships Exemplars*

Source	Exemplar
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent rapport:</p> <p>So she [parent] helps out in that way which is very beneficial. So, she's very open to what we do here in the classroom and if I send anything home it's done. She'll write little notes, "I worked with him [child] on this", so she's very cooperative. And I think my demeanor in the beginning, trying to get to know her, trying to know her child, helped with that.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent rapport:</p> <p>When I was first teaching, because I was still learning how to build that relationship, I know I didn't do some of the things that I do now. I didn't send home 'meet the teacher' notices. I didn't build myself up as the person that they could come and talk to so I didn't have a lot of parental involvement. Now even from the very jump like I said, I send the meet the teacher, I send the weekly newsletter. I make phone calls home for not any other reason than to say I really love having your child or I caught your child doing this today and I thought you should know. And it opens up that kind of line of communication. And once that's open, the parents feel a little more comfortable.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent rapport:</p> <p>My very first year I think it was nerves. I think I personally wasn't comfortable with the thought of parents coming in.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent rapport:</p> <p>So I'm hoping my perspective will change and being able to learn how to effectively utilize parents and make their involvement be meaningful.</p>



Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent rapport:</p> <p>When the parents come to the school for an event I like to take pictures of them with their children. And I try to get a copy of it to give to their child then post that up on the wall entitled “Our Class”. And in Spanish. I think that makes a positive connection for all.</p>
School A – Teacher 2 Interest Group	<p>Example of teacher/parent rapport:</p> <p>You have to kind of feel out your parents and gauge the temperature of your parents. And then how you’re going to respond to them and you know what their needs are.</p>
School C – Teacher 4 Interest Group	<p>Example of teacher/parent teamwork:</p> <p>I think also, as far as perspective, if the teacher has sort of it takes a village philosophy they might be more open to building that relationship. Taking the time to build a relationship. And sometimes it takes a little bit more other than what’s on the report card or what’s going on in a conference to kind of open that door. And they don’t feel as guarded and you find out more and it explains a lot as far as in the classroom.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent teamwork:</p> <p>I think, first of all, I look at the situation and once again in a flexible way knowing that I have to put myself in their shoes. Knowing that they don’t know anything of what I want them to do or what they’re expected to do other than they do have children of their own and they know how children are. And the parent is the child’s first teacher so they set the true example from get go. And I like to look at it as if the child can look at us as a triangle. We all three work together to get things done but they know that we’re working together.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of teacher/parent teamwork:</p> <p>I believe in team work. I believe we are a team. And if we do work together that child will succeed. May not succeed this year but that child will</p>

	succeed down the line because the seed is planted. I believe, well, I encourage parents and I expect them, if you don't do any of the homework, do these several things every night.
School A – Teacher 3 Interest Group	<p>Example of teacher/parent teamwork:</p> <p>I think that you just become very comfortable with talking with the parents because you're more partners versus when you first start [teaching]. And you're nervous when the parents want to come and see you.</p>

**Communication.** Teachers felt that continued communication with parents was necessary to the ultimate goal of parental involvement. They continued to seek out various means of communicating with parents in hopes of making meaningful connections with as many parents as possible.

Teacher C discussed her experience in communication:

I'm always calling the parents about this particular thing, especially their homework or some event coming up where they would like to be here for their children. They get that newsletter once a week. The newsletter is within the homework. It's like, everything on one. It tells them what to do Monday through Friday for homework. So they get reminders that way.

According to Barnyak and McNelly (2009), teachers believe it is important to use different forms of communication with parents. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) state that teachers feel the need to give parents information that would help facilitate involvement at home and to have regular consistent communication with parents. The following discussions occurred during the interest group and individual interviews and illustrated the teachers' perspectives on teacher/parent communication:

Table 17  
*Communication Exemplars*

Source	Exemplar
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>At the beginning of the years it's [newsletter] a basic one that talks about everything. That's where I talk about us working as a team. And at the middle of the year with this upcoming report card I have an individual letter for each child. Talking about their strengths and weaknesses and activities and things that parents can do at home to help their child become stronger. Almost like a mini conference form. But not asking them to come in. I only ask the low ones to come in.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>I'm reaching out but I'm not receiving responses. Like if I try email, the email gets sent back to me in as it can't be mailed. Phone calls go unanswered. Notes in the folder stay in the folder. I mean the folders are this thick with notes for months.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>But I have a couple of parents that I repeatedly try to reach and when I have reached them I'm kind of blown off, brushed off.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>They're [parents] all starting to become younger than me. But I have some parents who are a little bit on the younger side. And I think they might feel a little intimidated and not open up as much face-to-face, sort of speak, but then they feel comfortable with email because that's their familiarity.</p>
School A – Teacher 3 Interest Group	<p>Example of communication:</p> <p>I think the same was true for me when I first started [teaching]. I didn't even think about</p>

	the parents really. I was just so focused on my students and what we need to do in the classroom. And as the years grow you starting communicating more than just the weekly newsletter.
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent conference:</p> <p>I think it is very dependent on the parent. And I say that because I have some parents who like talking face-to-face. I love talking face-to-face. And so we'll have a 45 minute conference because they are opening up. But I do have parents whose conferences are very short but they will send me emails or class messengers that are pages long. Because I think they feel more comfortable doing it.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of parent conference:</p> <p>And I try to explain to them that it's not a problem for me. That I can be here for as long as I need to be because it's your child. But when we're doing conferences everything seems to go fast paced because they're trying to get as much information while they have me as they can. Whereas a lot of information that I do receive I receive through things like class messenger or the email.</p>

## Barriers

**Lack of knowledge.** One of the barriers to parental involvement was that parents lacked the skills to help their children. Parents often indicated that they did not know how to help their children with their homework or felt the kindergarten curriculum was too difficult to understand.

Teacher 2 stated:

I agree there, I think that there is a big connection with parents working with their kiddos and seeing that growth with parents putting that effort at home. But there

is that need to show them and teach them what to do at home and how to work with their kids at home.

Villiger et al. (2014) state that families from low socio-economic situations may have a lack of resources and knowledge on how to help their children do better academically. McWayne et al. (2004) explain that parental involvement is enhanced when teachers use intervention techniques which give parents information on how to help their children. Lack of knowledge is explained by the teachers below:

Table 18  
*Lack of Knowledge Exemplars*

Source	Exemplar
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of homework skill:</p> <p>I've had homework come back with notes on it and the parents said "I did not know what to do so can you help my child with this at whatever time today?" They send the homework back. And it is the wording now a days, it's not direct. Even when I was in school, it was direct. It was telling you what to expect in the homework and now they use educational verbage and parents don't understand that. They don't use layman terms in the homework.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of homework skill:</p> <p>A lot of the parents within the community are very hands on because academically the knowledge might not be there or they don't understand. And the reason I say that is because sometimes the parents come to me and say "I don't understand the homework."</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of homework skill:</p> <p>The levels of academics have changed completely and the way it's supposed to be taught and done is totally different from what these parents have done in school. So they don't understand it and if</p>

	we don't send step-by-step instructions, they're confused and frustrated with the homework as the kids are. It's intimidating.
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of homework skill:</p> <p>Sometimes I think they [parents] will admit it [don't understand how to help with homework], but for the most part I haven't had hardly any [parents], maybe very few admit that they don't understand something [how to help with homework]. The only way I can tell, I guess, if I watch them and see if they're embarrassed to step up and say something or do something, just by their mannerisms.</p>
School C – Teacher 1 Interest Group	<p>Example of lack of curriculum skill:</p> <p>Sometimes parents just need extra information. They don't always want to ask for it or admit they don't know what to do with their child. But some parents really open up and say "What can I do?"</p>
School D – Teacher 4 Interest Group	<p>Example of lack of curriculum skill:</p> <p>Lack of experience and parents not even knowing what they need when they come to school.</p>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of curriculum skill:</p> <p>I believe everybody has the skills that they need. They just need to have the confidence and realize that it's not as daunting a task that they think it is. Like something that you're not familiar with. "Oh what if I do this wrong, what if I do that wrong." I think they allow themselves to scare themselves away from doing something that's easier than they think it is.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of curriculum skill:</p> <p>Now though, as the years have gone by and our climate in our school has changed, a lot of these parents don't know how to work with their child.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of lack of curriculum skill:</p> <p>And so, they're doing the same things over and over and over again and not seeing growth in</p>

	their child. And then they become frustrated and it trickles into the classroom.
Teacher B Individual Interview	Example of lack of curriculum skill:  So one of the things we were looking at was teaching parents how to work with their child so when they put in that effort they do see growth and success.
Teacher A Individual Interview	Example of lack of curriculum skill:  Right, they [parents] don't understand what the curriculum is now. They don't really understand what we're doing.
Teacher A Individual Interview	Example of lack of curriculum skill:  In school some of them [parents] don't know how [to help their child]. There should be a training of some sort about what is expected in school.

**Low parental involvement.** There was a connection made between parents' job situations and the lack of parental involvement in the home. There appeared to be a lack of motivation for parents to help their children, and teachers expressed this often was due to busy life styles or challenging home situations. The teachers expressed great concern in the lack of parental involvement. They felt it could be a challenge that was often times hard to overcome.

Teacher 3 explained:

Their [parents] situation is difficult right now and they're honest and say we're not working with them at home. And I can see that their improvement is much less than those other two students who are getting help every single day.

Safdar et al. (2010) explain that some parents are not well aware of their own role in their child's education that often contributes to their lack of involvement. Van Voorhis

(2011) states, “all parents, regardless of formal education, should be able to participate in the student family interaction” (p. 245). The following discussions occurred during the interest group and individual interviews and illustrated the lack of parental involvement:

Table 19  
*Low Parental Involvement Exemplars*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Teacher A Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>This parent did tell me at the beginning of the year that they didn't have time to help their child with their homework. That they have all these kids and too much going on. But I guess they're too busy.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>I recently learned of a student who was having some severe difficulties at home. And while mom has been to several conferences and has been very supportive, I think whatever's going on at home is standing in the way of being able to be involved and supportive in her child's education. And that makes me wonder. Obviously it's starting to show. His grades are suffering and his progress is slowing. Knowing that she has the desire, just not the capability of doing something we wonder what we can do as educators to help keep that from becoming as big of a barrier. And letting parents know that we are here to help them without being intrusive or invasive.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>There was not academics happening at all because he [student] had a lack of support.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>Things that aren't always necessarily in the text. Or if we're doing math and we've done it one way he [student] can see it a different way. But he can't write the letters in his own name because nobody at home works with him and they don't check his folder.</p>



Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>My other one ended up being retained because his parent's didn't take interest in him until it was basically the end of the year.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>I had two students, one was a boy and one was girl and I would swear they were from the same family. Parents were not working with them. They were so far behind, it was affecting their behavior.</p>
Teacher B Individual Interview	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>It's almost like the culture, children are to be seen and not heard. There's no interaction with him [student], things don't really get done.</p>
School A – Teacher 3 Interest Group	<p>Example of challenging home situation:</p> <p>He didn't come in with any skills what-so ever versus I have other students whose parents work with them at home and they continue to do so. And their skill level is so much higher than the other students who had to start from scratch. So I agree with what they said that parental involvement is very important and the support they get at home even with what we teach them during the day.</p>
Teacher C Individual Interview	<p>Example of job situation:</p> <p>The first one that comes to my mind is my student this year whose daddy works late at night and grandma takes care of him and the other three little boys. And he [father] comes home at ten o'clock at night. So I'm dealing with that right now</p>

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine three research questions:

The broad research question that guided this study was:

What are the lived experiences of three urban kindergarten teachers of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Three questions were more narrowly refined for my inquiry:

Research Question One: What are the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested system and parental involvement?

Research Question Two: How do teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement?

Research Question Three: How do teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement?

This study used multiple data sources to gather evidence of teachers' perspectives of parental involvement. The data sources included interest groups and individual interviews of kindergarten teachers with varying years of teaching experiences. Major themes guided the sessions and included: (a) academic success, (b) race and ethnicity, (c) mother/father roles, (d) barriers, (e) teacher perspectives, (f) professional development, (g) school environment, (h) teacher experience, and (i) district initiatives. Using holistic and pattern coding (Saldana, 2011), major themes emerged and included how parental involvement was influenced by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological system and included: (a) microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, (d) macrosystem, and (e) chronosystem. Major themes developed from cultural contexts included (a) sibling involvement, (b) influence of home culture, and (c) mothers are more involved than fathers. Themes also included how parental involvement was influenced by access and barriers, such as: (a) parental involvement/higher academically, (b) lack of parental involvement (c) teacher/parent relationships, (d) communication between teacher and parent, (e) parents' lack of knowledge on how to help, and (f) professional development on parental involvement.

The concluding chapter discusses the findings of the study and describes the lived experiences of three kindergarten teachers and their perspectives on parental involvement. The findings give insight into ways kindergarten teachers in urban school districts may achieve more parental involvement in their schools and within the students' homes. This information may also help guide administrators on ways to provide professional development to their teachers that may help to promote parental involvement.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### **Introduction**

This phenomenological study investigated the perspectives of kindergarten teachers with varying years of teacher experience in urban elementary schools. The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers' perspectives could be beneficial in determining how they play a role in promoting parental engagement at home and in the classroom.

This study used Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (1979) and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1978) as a conceptual guide for the contextual development of the study. Bronfenbrenner's Theory was used as a framework to understand teacher perspectives on parental involvement within the "nested systems" and took into account how these systems influenced teacher perspectives and parental involvement at home and in the classroom. The systems included: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Vygotsky's Social Development Theory was helpful in understanding how social and cultural contexts influence behavior of teachers, parents, and children (Vygotsky, 1978).

This chapter presents and discusses the themes that were found in this study and how the themes show teacher perspectives on parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms. The themes included: sibling involvement, home culture, engagement of

mothers, high parental involvement, professional development, teacher/parent relationships, communication, lack of knowledge, and low parental involvement. These themes emerged and were categorized by context, which included cultural contexts, access, and barriers of parental involvement. Cultural contexts enabled teachers to explain how the home environment was critical to parental involvement in the classroom. From these contexts, the teachers discussed siblings helping younger children, home culture, and how mothers often got more involved than fathers. The context of access included teachers' perspectives on high parental involvement, professional development, parental support, the importance of teacher/parent relationships, and teacher/parent communication. Barriers considered included teachers' perspective on parents' lack of knowledge and low parental involvement. This chapter discusses the implications, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

### **Overview of the Study**

To have a better understanding of parental involvement of kindergarten teachers in an urban school district, I employed a phenomenological qualitative study to investigate the lived experiences of three teachers with varying years of teaching experience. I examined how teacher perspectives of parental involvement brought about an understanding of the cultural aspects, the access, and the barriers associated with parents being involved with their children.

Data collection included multiple data points and sources: interest groups, individual interviews, teacher audio journaling, and a researcher reflexive journal.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), "Triangulation is the act of bringing more

than one source of data to bear on a single point” (p. 252). The study enabled me to gain insightful information regarding teacher perspectives of parental involvement as experienced with parents and students. The data collection methods were beneficial as they allowed for a better understanding and points of view of teachers with varying years of teaching experience. The lived experiences of a novice teacher, a mid-career teacher, and a veteran teacher brought about insightful meaning to parental involvement that attributed personal experiences with parents in unique situations as well as an understanding of parental involvement at home. The following themes that emerged from a review of the literature guided the interest groups and individual interview sessions.

Table 20  
*Themes for Interview Questions*

Academic Success – kindergarten students who pass all kindergarten assessments and are developed in all areas of the kindergarten report card
Race/Ethnicity – different races or ethnicities among the students of each kindergarten classroom
Family Culture/Home Environment – how parents interact with their children at home. How other family members also interact or live with the children in their home.
Mother/Father Roles – how mother and fathers interact with their children at home and at school. How these interactions may be similar or different.
Barriers – influences that may hinder parental involvement. These may be barriers associated with home or school.
Teacher Perspectives – teachers’ beliefs regarding parental involvement.
Professional Development – workshops or other in-service opportunities aimed at helping teachers get more parental involvement at home and at school
School Environment/Climate – how the school and classroom are perceived by parents and others.

Teaching Experience – how varying years of teaching experience may influence parental involvement.
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District Initiatives – ways in which the district may provide professional development opportunities for teachers regarding parental involvement
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Interest groups and individual interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were then read, coded using holistic and pattern coding (Saldana, 2011), and analyzed. The major themes that emerged from the study were: (a) sibling involvement, (b) home culture, (c) engagement of mothers, (d) high parental involvement, (e) professional development, (f) teachers/parent relationships, (g) communication, (h) lack knowledge, and (i) low parental involvement.

### **Research Questions**

The broad research question that guided this study was:

What are the lived experiences of three urban kindergarten teachers of parental involvement in their classrooms?

Three questions were more narrowly refined for my inquiry:

Research Question One: What are the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested system and parental involvement?

Research Question Two: How do teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement?

Research Question Three: How do teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement?

### **Discussion**

Examining teacher perspectives regarding their roles in the classroom and school was crucial in determining how to encourage more parental involvement (Makgopa & Mokhele, 2013). Investigating the lived experiences of a novice teacher, a mid-career

teacher, and a veteran teacher gave insight into teacher perspectives about parental involvement in the classroom and at home. Their lived experiences regarding parental involvement was helpful in understanding the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested system and parental involvement, how teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement, and how teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement. Analyzing the secondary data from the interest group teachers added to the broader context of the study and better situated the experience of the three teachers.

### **Bronfenbrenner's Nested Systems View**

Connections were made between teacher perspectives on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's nested system. Through the microsystem, teachers' perspectives on parent/child and school/child interactions were important to understanding how home and school contexts influence parental involvement. The meso-level systems provided information regarding communication between teacher and parent and how a supportive school environment helps promote parental involvement. The exosystem consisted of understanding challenging home environments that caused a lack of parental involvement. The Hispanic and home cultures of the schools were examined through the macrosystem. The chronosystem included a critical look at challenging home environments and a lack of parental involvement through time. This helped in understanding teachers' perspectives of parental involvement through the school year.

### **Microsystem**

Teacher perspectives of parental involvement provided an understanding into the direct interactions of student/parent and student/school environments. Their perspectives



regarding these interpersonal relationships showed how a child's immediate environment affects parental involvement. Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualizes the microsystem as being the closest to an individual, which encompasses interpersonal relationships and direct interactions within immediate surroundings in the environment, such as direct parent/child interactions.

Direct interactions between parent and child were related to academic improvements and the teachers explained that students had better grades when parental involvement occurred on a regular basis. Xu et al. (2010) state that children do better academically when parents are involved at school and home and are involved in extracurricular activities. The teachers indicated that students who had parents that worked with them on homework and other school related activities did well in school and academic growth continued as parents remained involved.

The novice teacher explained:

You can tell right away whether or not the students are turning in homework, but you can tell right away if that student's being worked with at home. Because it all depends on how they respond to you in class, if they are catching on to the material quickly.

Parental involvement was dependent of the home context of the student and teachers expressed concern regarding students who received little or no parental involvement. The teachers indicated that often those students were struggling academically. Parents became more involved with the children when teachers communicated often and when teachers taught parents how to read with their children

through various reading strategies. Adams et al. (2010) explain that reading achievement is higher when there are reading strategies used by parents at home.

One-on-one parental involvement was considered important in helping children learn specific concepts, such as counting objects and students who did not have consistent parental involvement often suffered academically. Engle et al. (2011) explain that difficult home situations, such as families who live poverty, may hinder parental involvement. The teachers believed that the continued growth of the child due to consistent parental involvement showed the importance of the micro-level systems. The lived experiences of the kindergarten teachers showed the significance of direct interactions within the microsystem. One teacher explained that parental involvement was obvious when students' were able to transfer learning from home to school and showed a direct link between parent and child interactions within the home context. El Nokali et al. (2010) found that children performed better achievement scores and problem solving skills when parents were highly involved.

### **Mesosystem**

Understanding teacher perspectives regarding their relationships with parents gave insight into ways to promote parental involvement. Communication and a supportive school environment were associated with meaningful teacher/parent relationships. The mesosystem includes the interactions between microsystems, such as teacher/parent relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Teacher/parent relationships were crucial to parental involvement and school expectations. Being open and looking at the teacher/parent relationship as a team allowed

the teachers to be more encouraging and inviting with parents. Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) explain that teachers feel the need to have consistent communication that offers information to parents. Having positive comments along with recommendations during conferences was beneficial as it allowed the teachers to discuss areas that the child needed to improve on. The veteran teacher stated that making personal connections to parents, being a team with parents, and having consistent expectations with parents was important to student success.

She explained:

Well I guess I'm just honest with the parents and I tell them up front that I love having a parent come help me because the child has another adult that they can look upon for direction and help. And also they see that it's not just teachers involved in the education process, it's parents too. And it helps the parent feel like they're contributing somehow, someway. So I guess it's just what I verbally tell them. That I welcome the help.

She felt she was in a "people profession" and that, although she often had to discuss student issues with parents, she tried to remain positive at all times. Another teacher maintained a classroom environment that was welcoming and supportive to encourage parental involvement.

The mid-career teacher explained that years of teaching experience had given insight into the importance of making meaningful connections with parents and the teachers. She felt that teacher perspectives regarding teacher/parent relationships changed through time and the teachers indicated the importance of keeping the line of

communication open between teachers and parents. All of the teachers felt that being welcoming, honest with parents, and positive with parents created rapport that increased more parental involvement in the classroom and at home. Barnyak and McNelly (2009) state that teachers' attitude is instrumental in promoting more parental involvement. This was exemplified in several of the perspectives presented by the three teachers. The mid-career teacher explained that she did not know how to build strong parent connections when she was a beginning teacher and realized through time that finding ways to communicate with parents was essential to parental involvement. She then began to set up teacher conferences and send home weekly newsletters.

El Nokali et al. (2010) explain that teacher/parent communication is crucial to child success especially if it is continued throughout the school year and in a regular consistent manner. The importance of setting up an atmosphere that was welcoming contributed to stronger teacher/parent connections within the mesosystem. This is reflected in one teacher perspective as she described a supportive school environment as one that was welcoming and positive. She found through her years of teaching that it was important to help parents feel less intimidated. She found that if she consistently welcomed parents into her classroom they were more willing to get involved.

### **Exosystem**

Parents' employment indirectly affected parental involvement and parents regularly did not have the time to work with their children on homework due to job situations. The exosystem involves external environments, which indirectly influence child growth and development. External environments may include a social setting in

which the child does not have an active role within the immediate environmental context in which he lives and interacts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The mid-career teacher explained challenges at home often hindered parental involvement, “I had two students, one was a boy and one was girl and I would swear they were from the same family. Parents were not working with them. They were so far behind, it was affecting their behavior.” She had three students in her class whose parents worked two jobs. Another teacher explained the lack of parental involvement was affecting the behavior of one of her students. These perspectives are mirrored in the literature as evidenced by Engle et al. (2011). The authors state that although parents have challenges to overcome, their desire to help their child through meaningful engagement at home may make a difference to how often they get involved.

One teacher felt cultural aspects were seen in families where the father felt it was his responsibility to go to work and not help the children with school work. Due to this, parents’ job situations were often barriers to parental involvement. According to the teachers, students often came back to school with unfinished homework due to a lack of parental involvement and students who were not involved with their parents at home were often so far behind academically that it was affecting their behavior. Goldberg et al. (2013) found that fathers often contribute lack of parental support to job obligations. They found that fathers did not consider their role to be that of a facilitator to parental involvement. The teachers consistently explained that these patterns were seen through the years and that parental involvement was very individualized. The veteran teacher found that she had challenging home situations in which fathers worked late hours and

explained that this was a barrier to parental involvement. According to Huntsinger and Jose (2009), it is important to understand the cultural differences that affect parental involvement. The teachers in this study, as evidenced through their shared perspectives, worked diligently to understand the cultural differences. Challenging home situations, such as job obligations, were part of the perceived home culture of the students and, as discussed by the teachers, was influential in determining parental involvement.

### **Macrosystem**

It was important to examine teacher perspectives of parental involvement through the socio-cultural context of teachers' students and families in order to understand how culture played a role in parental involvement. With a large percentage of the students in each classroom as well as the district being Hispanic, it was essential to look at how the Hispanic culture and home culture of the students affected parental involvement. The macrosystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979), included the larger socio-cultural context that describes the culture in which individuals live. The macrosystem included the larger socio-cultural environment as well as the predominantly Hispanic culture of the classroom within the macrosystem.

The teachers explained students, many of whom lived in multi-generational homes, were significantly influenced by their Hispanic culture. The novice teacher explained, "You know in certain cultures, especially the Hispanic culture, the grandparents are very involved. They believe in multi-generational homes." She found this was more prevalent due to the high enrollment of Hispanic children at the school.

The mid-career teacher concurred that the home culture often consisted of making sure the children had the bare necessities and parents felt school-work should be completed at school, not at home.

She stated:

The parents who their culture at home is, I have my child and it's my responsibility to feed and clothe them and school is school and whatever happens at school stays at school and deals at school. There's a hindrance in their academics because homework isn't being done.

She found that several of the families, who lived in low socio-economic areas, often lacked resources to help their children. In the Hispanic culture, one teacher found that parents were respectful of the teacher and discipline was good with the children. Home culture was described as being individualized and often parents value the educational system and provided meaningful engagement with their children.

Teacher 4 gave an example of Hispanic culture:

I think each culture is different. I know growing up in the Hispanic culture our parents were way up in our business whether we wanted it or not. And just from my personal perspective because this is a bilingual campus and of course they could probably attest way more to it, but like from what I've seen I think at this campus with the bilingual program what I've seen is they value the opportunity for education.

According to Huntsinger and Jose (2009), cultural contexts influence parental involvement through the views of the parents. The teachers felt the cultural context of the

home either hindered or promoted parental involvement depending on individual home situations. Understanding the cultural contexts of the families helped teachers have a better idea of how to get more parents involved.

### **Chronosystem**

The chronosystem is the evolution of the four other systems over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Barriers to involvement, which included job situations and a lack of parental involvement, evolved over time and through the school year. Bower and Griffin (2011) explain that barriers associated with parent/teacher communication may be resolved if teachers implement strategies to build rapport with parents.

Communication regarding challenging home situations was crucial to parental involvement and the barriers that occurred through time and affected the kindergarten children were addressed by teachers but not necessarily resolved. Johnson (2011) concurs, stating that communication between teacher and parent is crucial in increasing parental involvement. The novice teacher explained that the lack of parental involvement would continue to be a barrier as parents were often too busy to work with their children.

She stated:

This parent did tell me at the beginning of the year that they didn't have time to help their child with their homework. That they have all these kids and too much going on. But I guess they're too busy.

The mid-career teacher explained that she often reflected on her own teaching and routinely sought ways to communicate to parents. She expressed the desire to be supportive through face-to-face conferences and tried to structure meetings that were not



intrusive or invasive. She found, through time, there was academic improvement in children who had more parental involvement.

She explained a situation regarding a conference with a parent:

I recently learned of a student who was having some severe difficulties at home.

And while mom has been to several conferences and has been very supportive, I think whatever's going on at home is standing in the way of being able to be involved and supportive in her child's education and that makes me wonder.

Obviously it's starting to show. His grades are suffering and his progress is slowing. Knowing that she has the desire just not the capability of doing something we wonder what we can do as educators to help keep that from becoming as big of a barrier. And letting parents know that we are here to help them without being intrusive or invasive.

Wright (2009) explains that teacher perspectives of parental involvement includes the idea of having high expectations for the parents throughout the school year. The challenges faced by teachers and parents were considered barriers to involvement and showed a direct link to the chronosystem.

### **Home Contexts**

Home contexts must be taken into account when considering the ways parents get involved with their children. The home contexts in which parents and children live give insight into the reasons why some parents get more involved than others. Vygotsky (1978) states that social and cultural contexts is important in understanding involvement between a parent and child. Often, the cultural influences create more opportunities for

parental involvement; whereas, there might be some situations that hinder parental involvement (Safdar et al., 2010).

### **Sibling Involvement**

Understanding sibling involvement may be helpful in understanding how social and cultural contexts influence behavior of teachers, parents, and children. It is important for teachers to understand why parents do not get involved with their children and how to promote more involvement at home and at school. Teacher perspectives on sibling involvement in the home and challenging home situations enabled an understanding of how home contexts are influential in determining to what extent parents get involved with their children (Vygotsky, 1978).

Many parents do not understand their roles in their children's educations and often do not take the time to get involved in their children's education at home or at school (Safdar et al., 2010). Teachers explained that students' siblings often helped with homework or other school related activities in place of the parent. The veteran teacher gave an example of sibling involvement, "If they have older brothers and sisters who are getting their homework done it seems that they're helping these little ones. Sisters or brothers don't necessarily do it but they are helping them." This was often due to parents' work situations, challenges at home, or cultural contexts within the home. The cultural context of the home, as described by the teachers, was one of unity among the family members where often siblings helped with homework. The veteran teacher also explained that she often tried to encourage sibling involvement if parents were not available to help with their children's homework.

She stated:

You know, if the parents or parent cannot [help with homework]. In fact, I talked to siblings, a couple of them here, to help their little sisters or brothers. My problem is that they have homework too and need to get theirs done. But I ask them if they can please help them a little.

She expressed concern regarding the pre-conceived ideas that parents had regarding the ability to help their children academically and felt siblings were capable of helping as well as parents. Weisner (2001) states that families often view sibling involvement as a responsibility within the home context. He explains this is often due to job obligations and that the cultural beliefs of families often determine the extent to which siblings become involved.

The mid-career teacher felt siblings were required to help within the home culture due to situations in which parents had a lack of confidence in helping academically. Additionally, there were language barriers and employment situations where parents were not home to help their children with their homework. The mid-career teacher explained, "Their parents didn't come up and offer to read. Homework was done but it usually required the help of an older sibling who, you know, could take the time and also spoke English." Although the home culture often included sibling help of younger children, teachers were often hesitant to encourage sibling involvement because of their own educational needs and felt that older siblings helped, but there were times that older siblings were busy. According to Huntsinger and Jose (2009), cultural contexts and parental involvement is influenced greatly by how parents view their involvement.

Taking cultural differences into account gives insight into why parents are more involved than others.

### **Home Culture**

Family culture and values continue to be instrumental in developing strong parental involvement between parents and children of all ages (Henry et al., 2011). Grogan-Kaylor and Wooley (2010) explain that home culture includes: family dynamics, neighborhood, and school contexts in which children learn and interact.

One teacher explained that the home culture of her students was influential in parental involvement. She explained that home culture was individualized among families, with views and ideas regarding parental involvement differing from family to family. Communication between parent and teacher is an important factor in developing a positive relationship and understanding ethnic diversity is crucial in eliminating barriers associated with parental involvement (Fan et al., 2012). Some families were multi-generational in which everyone in the household was involved and the novice teacher stated, “You know in certain cultures, especially the Hispanic culture, the grandparents are very involved. They [families] believe in multi-generational homes.” She also mentioned how important it was that the school was aware of the home culture by providing representatives in the school that were of that culture. She stated, “Also, representation of the cultures within the communities in this school. You have Hispanic community, then you have that representative in the front office. And they understand.”

The context of home culture also extended into parental involvement. Teacher 2 explained that some of her parents believed that their duties as a parent were to provide for the children monetarily and not academically.

She stated:

Well the reason that I say socio-economic is not necessarily that if you're below a certain percentage then you don't value education, that's not what I'm saying. But it tends to be that those who have generational poverty, not just we've hit on hard times, but we've had to move into an apartment. The main focus is, let's get money for the family.

According to Grogan-Kaylor and Wooley (2010), contributing factors of home culture include: socio-economic factors, race, and ethnicity. The mid-career teacher expressed concern for this belief system and the hindrance of academic success, "On the other hand, in this same classroom I do have a student whose home culture, from what I can tell right now, is that really nothing is important, not even school." Parental involvement is dependent on cultural aspects of the home and parents often feel inferior to those at the school, creating barriers to teacher/parent communication (Freeman, 2010).

The novice teacher explained that when parents worked multiple jobs or worked late every day there was less parental involvement, "From what I've experienced in this school, it's not necessarily a race or ethnicity issue as it is a socio-economic issue." This was also considered, by the teachers, to contribute to lower academic success. One teacher stated there was a lack of understanding of the importance of parental involvement

among some parents that was directly tied to their home beliefs. Hispanic parents were respectful, had well-disciplined children, and the veteran teacher stated this contributed positively to parental involvement.

### **Engagement of Mothers**

According to Aram (2010), mothers tend to help their children in ways that promote academic success. Mothers usually help their children with homework and are more apt to get involved in ways that promote academic success. This is often seen in areas of early writing skills in which the mother uses more cooperation strategies and guides their children linguistically when working on homework (Aram, 2010). Fathers are more involved in home literacy activities if they are given specific directions to follow regarding writing assignments (Aram, 2010).

The teachers agreed that mothers were the most involved with their children at home and in the classroom and expressed the desire to have more fathers involved with their children at home and in the classroom. Henry et al. (2011) explains that research continues to indicate that mothers are more likely than fathers to work with their children and monitor their behavior. Mother involvement was often dependent on home culture and work situations. Teacher 2 had two involved fathers in one of the kindergarten classes, “Overall, mostly mom’s the contact point. I’ve had a couple of single dads and they have been well involved but as a rule mom’s mostly the contact point.” It was the mothers who communicated with the teacher on a regular basis, worked with their children on homework, made school conferences, and made sure all the basic needs were met for their child.

The mid-career teacher explained that parental involvement was enhanced when educational games were sent home to reinforce learning and through her years of teaching, mothers were more consistently working with their children one-on-one with the educational games.

She explained:

Like I said, a lot of the things [school activities] are games. I find mothers and fathers are into some of the resources, like sending home a letter flash card set. I see more of the moms doing consistently than hear about or seeing the dads.

Another teacher stated that mothers usually were the ones who helped children with their basic needs, such as dressing for school, getting breakfast, helping with back packs, and helping with homework. Lack of father involvement is often due to employment related situations and is often a barrier to parental involvement (Goldberg et al., 2013). The mid-career teacher explained job obligations, “I have one family who I’ve had several of the siblings and I only met with mom. Dad was, this was not his job, his job was to go to work.”

### **Access**

Developing strategies to get parents more involved in the classroom and at home may be beneficial to academic success. Professional development opportunities may increase teachers’ awareness of developing strategies to get more parents involved and is crucial to student achievement. Professional development and learning is beneficial in helping teachers understand parental involvement and should be included in staff meetings and in-service workshops (Kose & Lim, 2011). Teacher/parent relationships

may be developed through parental support opportunities and good communication. El Nokali et al. (2010) state that teacher/parent communication is crucial to child success especially if it is continued throughout the school year. Teacher perspectives include the need for parents to make a commitment to helping their children and the necessity for the parents to take the time to work one-on-one with their child

### **High Parental Involvement**

Nargis (2013) explains that when teachers and parents communicate more often about expectations of children, starting in kindergarten, students do better academically. Benefits of having a good relationships between teacher, child, and parent are apparent and may increase parental involvement. This was exemplified in several of the perspectives presented by the three teachers.

The novice teacher explained that parents who were vested in helping their children transferred that knowledge to the child and high parental involvement included placing importance on learning and meeting with the teacher on a regular basis. She felt there was a connection between high parental involvement and academic success.

She explained a student situation:

I have one [student] that's like that. I can say one thing. "Oh I saw that museum in Alaska or I saw that place in Louisiana." Ok wow, this child has been everywhere and has something to say with everything I talk about.

Van Voorhis (2011) explains that families should act as facilitators to involvement and should interact often. Additionally, the novice teacher felt it was important for teachers to show parents what was expected in regard to parental



involvement, “And I explained and I sat down and showed her [mother] what our [school] expectations are and I showed her what I would like the child to be doing. And, oh my goodness, there was a huge turn around.” Schady (2011) states that teacher perspectives regarding parental involvement is beneficial when they continue to reflect on ways to promote parental involvement. She found this was beneficial in helping parents to understand their role in their child’s academic success. High parental involvement was associated with higher levels of reading in kindergarten when parents focused on the kindergarten curriculum, such as learning words and letters. The veteran teacher explained how consistent teacher/parent conferences were beneficial to overall parental involvement.

She stated:

At first the child was not that involved with getting their homework done and then we had our early conferences in the middle of September or early October. The dad admitted that they weren’t helping as much and the child was struggling somewhat. And he says but I will promise you we will be working more with our child. And low and behold this child is moving up.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development included ways to make meaningful connections with parents and included how to hold successful parent conferences, how to model teaching strategies for parents, how to teach parents to read to their child, and how to have good rapport with parents. Wildenger and McIntyre (2011) suggest the need for more professional development for kindergarten teachers and explains that the transition into

kindergarten would be more successful for children if there were more parental involvement. LaRocque and Darling (2011) state that principals should find ways to get more parents involved in the school through appropriate teacher trainings and that teacher trainings should focus on how teachers can facilitate communication with families. The researchers explain that teachers should be trained on the cultural context of the family and understand diversity among families.

Professional development often focused on reading goals for children and parents, vocabulary, and questioning strategies. Blackmore and Hutchison (2010) explain that school professional development opportunities increase parental involvement.

The mid-career teacher gave an example of teacher training:

We had a scholastic training at the end of last year and it was more to teach parents. It was about parental involvement. It was to teach parents how to read with their child and not just the basics of, you know, sitting down and reading the book to them. When you might pause and ask questions or if there's vocabulary in there point out that word. And then those of us who got trained in that came back and we did that session with parents who signed up.

Shen et al. (2014) and Hornby and Lafaele (2011) suggest that schools make improvements in parental involvement strategies in order to better facilitate teachers' understandings of how to get parents involved. The veteran teacher discussed a teacher conference on creating good rapport with parents.

She stated:

I was saying a few years ago I went to a conference where you can select different areas to go to in different rooms throughout the day and one of them was about conferences with parents. And that's what they talked about, the man in charge there said to be friendly, to be positive always. Don't bombard them [parents] with negatives.

She further explained, "Most of our training has been, have a nice conference.

You know, before you give them a negative give them a positive."

### **Parental Support**

Parental involvement is improved when schools find ways to include parents in school activities. Principals find this to be extremely difficult in some situations, but they actively try to overcome the barriers associated with parental involvement in the form of school activities (Kose & Lim, 2011).

Opportunities for educational support for parents included: literacy night, science night, math night, open houses, scholastic training, and parent trainings. The novice teacher believed these types of support promoted parental involvement, and explained that often times, the teachers planned and implemented parent activities, "The literacy nights and the math nights that we [teachers] have that are supposed to get the parents involved, but we as teachers put that together." Mannix-Lesh (2013) state that teachers invite parents into the classroom more often when they understand the importance of parental involvement in the school. The events gave parents opportunities to learn and to

work with their children using hands on activities. They were held at the child's school and conducted after school to meet the needs of the working parents.

Open houses were one of the best ways to support parents and the novice teacher indicated open houses at the beginning of the year were beneficial in promoting a strong connection with parents that lasted throughout the year, "Open houses, I think that's one of your good ones. Often times your open houses or meet your teacher, those are your first impressions and that's, I think, the ones that make your parents feel welcome and excited." The mid-career teacher explained that training parents on reading techniques to use with their children was one of the most consistent parent trainings in the district.

She stated:

We have literacy night. A lot of the teachers, we usually hang on to old adoptions or any old books that we might have lying around. Or we move from one grade level to another and we have this extra library.

These trainings were developed to get kindergarten students reading on grade level and to develop an awareness of the importance of parental support in the form of literacy activities at home. Parental support was offered to bilingual students through free resources and the veteran teacher explained resources often included books and backpacks. The veteran teacher explained that the district often invited parents to local schools to offer free resources.

She stated:

And for the bilingual students I know we [teachers] got, many times, letters sent to parents inviting the moms to meet at one of the schools down the street. To

help them with their students and they [district] give them free books and backpacks to take home.

Durand (2011) states the importance of considering the diversity within schools, particularly students who may be at a disadvantage. This provided parents with the necessary literacy tools needed to help promote involvement at home that was meaningful and tied to kindergarten objectives for bilingual students.

### **Teacher/parent Relationships**

Traits that teachers expressed as being influential to a good relationship with parents includes: a good demeanor, working as a team, asking parents for help, open communication, getting parents to volunteer in the classroom, being flexible, and making positive connections. Mannix-Lesh (2013) explain that teachers are more likely to invite parents to their child's schools and have them involved in classroom activities if they understand the significance of involvement.

The veteran teacher felt building appropriate relationships with the parents of the students included being open, friendly, and genuinely concerned.

She explained:

I think, first of all, I look at the situation and once again in a flexible way knowing that I have to put myself in their shoes. Knowing that they don't know anything of what I want them to do or what they're expected to do other than they do have children of their own and they know how children are. And the parent is the child's first teacher so they set the true example from get go. And I like to

look at it as if the child can look at us as a triangle. We all three work together to get things done but they know that we're working together.

Tooper et al. (2010) explain the need for teachers to have consistent communication with parents throughout the school year. The novice teacher recognized the significance of having good rapport with parents and continually strived to have good teacher/parent relationships and that teamwork was the most important in teacher/parent relationships. She often encouraged parents to work with their children at home and gave them ideas on ways to interact with their children.

She stated:

I believe in team work. I believe we are a team. And if we do work together that child will succeed. May not succeed this year but that child will succeed down the line because the seed is planted. I believe, well, I encourage parents and I expect them, if you don't do any of the homework, do these several things every night.

Parental involvement laid a foundation for future success of the students. The mid-career teacher stated that building relationships with parents was crucial to student success, and she continually looked for ways to encourage teacher/parent relationships.

She explained:

When I was first teaching, because I was still learning how to build that relationship, I know I didn't do some of the things that I do now. I didn't send home 'meet the teacher' notices. I didn't build myself up as the person that they could come and talk to so I didn't have a lot of parental involvement. Now even from the very jump like I said, I send the meet the teacher, I send the weekly

newsletter. I make phone calls home for not any other reason than to say I really love having your child or I caught your child doing this today and I thought you should know. And it opens up that kind of line of communication. And once that's open, the parents feel a little more comfortable.

Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) explain that communication between teachers and parents is the most important aspect of promoting parental involvement because it is an opportunity for teachers to give information to parents regarding their involvement. The mid-career teacher wanted to find ways to include parents in school activities and work to make positive connections with parents, "So I'm hoping my perspective will change and being able to learn how to effectively utilize parents and make their involvement be meaningful." It was important for the teachers to understand parents' points of view and to create rapport with parents in the hopes of creating an open relationship with them.

### **Communication**

Kindergarten teacher efficacy includes communicating effectively with parents (Fantuzzo et al., 2012). Makgopa and Mokhele (2013) stress the importance of constant communication between the teacher and the parent.

There was a concern for good teacher/parent relationships and communication. Teachers continued to work on strategies throughout the school year that helped promote communication with the parents of their students. The novice teacher started the school year by having a parent conference that explained her philosophies of teaching and the importance of communication.

She stated:

At the beginning of the year it's [newsletter] a basic one that talks about everything. That's where I talk about us working as a team. And at the middle of the year with this upcoming report card I have an individual letter for each child. Talking about their strengths and weaknesses and activities and things that parents can do at home to help their child become stronger. Almost like a mini conference form. But not asking them to come in. I only ask the low ones to come in.

Teacher/parent communication was often dependent upon the parent and was individualized. The mid-career teacher explained her philosophy of this:

I think it is very dependent on the parent. And I say that because I have some parents who like talking face-to-face. I love talking face-to-face. And so we'll have a 45 minute conference because they are opening up. But I do have parents whose conferences are very short but they will send me emails or class messengers that are pages long. Because I think they feel more comfortable doing it.

The teachers discussed various methods of communication with their parents and found that some parents preferred face-to-face meetings while others preferred emails or the use of school apps. Bower and Griffin (2011) state that in order to overcome barriers associated with parent/teacher communication schools should find ways to build effective relationships with students and parents from low socio-economic schools.

Since each parent viewed communication differently, the mid-career teacher used a preferred method of communication for each parent.



She explained:

And I try to explain to them that it's not a problem for me. That I can be here for as long as I need to be because it's your child. But when we're doing conferences everything seems to go fast paced because they're trying to get as much information while they have me as they can. Whereas a lot of information that I do receive I receive through things like class messenger or the email.

Better relationships between teachers and parents include parents' understanding of their roles in their child's education gained through teacher/parent communication (Nargis, 2013). Communication was on-going and one teacher explained that she made frequent telephone calls to her parents regarding school functions or academics and that she did not always call when there was a problem but made telephone calls to let the parents know the "good" things their children were accomplishing in school.

### **Barriers**

There is a need to understand why some parents do not get involved with their children at home or school. Teachers should consider these barriers when determining strategies that may be helpful in getting parents involved with their children (Barnyak and McNelly, 2009). Finding techniques to enhance parental involvement may ultimately increase parental involvement and provide a foundation for successful learning (Makgopa and Mokhele, 2013).

#### **Lack of Knowledge**

A barrier to parental involvement was a lack of knowledge on how to help or support children's learning. Teacher perspectives include the idea of having high

expectations for the parents and indicates this is a more effective way of getting parents involved (Wright, 2009). Ghazi et al. (2010) suggest that parents have the responsibility to meet the basic educational needs of their children through parental involvement.

Teachers reported that parents increasingly did not understand how to help their children due to the kindergarten curriculum and there was a growing concern among the teachers that parents did not know how to facilitate learning with their children during homework or other school related activities. According to the novice teacher, “In school some of them [parents] don’t know how [to help their child]. There should be a training of some sort about what is expected in school.” The novice teacher also felt parents had the skills needed to be involved with their children.

She stated:

I believe everybody has the skills that they need. They just need to have the confidence and realize that it’s not as daunting a task that they think it is. Like something that you’re not familiar with. Oh what if I do this wrong, what if I do that wrong. I think they allow themselves to scare themselves away from doing something that’s easier than they think it is.

She indicated that they lacked confidence and felt parental involvement required skills they did not have. Freeman (2009) explains that parents often feel they are looked at as inferior in regards to their involvement with their children.

Another concern of the teachers was a change in the kindergarten curriculum, resulting in many parents lacking the knowledge of how to help their children. The

veteran teacher stated that parents often did not communicate to her that they did not understand how to help their child.

She stated:

Sometimes parents just need extra information. They don't always want to ask for it or admit they don't know what to do with their child. But some parents really open up and say, "What can I do?" This appeared to be a growing concern among the teachers.

According to Makgopa and Mokhele (2013):

Communication between teachers and parents is of prime importance in all of this, because communication, by its very nature, means that teachers can tell parents what they are supposed to do in order to help their children do well at school. (p. 225)

### **Low Parental Involvement**

A lack of resources may produce barriers to parental involvement (Villiger et al., 2014). Low parental involvement may be due to outside factors and often parents have circumstances that may prevent them from participating with their children at school and at home especially families who live in low socio-economic areas or live in poverty (Engle et al., 2011).

Teachers indicated that low parental involvement was due to several factors and was individualized for each family. Safdar et al. (2010) explain that some parents do not understand their role in their child's education. Teachers explained that job situations and challenging work situations caused a lack of motivation for parents to help their children

and were two of the most prevalent reasons for low parental involvement. Parents were often too busy to help their children with homework or school related activities. The novice teacher expressed concern over the lack of parental involvement.

She explained:

This parent did tell me at the beginning of the year that they didn't have time to help their child with their homework. That they have all these kids and too much going on. But I guess they're too busy.

Some students had severe difficulties at home and the mid-career teacher stated that affected academic performance in a negative way.

She explained:

I recently learned of a student who was having some severe difficulties at home. And while mom has been to several conferences and has been very supportive, I think whatever's going on at home is standing in the way of being able to be involved and supportive in her child's education. And that makes me wonder. Obviously it's starting to show. His grades are suffering and his progress is slowing. Knowing that she has the desire, just not the capability of doing something we wonder what we can do as educators to help keep that from becoming as big of a barrier. And letting parents know that we are here to help them without being intrusive or invasive.

The lack of parental involvement included the desire to help and to communicate with the teacher. Furthermore, the lack of parental involvement affected behavior in the classroom, and students who had poor behavior did poorly academically. The mid-career

teacher indicated some parent beliefs included, “children are to be seen and not heard.”

A lack of parental involvement was due to work situations where families either worked multiple jobs or came home late and the veteran teacher had a parent who often came home late at night from work.

She stated:

The first one that comes to my mind is my student this year whose daddy works late at night and grandma takes care of him and the other three little boys. And he [father] comes home at ten o’clock at night. So I’m dealing with that right now.

She found in some situations that grandparents were often the caregivers, which affected involvement.

### **Future Research**

This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of teachers with varying years of teaching experience in three kindergarten classrooms. At the beginning of the study, based upon the literature, the following topics were explored further: academic success, race and ethnicity, mother and father roles, barriers, varied perspectives (parent, teacher, principal), professional development, school environment/climate, teaching experiences, and district initiatives. After the study, the results indicated there were areas we still do not know, indicating gaps that needed further investigation. The results showed that future research is needed regarding the home contexts of kindergarten children and how these cultural contexts may influence sibling involvement. How access to parental involvement, such as high parental involvement, parental support, teacher/parent relationships, and communication between

teacher and parents, may help promote more involvement at home and at school. In addition, how barriers associated with parents' lack of understanding on how to help their children may hinder parental involvement. The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Examination of how home contexts among families of kindergarten students influence parental involvement, specifically the home context in which sibling involvement is prevalent. Understanding the role of the sibling within home contexts would provide more knowledge regarding parental involvement and would be helpful in understanding how teacher perspectives on parental involvement are influenced by the home context and sibling involvement of their students.
2. Determining how access is influential in promoting parental involvement among kindergarten students. Access that should be studied include high parental involvement, parental support, teacher/parent relationships, and communication between teacher and parent. Having a better understanding of how to promote parental involvement among kindergarten teachers may ultimately promote involvement.
3. Investigation of how barriers may affect parental involvement. More investigation of how parents may better understand how they can help their child is needed. This in turn may promote parental involvement in the classroom and at home. It is also important to understand ways that prevent parents from becoming involved with their children. Research in this area may

provide meaningful insight into how teachers can find ways to get parents involved more often.

### **Limitations**

The participants in the study consisted of kindergarten teachers in one school district. This did not allow me to gain perspectives of parental involvement through the lived experiences of teachers in other grade levels. This did not allow me to investigate the perspectives of teachers in other school districts across the city. This would have allowed for a broader understanding of teacher perspectives within other grade levels and across school districts.

The sample size consisted of 16 teachers initially and concluded with three kindergarten teachers with varying years of teaching experience. A different type of methodology would have supported the inquiry into a larger sample size and given more insight into teachers' perspectives of parental involvement.

There was a lack of time to “live” with the teachers due to the school year and end of school testing. With more time to spend with the teachers, I would have been able to experience firsthand the lived experiences of the teachers in regard to parental involvement.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings of my three research questions. To address Research Question One I examined the connections between Bronfenbrenner's nested system and parental involvement. The Bioecological Theory helped in my understanding of the role of the teacher, working with parents, and parental involvement. The results of

the study indicated the importance of parental involvement through direct interactions of the parent and child within the micro-level systems. Teacher/parent relationships were considered crucial to parental involvement and encompassed the meso-level systems between school and home. The most prominent issue within the exosystem included parents' lack of involvement due to employment. The teachers felt this was one of the most influential reasons for lack of involvement. It was apparent that barriers associated with involvement occurred through time and extended throughout the school year. This was an example of the chronosystem and how situations involving parental involvement was seen through time.

Research Question Two examined how teachers perceive home contexts influence parental involvement. Findings revealed that sibling involvement was prevalent within families often due to challenging home situations or job situations. Understanding the context of the home was important in finding ways to get parents involved. Teachers stated that, although fathers occasionally got involved with their children, mothers got involved more often. Strategies were used to encourage more father involvement in school and at home.

Research Question Three examined how teachers perceive access and barriers influence parental involvement. The results indicated access to be the most important to teachers. High parental involvement was the most influential in helping children be successful in school. Students who had parents that were involved consistently and on a regular basis did better academically. Professional development opportunities were considered important in developing an understanding among teachers on the best



strategies to use to get parents involved. Additionally, finding ways to support parents was also beneficial in helping them understand their role in student success.

Teacher/parent relationships were improved when there was good open communication and when there was rapport between the teacher and parent. The study indicated that barriers to involvement consisted of parents' lack of knowledge on how to help their children and low parental involvement. Parents often felt frustration over the kindergarten curriculum and expressed concern over helping their children with homework or other school activities.

The study found parental involvement was influenced by home contexts among families of kindergarten students. Sibling involvement was prevalent in many homes and teachers explained that they usually took the place of the parent in school involvement. Home culture was important in understanding the socio-cultural aspects of parental involvement and the results indicated that mothers were more involved than fathers in parental involvement. Access to parental involvement included high parental involvement in which parents were involved with their children at home and at school.

Additionally, teachers indicated that professional development helped them to develop strategies that would get more parents involved. Supporting parents with various programs helped to give information to parents that would instruct them on how to better help their children. The study found that teacher parent relationships were essential in gaining rapport and helped to establish a good foundation for meaningful communication. Barriers were associated with parents' lack of knowledge on how to help their children. Teachers expressed concern over parents' lack of understanding the kindergarten

curriculum. Low parental involvement was often associated with challenging home situations or work obligations. The results of the study indicated home contexts, access, and barriers were influential in determining parental involvement at home and at school and provided information that may benefit educational professionals in large urban school districts.

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APPENDIX A

INTEREST GROUP GUIDE

## **Interest Group Guide**

The interest group questions listed in the protocol section of this guide have been constructed to interview kindergarten teachers regarding the tenets of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory. Bronfenbrenner's "nested systems" will be taken into account with emphasis placed on the microsystem and mesosystem, as these systems involve interpersonal relationships and direct interactions.

### **Interest Group Protocol: Kindergarten Teacher**

The interviewer will begin the interest group by allowing the teachers to openly talk among themselves and to ask any questions before getting started. The interest group will then begin with the interviewer explaining that the questions, answers, and discourse among the group will be recorded. Teachers will be allowed to elaborate as long as necessary to capture the essence of the answers. Clarifications will be addressed and discourse among the teachers will be encouraged.

### **Academic Success**

How do you feel parents play a role in academic success?

How do you believe daily interactions between parents and children at home contribute to their academic success?

What methods do you believe would enhance parental involvement?

What ways appear to promote communication between parent and teacher?

How do you believe the extent (the time spent) to which parents interact with their children makes a difference in academic success?

### **Race/Ethnicity**

How do you feel race or ethnicity influences parental involvement?

### **Mother/Father Roles**

What differences do you see between parental involvement of mothers and fathers?

### **Barriers to Involvement**

What barriers do find hinder parental involvement?

### **Varied Perspectives**

How do you feel teacher perspectives makes a difference in parental involvement?

How do you feel teacher perspectives makes a difference in parental involvement within urban schools?

How do you feel teacher perspectives makes a difference in parental involvement within low socioeconomic areas?

### **Professional Development**

How do you feel professional development has helped promote parental involvement?

In what ways has professional development helped promote parental involvement through your teaching?

### **School Environment/Climate**

How do you feel the school or classroom environment contributes or hinders parental involvement?

### **Teaching Experiences**

In what ways has your years of teaching experience affected parental involvement?

### **District Initiatives**

Can you describe how the current District Initiatives may have affected parental involvement?

## APPENDIX B

### INITIAL INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

## **Individual Interview Guide**

Using the tenets of Bronfenbrenner, the interview questions listed in the protocol section of this guide have been constructed to explore teacher perspectives of parental involvement. Questions will be asked in the teacher's classroom after school in order to create a relaxing atmosphere. Questions will include broad open-ended questions regarding teacher perspectives of parental involvement.

### **Interview Protocol: Kindergarten Teacher**

The interviewer will encourage the teacher to pick a comfortable area of the classroom to conduct the interviews. The interviewer will ask if there are any questions before getting started with the interview. All questions will be answered prior to starting the interview. Any questions during the interview process will also be answered and any clarification addressed. The interviewer will let the teacher know that the interview will be recorded.

#### **Academic Success**

How do you believe meaningful engagement between parent and child facilitates better grades?

What are your thoughts on parent/child engagement in school and home in regards to academic success?

#### **Race/Ethnicity**

In what ways do you feel race or ethnicity may contribute or hinder parental involvement?

In what ways do you feel race or ethnicity may contribute or hinder teacher/parent involvement?

#### **Mother/Father Roles**

How do you view the importance of parents as mediators?

What are your expectations regarding high parental involvement?

How do you believe parents have the skills needed to facilitate academic success through activities with their children?

How do you believe parents could easily acquire these skills?

#### **Barriers to Involvement**

What are your perspectives, in general, of parental involvement in an urban district?

What are your perspectives, in general, of parental involvement in a low socioeconomic area?

### **Varied Perspectives**

What are your perspectives, in general, of parental involvement in a kindergarten classroom?

How do you feel your perspectives regarding parental involvement plays a role in parental involvement in your classroom?

In what ways do you feel your perspectives of parental involvement impact the academic success of your students?

### **Professional Development**

How do feel your perspectives on professional development promote parental involvement in the classroom?

In what ways do you believe professional development has helped to promote parental involvement through your teaching and classroom activities?

### **School Environment/Climate**

In what ways do you feel the school environment/climate plays a role in parental involvement?

What are your perspectives on the importance of school environment/climate on parental involvement?

### **Teaching Experiences**

How do you feel your years of teaching experience have contributed to your perspectives of parental involvement?

How do you feel your perspectives will change as you gain more teaching experience?

### **District Initiatives**

Can you describe how the current District Initiatives may have affected parental involvement?



## APPENDIX C

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

## **Individual Interview Questions (Developed from the interest groups sessions)**

### **Academic Success**

How do you believe meaningful engagement between parent and child facilitates better grades?

1. How do conferences help you understand meaningful parental involvement at home?
2. Can you think of an example or experience you had where you definitely knew there was no meaningful engagement going on and the student didn't do well academically?
3. What are your thoughts on parent and child engagement at school, specifically the classroom?
4. Can you recall any experience where a child did do better academically because a parent came into the classroom?

### **Race & Ethnicity**

1. In what ways do you feel race or ethnicity may contribute to or hinder parental involvement?
2. What are some examples or experiences you've had where you knew that the family culture or the home environment was contributing or hindering parental involvement?
3. In what ways do you think ethnicity, race, family culture, or home environment may contribute or hinder parents' involvement with you as their child's teacher?
4. What types of generational influences have you experienced?
5. What experiences have you had with families of multiple children (siblings) and parental involvement?

### **Mother/Father Roles**

1. How do you view the importance of parents as mediators between home and school?
2. What differences do you see between mother and father?
3. What are some examples between mothers and fathers as role of mediator between home and school?
4. What are your expectations regarding high parental involvement?
5. How do you believe parents have the skills needed to facilitate academic success through activities with their children?
6. How do you believe mothers and fathers have the skills needed?
7. What other strategies do you use to help parents acquire the skills they need to help their children be successful?

## **Barriers**

1. What experiences have you had regarding parents being reticent to get involved because they didn't understand the curriculum or felt intimidated by what you're doing in the classroom?
2. Can you give examples of parents not knowing how to help their child with homework?
3. What experiences have you had with language barriers and parental involvement?
4. What barriers do you feel are associated with parents feeling intimidated?
5. What experiences have you had with the privacy issues of parents in regard to not wanting to come into the classroom?
6. In what ways do siblings contribute or hinder parental involvement?
7. In what ways do transportation issues hinder parental involvement at school?

## **Teacher Perspectives**

1. What experiences have you had regarding being welcoming and communicating with parents and how that makes a difference in their parental involvement at school and home?
2. How do your expectations and beliefs help promote parental involvement?
3. How has being flexible helped to promote parental involvement? (new question that naturally occurred during the interview)
4. What have your experiences been as far as parental entitlement and how does that affect parental involvement?

## **Professional Development**

1. What are some examples of how professional development (teacher trainings) promoted parental involvement in your classroom?
2. In what ways has weekly grade level meetings or campus leadership meetings helped to promote parental involvement?
3. How has professional development changed through the years?
4. How do parent conferences or open houses contribute to parental involvement?
5. Do you have any experiences regarding parent workshops and how they may promote parental involvement?
6. Any experiences with PTO programs promoting parental involvement at your school?
7. Any experiences with district representatives or early childhood specialists promoting parental involvement?

### **School Climate/Environment**

1. In what ways do you feel that the school environment plays a role in parental involvement?
2. How do you feel the classroom environment plays a role in parental involvement?

### **Teaching Experience**

1. How do you feel your years of teaching experience have contributed to your perspective of parental involvement?
2. How do you feel your perspective will change as you gain more teaching experience?

### **District Initiatives**

1. In what ways has the district promoted parental involvement?

APPENDIX D  
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Script for first meeting:

Hello, my name is Tinney Leveridge and I am asking you to participate in a research study for my dissertation at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of my study is to have a better understanding of kindergarten teacher perspectives of parental involvement in urban kindergarten classrooms. I will also be collecting data from teachers with varied levels of teaching experiences. I am asking you to participate in my study because you are a kindergarten teacher in an urban elementary school.

If you decide to participate in my study, I will ask you to participate in an interest group with other kindergarten teachers in your school. I will ask questions about your perspectives of parental involvement in your classroom. I will audio record the interest group sessions as well as take notes during the sessions to maintain accuracy when looking at the data. The interest group sessions will meet weekly for four weeks and the sessions will last no longer than one hour.

You then may be selected to participate in one on one interviews. I will have one on one interviews to get more information over teacher perspectives. The one on one interviews will also be audio recorded and the participants will also be asked to record information through audio journaling. This will be a way to record information regarding parental involvement at other times, such as during the school day or after school. The one on one interviews will meet weekly for 8 weeks and the session will last no longer than one hour.

Steps will be made to minimize risks during the research study, such as confidentiality issues, embarrassment during the interview process, emotional discomfort, child confidentiality, loss of time, and researcher bias.

Your involvement in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Once the study is complete I will offer a workshop in which I will disseminate the findings of my study and it will be aimed at helping to increase and support parental involvement in the classroom. A gift card drawing will be conducted at the beginning of the study.

APPENDIX E

INFORMATIONAL HANDOUT

## Informational Handout

### **Re: Dissertation Research Information**

I am currently getting my PhD from Texas Woman's University. The title of my research project is:

### **A PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY ON KINDERGARTEN TEACHER PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN URBAN KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS**

The broad research question that will guide the study is:

### **What are the lived experiences of three urban kindergarten teachers of parental involvement in their classrooms?**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to have a better understanding of kindergarten teacher perspectives of parental involvement in an urban school district, specifically in several low socio-economic elementary schools. Teachers with varied years of teaching experience in kindergarten will be included in the study. Looking at how teachers recognize these factors could be beneficial in determining how they play a role in promoting positive and active parent engagement and involvement and ultimately how well students perform academically in school. This study will take into account how teacher perspectives may make a difference in how often parents become involved and ways to promote parental involvement in the form of parental support. The results could also assist teachers in developing professional development workshops that would help in understanding how they can promote parental involvement.

It will be important to look at teacher perspectives from different levels of teaching experience, as different levels of teaching experience are unique and contribute to parental involvement in the classroom in different ways. Selecting participants with different levels of teaching experience, such as a beginning first year teacher, a mid-career teacher with 10-12 years of teaching experience, and a veteran teacher with more than 20 years of experience, will allow the researcher to examine teacher perspectives from varying points of view and give insight into parent/teacher experiences in the classroom.

Three to six elementary schools will be used to recruit the participants for the interest groups. The interest groups will include kindergarten teachers in various elementary schools and should consist of between eight and twelve participants. Three teachers of varied experience will then be recruited from the interest groups to continue with the study and participate in the one on one interviews and audio



journaling. Data results will be given to teachers once the study is complete upon their request. Teachers will also be invited to attend a workshop in which the researcher will disseminate the findings of the study. The workshop will be aimed at helping to increase and support parental involvement in the classroom and ultimately increase academic success.

The research study will be conducted during the 2015 – 2016 school year. I would request to meet with interest groups weekly for four weeks. Each meeting will take approximately 30 minutes and no more than 1 hour. I would then request to meet with the three teachers that will continue with the study for one-on-one interviews weekly for eight weeks. Each interview will take approximately 30 minutes and no more than 1 hour. Interest groups and interviews will be conducted in the teacher's classrooms at a time that is convenient to them, either during conference time or after school. Refreshments and gift card drawings will be provided.

APPENDIX F

DISSERTATION STUDY IRB SIGNATURE PAGE

**DISSERTATION STUDY IRB SIGNATURE PAGE**

DATE: October 14, 2015

TO: Ms. Tinney Leveridge  
Family Sciences

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

*Re: Approval for A Phenomenological Qualitative Study on Kindergarten Teacher Perspectives of Parental Involvement in Urban Kindergarten Classrooms (Protocol #: 18454)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 10/14/2015 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 10/13/2016. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. Karen Petty, Family Sciences

Dr. Sharla Snider, Family Sciences

Graduate School

APPENDIX G  
RECRUITMENT FLYER



## The Importance of Parental Involvement

### **You can make a difference!**

*Find out how teacher perspectives influence parental involvement*

You are invited to participate in a research study that will take your teaching experiences into account and may ultimately show ways to get parents involved at school and home.

Each teacher participating in the study will:

***Receive a \$10 Starbucks gift card.***

***Be eligible to win a \$50 Target gift card through a gift card drawing.***

***Be invited to attend a teacher workshop featuring ways to get parents involved and increase academic success among your students.***

APPENDIX H

RESEARCHER REFLECTION SAMPLES

## **Researcher Reflection Samples**

### **Reflection**

- The meeting with the principal went well. He showed me the kindergarten classrooms and introduced me to the lead kindergarten teacher. He told her to set up a meeting for the next day and told me we would meet in the lead teacher's classroom. We went back to his office and he asked me some questions about my study. He talked about his teaching days and offered his experiences of parental involvement as an elementary teacher. He was receptive to my study.
- Continue with transcriptions. Will start highlighting and coding as I transcribe.

### **Reflection**

- One teacher was absent today. The session went well. It seemed that each person had a lot to say regarding parental involvement so most of the teachers, except ones that were extremely quiet, spoke for longer periods of time. Session went well.
- Extremely good session. Each of the four teachers had a lot to say regarding parental involvement and appeared enthusiastic to share their life experiences as a teacher.

### **Reflection**

- A good session today. The teachers appeared more willing to open up and discuss life events. Mid-career teacher elaborated quite a bit on her answers. She appears to put a lot of thought into her discussions and can recall teacher experiences easily.
- Interesting session. A new area of interest emerged from the interest group today that included special needs children. Technology appears to be an excellent way to keep in contact with parents, with caution regarding confidential information being released. Teachers did agree that the "personality" of the school makes a difference in parental involvement but to my surprise none of the teachers had thoughts on parental involvement within an urban school.